

Jl Ameer off to Qatar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Ameer of the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JI) Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman has departed for Qatar to attend the funeral of the Palestinian freedom fighter group Hamas' martyred head Ismail Haniyeh. According to media reports, the head of the Jamaat-e-Islami negotiation team Liaquat Baloch has become the acting ameer of the party in the absence of Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman.

Reducing electricity prices top priority: PM

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated on Friday that the government was focused on providing relief to electricity consumers, as reducing electricity prices was a key agenda for PML-N President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the government, and its allies.

In his initial remarks at the Cabinet meeting, Sharif emphasized that the government needed to lower electricity prices to boost the country's exports. He pointed out that without this reduction, neither the agricultural sector nor the industrial sector could expand effectively. Competitiveness in the industry was directly linked to lower electricity prices, he remarked.

Sharif criticized the use of electricity issues for political gain, calling it disrespectful to the public. He highlighted that the nation sought a resolution to this problem. Addressing inefficiencies and corruption within the Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) and the Energy Sector, and making these institutions efficient, would set the country on the right path.

He assured that the government was aware of the people's problems and doing its utmost to address them. Shehbaz noted that the PML-N government had resolved the 20-hour daily load-shedding issue. At that time, few were willing to invest significantly in electricity production, with China being the only country showing interest in investing in power generation. In 2015, the prime minister mentioned that some of the fastest power-producing plants in history were installed. The government set up four LNG plants, each with a capacity of 500 MW and a turbine efficiency of 64 percent. Credit for these cost-effective plants went to Nawaz Sharif. At that time, NEPRA's tariff was \$8.5, and the plants were built for just \$450,000. These agreements should not be criticized, as they represented a sincere effort to address Pakistan's most pressing challenge.

He instructed ministers and government officials to inform the public about the steps taken by successive PML-N governments to eliminate load-shedding in the country. The government had extended the last date for paying electricity bills by 10 days, said the prime minister. Likewise, the electricity tariff for the country's industry had been reduced by Rs 8.5 per unit. A Rs 170 billion subsidy was being provided to the industry in this regard.

Two cops martyred as convoy of judges attacked

F.P. Report

TANK: Two cops were martyred and two others injured when terrorists attacked a convoy of judges squad vehicles in here on Friday.

According to details, terrorists attacked the convoy of judges squad at Dera Ismail Khan road near Bhagwal area of district Tank of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As a result of firing, two policemen including Abdullah and Samad were martyred while two officials were injured. The martyred cops belonged to South Waziristan. The assailants fled the scene after retaliatory action of police.

The bodies and injured were shifted to hospital. Police cordoned off the area after the area and started search operation for the attackers. President Asif Ali Zardari has condemned the firing on a convoy of judges in Tank District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Friday. In a statement, he expressed deep grief over the martyrdom of a security official in the firing and prayed for higher status in heaven for the departed soul.

The President also commiserated with the bereaved family. According to media reports, the attack was carried out near Bhagwal on Dera Ismail Khan Road. Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday strongly condemned the firing incident on judges' vehicles in Tank District. In a statement, the Governor expressed profound sorrow over the loss of two policemen who were providing security to the judges. He conveyed his heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the families of the slain officers.

The Frontier Post

PTI leader shot dead

LAHROE (INP): A local leader of PTI identified as Dr. Shahid Siddique was shot dead by unidentified armed men who managed to escape here on Friday. Police said that unknown gunmen sprayed bullets at PTI's founding member as soon as he came out of mosque after offering Juma prayers in Valencia Town, Lahore. As a result of firing, Dr Shahid Siddique who was also owner of a private hospital was killed on the spot.

Israel should be held accountable for Ismail Haniyeh's assassination

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday strongly condemning the unabated bloodshed of Palestinian people by the Israeli occupation forces and the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, warned that the lava of public anger would get out of control if the Zionist state was not held accountable.

"The Zionist state has crossed all the limits of crimes... The lava of public anger is boiling... If justice does not prevail and the Zionist state killing innocent people is not held to account, the lava of public fury will be in no one's control. It will risk the annihilation of world's peace and development," the prime minister said addressing the National Assembly after the House unanimously passed a resolution calling Haniyeh's killing a 'deliberate conspiracy to sabotage' Gaza ceasefire efforts and condemning the ongoing Israeli "state oppression and brutality" in Gaza. The prime minister, who earlier also highlighted the issue in the cabinet meeting chaired by him a while ago and coalition parties meeting on Thursday, said the whole Muslim world including the Pakistani nation was grieved over Ismail Haniyeh's killing.

Thanking the members from both sides of the aisle for evolving a consensus on the resolution, he said the parliament's voice would resonate the world over to shock the enemies of Pakistan and strengthen its friends. He highlighted that the Palestinian people were suffering the worst bloodshed by the Zionist state for the last nine months which killed around 40,000 people including thousands of women and children. "The cities have turned into cemeteries. The cries have taken over the joys and smiles of the playing children. Palestine is giving a deserted look," the prime minister said and questioned the inaction and helplessness of the world to end the Israeli oppression. He said not only the Muslims rather every peace-loving human being, regardless of faith or creed, was questioning the non-implementation of the international laws and human rights charters for which the world bodies including the United Nations were created.

The prime minister said that the government was making collective efforts to address electricity theft. He praised the interim government, the Sindh and Punjab governments, and Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir for their dedicated efforts to tackle the issue. He expressed concern that the salaried class had been heavily burdened. However, the government had provided a Rs 50 billion subsidy for consumers using up to 200 units of electricity per month.

Sharif said efforts were underway to resolve issues with Independent Power Producers (IPPs). However, he acknowledged that the issue could

PM, MPs offer Ismail's funeral prayer

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, members of the Federal Cabinet and the Parliamentarians on Friday offered the funeral prayer in absentia of Ismail Haniyeh, the Chief of the Political Bureau of Hamas, martyred in Tehran.

The funeral prayer was held across the country as part of the government's decisions, taken on Thursday which also included the observance of a day of mourning. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, and leaders of the ruling coalition as well as the opposition parties also offered the funeral prayer. They prayed for the elevation of the rank of the martyr in paradise, peace in Palestine and the betterment of the Muslim world.

not be resolved overnight and the government was trying to address it.

Earlier, Sharif informed the Cabinet that the government, allied parties, the foreign office, the deputy prime minister, as well as China and Russia, had all strongly condemned the brutal assassination of Ismael Haniyeh. He emphasized that this horrific act should shake the conscience of global organizations. During Friday prayers, funeral prayers in absentia were to be offered for the departed soul of Ismael Haniyeh across mosques in the country, including in the mosque at the prime minister's residence.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and parliamentarians offering funeral prayer of Ismail Haniyeh.

KP PA passes resolution in support of Haniya

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly with Speaker Babar Salim in chair here Friday passed a resolution on the Shahdat of Hamas leader Ismail Haniya.

The house also offered Fateha for eternal peace of Hamas leader offered by special assistant to the Chief Minister Dr Amjad Ali. In the resolution, the house condemned the assignation of Ismail Haniya and demanded unmasking the culprits.

Meanwhile, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly with Speaker Babar Salim in chair here Friday deferred the Ushr and Zakat amendment bill 2024 after debate by the members from treasury and opposition branches on the powers of Chairman of Council.

When the bill was moved by the Provincial Law Minister, Member Provincial Assembly Rehana Ismail informed the house that she has taken her amendments back. Similarly, another amendment could not be presented due to leave of MPA Usman Khan. However, MPA Ahmed Kundi presented his amendment requesting for inclusion of an elected member in Zakat Council rather a private member.

Bilawal shocked over losses in rains

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has expressed deep sorrow and grief over the loss of lives and property caused by the ongoing monsoon rains in various parts of the country.

According to a press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP highlighted that the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has suffered the most significant loss of life, with ten fatalities reported in Kohat district alone. He noted that due to severe weather and lack of communication facilities, many incidents in remote areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remain unreported. He expressed regret that rain victims in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are left helpless, with no visible government assistance.

Addressing the situation in Punjab, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari expressed hope that the provincial government will ensure timely and indiscriminate assistance to those affected by the rains.

He directed all PPP members of the assemblies to remain present in their constituencies during the rains. In Sindh and Balochistan, ministers, assembly members, and local government representatives have already been instructed to oversee relief efforts and ensure that no affected individual is deprived of government aid.

Thousands in Qatar bid farewell to slain Haniyeh

DOHA (Reuters): The funeral of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh took place in Qatar on Friday following his assassination two days ago in Iran's capital Tehran — one in a series of killings of senior figures in the Palestinian group as the fighting between Israel and Hamas in Gaza rages.

Mourners at the ceremony in Imam Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab Mosque, the Gulf emirate's largest, just north of the capital Doha included Khaled Meshaal, who is tipped to be the new Hamas leader. Other senior Hamas officials and Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani also attended. Mourners lined up for funeral prayers inside the mosque while others prayed on mats outside in temperatures that reached 44 degree Celsius.

Haniyeh's coffin, draped in the Palestinian flag, was carried across the mosque past hundreds of people along with the coffin of his bodyguard, who was killed in the same attack in Tehran on Wednesday. He was laid to rest in Lusail, north of Doha. The burial was restricted to a small number of people including one of Haniyeh's daughters, Sara, who shared a video on social media showing her pouring holy water over a pebble-topped grave before lowering her head to kiss it. "In this moment, I buried my soul under the dirt and I departed. I departed with all the pain of the world in my ribs," she captioned the video uploaded on X.

Turkiye and Pakistan announced a day of mourning today to honour Haniyeh, while Hamas called for a "day of furious rage". Many Doha mourners were dressed in crisp white traditional robes, others in street clothes. But most wore scarves that combined the Palestinian flag with a checkered keffiyeh pattern and the message in English: "Free Palestine". Doha traffic police and Qatar's internal security forces monitored all approaches and police lined highway embankments adjoining the mosque grounds.

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan were among the officials due at the funeral. Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri spoke to Reuters by phone as he attended the funeral: "Our message to the occupation (Israel) today is that you are sinking deep in the mud and your end is getting closer than ever. The blood of Haniyeh will change all equations." Haniyeh was killed by a missile that hit him directly in a state guesthouse in Tehran where he was staying, senior Hamas official Khalil Al-Hayya told a news conference, quoting witnesses who were with him.

Iran and Hamas have both accused

Israel of carrying out the killing and have pledged to retaliate against their foe. Israel has not claimed responsibility for the death nor denied it. The strike was one of several that have killed senior figures in Hamas or the Lebanese movement Hezbollah, fuelling concern that the fighting in Gaza between Israel and Palestinian group is turning into a regional conflict stretching from the Red Sea to the Lebanon-Israel border and beyond.

In the United States, President Joe Biden said Haniyeh's killing was not helpful to international efforts to secure a ceasefire in the conflict in Gaza, now in its 10th month. "It doesn't help," Biden told reporters on Thursday, when asked if the action ruined the chances of a truce. Qatar has been leading the peace effort along with Egypt and the United States, Israel's main ally. Haniyeh had been the face of Hamas' international diplomacy as fighting raged back in Gaza and had taken part in the indirect ceasefire talks. He was seen by many diplomats as a moderate compared to the more headline members of the group inside Gaza, although some Israeli commentators have said he was considered by some on the Israeli side as an obstacle to a deal.

Appointed to the Hamas top job in 2017, he moved between Turkiye and Doha, escaping the travel curbs of the blockaded Gaza Strip. In May, the International Criminal Court prosecutor's office requested arrest warrants for three Hamas leaders, including Haniyeh, as well as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for alleged war crimes. Israel and Palestinian leaders have dismissed the allegations. Iran held its own funeral ceremony for Haniyeh on Thursday which was attended by his widow Amal.

"Say hello to all the martyrs of Gaza, say hello to the leaders, to all Gaza's martyrs, all the Muslims," Amal Haniyeh said as she mourned beside his coffin. Hamas politburo member Izzat al-Rishq called on people to pray for his soul in all mosques around the world. "Let today, Friday, be a day of overwhelming anger denouncing the assassination crime and rejecting the genocide in the Gaza Strip," he said in a statement.

While Israel has not said it carried out the killing, it has announced that an airstrike it mounted last month killed the elusive Hamas military leader Mohammed Deif in Gaza. Hamas has not confirmed nor denied the death of Deif. Hezbollah confirmed on Wednesday that its senior military commander Fuad Shukr had been killed in an Israeli strike on a building in Beirut.

MPs, KP CM discuss rains, floods and relief activities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) parliamentarians and other party leaders from all four regions of the province called on Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur here at Chief Minister's House on Friday. Matters related to public issues, progress on public welfare projects, rehabilitation of infrastructures affected by the recent monsoon rains and flash floods and relief activities were discussed in details during the meetings.

The Chief Minister, while speaking on this occasion, made it clear that the funds have already been allocated to rehabilitate the infrastructures affected by torrential monsoon rains in the province, adding that relief activities and rehabilitation of affected infrastructures and households would be carried out without any delay. He maintained that the losses of rain-affected families would be compensated on the first priority;

district administrations are already working on it and the provincial government is committed to utilize all available resources for this purpose.

Touching upon the developmental strategy of his government, the chief minister said that some 600 development projects near to completion, have been identified across the province which would be completed by December this year. He said that ongoing development projects all over the province would be completed on first priority; necessary directives have already been issued to concerned authorities in this regard. Apart from this, necessary powers related to development projects have also been devolved to the grass root level with the aim to ensure that the development projects are finalized and implemented as per the needs and aspirations of general public at local level. He also urged upon elected public representatives to propose development projects keeping in view the needs and priorities

ties of the people of their respective constituencies, adding that it is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that the money of taxpayers is utilized in a judicious and beneficent manner. "Development projects would be inaugurated only when they are complete in all respects and service delivery is started", he remarked and added that no inauguration shall be done merely for the purpose of putting up one's name plaque.

Moreover, matters related to public gathering proposed on August 5 in Swabi were also discussed in the meetings. The Chief Minister said that it is the first public gathering which is being arranged on the call of Imran Khan. All the party leaders and parliamentarians would have to play proactive role in making the proposed public gathering a success and historic one. Elected public representatives and party leaders also expressed their commitment to go all out to make the public gathering a success story.

Senate body seeks IPPs' audit amid outcry over bills

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat Friday has called for conducting a forensic audit of independent power producers (IPPs) after public outcry over inflated bills.

Pakistanis have been receiving high electricity bills which also include capacity payments being made to the IPPs. The power producers are paid capacity payment regardless of whether they generate electricity or not. Several protests have been staged across the country against high electricity bills, including a sit-in being held by the Jamaat-e-Islami in Rawalpindi.

During the committee meeting, chaired by Senator Rana Mahmood ul Hassan, National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra)

Chairman Waseem Mukhtar briefed the members. The Nepra chairman informed the committee that maintaining a balance between the government, power companies, and consumers is the most difficult task.

"New electricity generation plants will be installed. By October or November, we will open the commercial market and the consumer will be allowed to get electricity from the company of their choice." The Nepra chief said that we have all "made mistakes", adding that there was a power crisis in 2007. In 2013-14, power plants were installed with the help of China.

"We thought the GDP would grow at 6%; in line with this, we added [electricity] to the [national] grid. We went into overcapacity due to our sentiments. Our demand has

come down." He said that due to the power shortage, the government had given incentives to the companies. "...we had given incentives in dollars to the companies setting up the plants, the value of our rupee is not stable, so the investor asked for payment in dollars."

Mukhtar said that the price of electricity would not increase if the government gave confidence to the investors and kept the economic conditions stable. Senator Abdul Qadir said that IPPs made money by overpricing. The IPPs have made a lot of money in 10 years. Forensic audit should be conducted and it should also be closely monitored. The committee's chairman Hasan agreed and said that the forensic audit should be done and noted that there's an outcry over the issue.

Gwadar protesters end sit-in

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) has decided to end its protest in Gwadar, Balochistan's interior minister confirmed on Friday, after the two sides signed a seven-point agreement.

The BYC has been holding protests for almost a week at the Marine Drive in Gwadar and other areas to decry the alleged human rights violations against the people of Balochistan, enforced disappearances, and alleged extrajudicial killings of the Baloch people. "Negotiations between the Baloch Yakjehti Committee and the district administration have been successful and the organisers of the committee have agreed to end their sit-ins across the province,"

Balochistan's Interior Minister Mir Zia Ullah Langov said in a statement.

"I appeal to the people to protest, but do not damage the protest site, attack the forces, or hurt the common people," he said, adding that the government would "not allow anyone to take the law into their hands under the guise of protest." The seven-point agreement, was signed by Gwadar Deputy Commissioner Hamood-dur Rehman and Dr Mahrang.

The statement said that the BYC would end its protest once all the protesters arrested by security forces in Balochistan and Karachi were released. "Protesters who have been sent to jail on judicial remand will be released by August 5 following court proceedings, the agreement

stated. The Balochistan government will be in contact with authorities in Sindh to ensure the release of those arrested therein, the agreement stated, adding that all cases registered against the Raji Muchi (Baloch National Gathering) protesters will be withdrawn.

It, however, noted that cases related to the loss of lives during protests will not be dismissed. "All highways will be reopened as soon as the sit-in ends, two hours after which mobile network will also be restored", the document said. A committee consisting of officials from BYC and the district administration will also be established, while all items confiscated from the protesters by the government will be returned within a week, it stated.



ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi made a surprise visit to Khanna Police Station, where he found the investigating officers absent from their offices, while complainants were present.

The duty sub-inspector was unable to respond to any questions and the front desk room smelled of cigarettes. Around 1500 motorcycles and several cars were parked at the police station.

Mohsin Naqvi expressed displeasure at the deplorable condition of the police station. He visited the front desk, clerk's room, and lock-up and inquired about the cases of the accused in the lockup. He ordered the release of four individuals who were arrested for parking their carts in the wrong place after completing necessary legal proceedings.

The interior minister emphasized that there is no justification for parking such a large number of motorcycles in the police station. The motorcycles belong to citizens and must be returned to them. He directed the immediate hearing of complainants and warned that making them wait unnecessarily would not be tolerated.

Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, was also present on the occasion.

The report showed that over 60,000 complaints were received from women across Punjab, including Lahore. Investigations were ongoing in 4,143 cases, and instructions had been issued to expedite 1,137 cases. The first information reports (FIRs) were registered in 4,083 cases based on women's complaints.

The CM mentioned that Thar has vast coal reserves that could meet the country's energy requirements for hun-

3- ملتان کی سینکڑوں سسٹوں پر (مرد اور عورتیں) امیدوار غریب تیز دماغ سے درخوا میں

(پرنسپل) ایگریکلچر سروسز اکیڈمی
 بلدیاتی اسٹاٹسٹیکل ایجنسی، روڈ نمبر 234
 INF/P/1941/24

Invitation for Bids

For Burns & Plastic Surgery Centre (Burn & Trauma Centre) Peshawar

Under National Competitive Bidding for the year 2024-25.

The office of the Director Burns & Plastic Surgery Centre (Burns & Trauma Centre) Peshawar invites sealed bids under National Competitive Bidding from qualified bidders for procuring the following through **bidding procedures mentioned against each**, as per Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (KPPRA) Procurement Rules 2014, for the financial year 2024-25 onwards.

S.#	Description	Bidding Procedure	Bid Security
1.	Security Services	Single Stage Two Envelope	200,000/-
2.	Hardware Installation with Services (Servers, Networking Active & Passive Equipment)	=	100,000/-
3.	CCTV Security System Up-gradation & Services	Single Stage One Envelope	100,000/-
4.	Maintenance & Services of Elevators	=	50,000/-
5.	Maintenance & Services of Transformers	=	30,000/-
6.	Maintenance & Services Electric Substation	=	30,000/-
7.	Maintenance & Services of Firefighting and Fire Alarm System	=	30,000/-
8.	Purchase of Laboratory Equipment/Chemicals/kits etc.	=	50,000/-

01. For (Serial No. 1) The approved rates will be valid upto **30-06-2027**.
02. For Serial No. 2 to Serial No. 8) The approved rates will remain effective till **30-06-2025**.
03. Bidding documents / TOR scan be obtained from Burns & Plastic Surgery Centre Peshawar in person / representatives during office hours before the Tender opening or downloaded from official website www.btcpk.gov.pk.
04. Pre-bid meeting is arranged on **Monday, 12/08/2024 at 11:00 AM** in Burns & Trauma Centre Peshawar.
05. Bids must be delivered at the address given below at or before 10:30 am on **Tuesday, 20/08/2024**. Tender will be opened in the presence of the bidders or their authorized representatives at **11:30AM** the same day by the Tender Opening Committee.
06. Tender received after due date/time will not be accepted.
07. Only typed tender on original company prescribing letter pad sealed & signed (Every Page) should be submitted with rated quoted in both words & figures. Hand written bids would not be acceptable.
08. The firm must be on FBR Active Tax payer list, taxes will be deducted as per rules. The firms must provide details of NTN#, SalesTax#, IncomeTax#, professional Tax# etc. and exemptions if any.
09. The bidder in case of being a winner, will be bound to ensure the fulfillment of the said order within stipulated period as per supply order, otherwise penalty will be imposed as per Govt. rules.
10. No conditional tender will be acceptable.
11. All firms must be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) where services are rendered as per (KPRA) rules.
12. **Bid Security** as mentioned against each category in the form of CDR shall be submitted in favor of **Director Burn and Trauma Centre Peshawar**.

Note: The competent Authority reserves the right to reject all bids under the rule 47 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (KPPRA) Procurement Rules 2014.

Bid Submission/ Opening
 Burns & Plastic Surgery Centre (Burn and Trauma Centre)
 Hayatabad Peshawar. Tel:091-5830078-82 www.btcpk.gov.pk

DIRECTOR
 Burns & Plastic Surgery Centre
 (Burn & Trauma Centre) Peshawar

(INF/P) 1917/24

[illegible]

PHC restrains govt from coercive action against tobacco company

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A two-member bench of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Shakeel Ahmed and Justice Fazal Subhan, has restrained the provincial government from taking coercive action against Khyber Tobacco Company and has summoned the Advocate

General to clarify certain points of the Finance Act, on Friday. The counsel Babar Khan Yusufzai advocate argued that Khyber Tobacco Company has stated that it pays an annual tax of 4 billion rupees, but the provincial government has imposed a new excise duty on the company, causing difficulties and affecting

investment.

Babar Khan Yusufzai informed the court that the company is already paying various taxes, but the provincial government's actions are creating problems. He requested the court to declare the provincial government's Finance Act 2024, regarding excise duty, as null and void. After initial arguments,

the court restrained the provincial government from taking coercive action against the company and issued notices to the relevant authorities, seeking their response. The court also summoned the Advocate General to assist in the case and ordered the petition to be clubbed with other similar writ petitions.



PESHAWAR: Managing Director Vertex Education Network Pakistan (VENP) Farman Ullah Khan called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi.

Governor lauds VENP role skills development

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Managing Director Vertex Education Network Pakistan (VENP) Farman Ullah Khan met with the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi, at Peshawar, on Friday.

During the meeting, the MD presented a comprehensive report highlighting the achievements of VENP institutions, particularly FIMS and Vertex Institute of Science and Technology, Abbottabad.

These institutions are renowned for their services in technical education in the health sector, producing skilled professionals who serve at national and international levels.

Governor Kundi praised the efforts and achievements of the institutions, emphasizing their positive impact on human resources.

He assured Mr. Khan of his full support and cooperation in advancing national interests through education and technical expertise.

Weather to remain hot, humid

PESHAWAR (APP): Weather is likely to remain hot and humid in most districts of the province, Meteorological Department officials said here Friday.

The officials said that there was a chance of rain with thunder at a few places in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Malakand, Shangla and Kohistan. There is a possibility of rain with thunder and strong winds at some places in Mansehra, Abbottabad, Bunir, Bajaur, Mohmand, Swabi, Charsadda and Peshawar and due to heavy rain, there is a risk of inundation of the low-lying areas of the province, the officials of the Meteorological Department said.

Roads may be affected by landslides in hilly areas and during the last 24 hours, the highest rainfall was 44 mm recorded in Dir Upper. Meteorological Department officials said.

Billion Tree Plus Campaign WSSP launches monsoon plantation drive

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) has kicked off the monsoon plantation campaign as part of the provincial government's Billion Tree Plus initiative. The campaign was formally inaugurated by the Chairman of Peshawar District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) and Member of the Provincial Assembly, Sher Ali Afridi, who planted saplings alongside Secretary Local Government Muhammad Daud Khan and Commissioner Peshawar Captain (Retd) Sarfraz Salim Akram, Chief Conservator Forests Kashif Baloch, WSSP GM PMER Syed Zameer ul Hassan, GM Operations Muhammad Ijaz, CFO Haider Ali, CIA Mian Asif Shah, WSSP Management, district administration, and other WSSP officials. In the first phase of the plantation, approximately 3,000 fruit and non-fruit sapling will be planted at dumping sites, transfer stations, and other loca-

tions. The Forest Department has supplied 1,900 saplings for the first phase, and WSSP has procured hundreds more from its resources. Commissioner Peshawar has set a target of planting 50,000 sapling for WSSP. Management officials and staff are actively participating in the plantation drive.

Addressing the ceremony, DDAC Chairman Sher Ali Afridi stated that following the Chief Minister's directives, all departments have been assigned tree planting targets. To combat the effects of climate change, we must plant as many trees as possible. The government is aware of the importance of plantation and is focused on planting more sapling under the Billion Tree Plus campaign to tackle climate change effects.

Secretary Local Government Muhammad Daud Khan emphasized that planting more trees is the most effective way to combat climate change. Instructions have been issued to all TMAs across the province, and local government departments are mobilized for plantation efforts.

Despite resource constraints, the set targets will be achieved. He urged the public to participate in the campaign by planting saplings, stating that if everyone contributes, the targets will be met ahead of schedule. Commissioner Peshawar/ CEO WSSP Riaz Mahsud highlighted the need to make optimal use of available resources and seize the opportunity presented by the plantation campaign.

Environmental changes are occurring, and we are facing challenges like glacial melt (GLOF) due to climate shifts. Actions are being taken to address these challenges. He noted that future generations will face water and flood challenges, which necessitates planting more saplings. He instructed deputy commissioners of Peshawar Division to monitor departmental plantation efforts and send daily reports.

Chief Conservator Kashif Baloch stated that under the provincial government's monsoon directives, millions of saplings are being planted to increase forest area, and the plantation campaign is ongoing across the province.

KP Govt adopts zero tolerance policy against corruption: Saif

PESHAWAR (APP): Adviser to the Chief Minister for Information, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif here Friday said that KP Government has adopted a zero tolerance policy against corruption and strict action would be taken against corrupt and commission mafia.

Addressing a press conference along with Communication

Works Department's Minister Shakeel Khan here at press club, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif said that the concerned ministers and departments would be held responsible in case of any report about financial irregularity or corruption. He urged people and journalists to identify corruption and financial irregularity so that strict

action would be taken against the responsible officials.

Provincial Minister for Communication and Works Department Shakeel Khan said that corruption was unacceptable and Secretary C & W was removed as he was not satisfied with him.

"We are accountable to people and every minister would present his per-

formance report to the PTI founder," he said, adding the Federal Govt has been requested to transfer Chief Secretary KP and the decision in this regard was awaited.

Shakeel Khan said he recently met with the PTI founder in Adaila Jail who clearly instructed to pass his message of zero tolerance against corruption to all.



PESHAWAR: A vendor picks red roses to create bouquets at Fawara Chowk. — APP photo

Zalmi Foundation and Commonwealth launch 'Peace at the Crease' initiative in Pakistan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Zalmi Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat today launched the 'Peace at the Crease' initiative in Islamabad, Pakistan.

The joint initiative uses the unique power of sport to bring young people from different backgrounds together for the promotion of Commonwealth values, such as peace, tolerance and equality.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC, Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashood and COO Peshawar Zalmi Mian Abbas Layaq were attended at the launch event.

Last year, Zalmi Foundation Chairman Mr. Javed Afridi met Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland

in London in connection with the Commonwealth Year of Youth celebrations and discussed the Peace at the Crease initiative.

The Peace at the Crease initiative of the Zalmi Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat has been officially launched in Pakistan. Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland and Prime Minister's Youth Programme Chairman Rana Mashood were also present at the event.

Speaking on the occasion, Zalmi Foundation Chief Operating Officer Mian Abbas Layaq welcomed the distinguished guests, including Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland and Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashood as well as other dignitaries. Zalmi Foundation



Chairman Javed Afridi and Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland met at the Commonwealth headquarters in London for the Peace at the Crease programme, which aims to spread the message of peace through sports and empowering young people.

Now it has been launched in Pakistan. The launch coincided with the visit of Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland to Pakistan.

Speaking at the launch event, Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia

Scotland said she was delighted to be in Pakistan. This joint initiative of the Zalmi Foundation and the Commonwealth will create programmes for youth in Pakistan in sports as well as other fields of life. Through this initiative,

the message of peace will be promoted and opportunities for the youth to move forward will be created. The initiative will also focus on women's empowerment in Pakistan through sport.

Rana Mashood Ahmed Khan, Chairman of the

Prime Minister's Youth Programme, said that it was a pleasure to work with the Zalmi Foundation for the Commonwealth's Peace at the Crease initiative. He hoped to working together with the two organisations for the betterment of youth in Pakistan. He added that the Government of Pakistan is already providing opportunities to youth through the Prime Minister's Youth Programme.

In his message, Javed Afridi, Chairman of Peshawar Zalmi and Zalmi Foundation, welcomed Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland to Pakistan. He said it was an honour for the Zalmi Foundation to be associated with the Commonwealth and jointly launching the 'Peace at the Crease' initiative.

Zalmi Foundation Chairman Javed Afridi

met Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland in September last year.

The meeting was held at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London in connection with the Commonwealth Youth Celebration Year celebrations and discussed the Peace at the Crease programme.

The Zalmi Foundation and the Commonwealth will continue this initiative in the future.

The Zalmi Foundation is affiliated with the Commonwealth and works with the Commonwealth and the UNHCR in Pakistan on education, health, and youth programs. The Zalmi Foundation has in the past also worked with UNHCR to uplift communities and now we are looking forward to collaborating with the Commonwealth on various projects.



In brief

Tree plantation drive kicks off F.P. Report

BUNER: TMO Zahoor Tehsil Municipal Administration Daggar, ADC Syed Akram Shah, Assistant Commissioner Daggar Mir Ali Shah and SDFO Syed Rahim Khan from Sub Division Forest Department, Daggar and TMA Daggar Assistant Sadaqat Khan contributing to the Monsoon Plantation Campaign, planted saplings at Sang e Mur Mur Chowk, TMA Car Parking, Government Sentinel Model High School, and Al Khair Public School and College. In this campaign, TMA District Administration Sub-Division The teachers and students of Ahlkar schools of the Daggar administration Forest Department actively participated and raised the slogan of "Har Bashar two Shajjar, for happy environment, clean water and fresh tourism promotion and making the dream of a clean and green Pakistan come true. On this occasion, TMO, ADC, AC, SDFO and Assistant Sadaqat and others have given a message to the public through the media to plant two or four plants in their homes and add their love to motherland by turning Pakistan clean and green.

MNA visits Bannu highway F.P. Report

KOHAT: Former Interior Minister and Member of National Assembly Shehryar Afridi along with the Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Mutasim Billah Shah and Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram paid a surprise visit to Bannu Road Highway on public complaints where they found sub-standard work and poor materials at various places during the inspection. Shahryar Afridi on this occasion expressed his anger over the substandard work and directed Commissioner Kohat and Deputy Commissioner Kohat to take strict legal action against those who used the substandard materials. He said that he didn't believe on corruption and commission and will not allow anyone to do it. He declared that he will not allow anyone to misuse the national exchequer.

Blood donation camp arranged Fazal Haq

MARDAN: Regarding Police Martyrs' Day, a blood donation camp was organized to pay tribute to the martyrs of the police and their eternal sacrifices in the police line on Friday. The Blood Donation Camp was inaugurated by RPO Mardan Region Najib ur Rehman, on this occasion DPO Zahoor Babar Afridi, DHO Mardan Dr. Javed Iqbal, Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Zahir Shah, President of Mardan Press Club Bashir Adil, Senior Journalist Musrat Khan Aasi, ADC Saeedullah Jan, EPI Coordinator Dr. Imtiaz, and other police officers along with media representatives, businessmen and doctors were also present. In the blood donation camp, business community, journalist community, police officers and officials including doctors and public donated blood were also present. RPO Mardan Region Najib ur Rahman expressed his views on this occasion and said that there is no substitute for the sacrifices of police martyrs. They are always ready to make any kind of sacrifice. DPO Mardan Zahoor Babar Afridi expressed his views and said that the eternal sacrifices of police martyrs cannot be forgotten.

Rescue operation continues in Chitral region amid flooding

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Frontier Corps North on Friday continued rescue operation in remote areas of Chitral after severe flooding hit the region.

According to a report, due to heavy rains and floods, Yarkhun Valley of Chitral was cut off from Mastuj. Losses have also been also reported in Arsun and Kalash. Crops, shops and many houses were washed away due to severe floods. Frontier Corps North is shifting the people to safer places.

Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said on

Friday that torrential rains might generate flash flooding in local nullahs and streams of Murree, Galliyat, Mansehra, Kohistan, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Shangla, Bunner, Bannu, Kurrum, Waziristan, Dera Ismail Khan, Orakzai, Khyber, Mohmand, Nowshera, Swabi, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Northeast Punjab, Hill torrents of D.G Khan and Kashmir.

According to PMD statement, the stormy rains are also likely to cause flash flooding in Kalat, Khuzdar, Barkhan, Lasbella, Zhob, Loralai,

Sibbi, Harnai, Awaran, Kohlu, Dera Bugti, Jhal Magsi, Naseerabad, Musa Khel and Jaffarabad. Heavy Downpour may cause urban flooding in low lying areas of Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Lahore, Sheikhupura, Kasur, Sialkot, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Multan, Sahiwal, Nowshera and Peshawar from 02nd and 03rd August and low lying areas of Sindh. Landslides may cause roads closure at the vulnerable hilly areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Murree, Galliyat, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan during the wet period.

Elements imposed on Hub had turned City into ruins

F.P. Report

HUB: For more than four decades, anti-people elements imposed on Hub had turned Hub city into ruins. Those self-interested elements have always robbed the people's rights and worked for their personal interests.

These views were expressed by senior leader of Pakistan Peoples Party, Spokesman of President Asif Ali Zardari, elected member from Hub of Provincial Assembly and Advisor for Industries and Crafts Balochistan Mir Ali Hassan Zehri while talking to a delegation of public representatives from Hub. He said that the city has started to change and shine has begun.

The credit for this goes to the people of Hub who defeated the occupying mafia for many decades. He said that the so-called representatives imposed for forty years were responsible for the backwardness of Hub, who had pushed Hub into the Stone Age.

They did not pay any attention to the development work due to which Hub district could not develop that which was its right. There was no health facility here nor did the

condition of the schools improve. He said that Allah made us leaders and gave us the courage to fulfill our promises made to the people of Hub, due to which the development of Hub was not possible. The execution of works is going on rapidly.

On this occasion, the elders and citizens included in the delegation paid tribute to the efforts of Mir Ali Hassan Zehri and said that the people are very happy and satisfied with the way the development works are being done in the hub city. Repairing of streets tiles, construction of roads, supply of clean drinking water and basic facilities like health and education including drainage have never been done. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri not only provided government schemes for the hub but also took steps to provide necessary facilities in many areas at his own expense.

Provincial Advisor for Industries and Crafts Balochistan Mir Ali Hassan Zehri while talking to the delegation said that the development and prosperity of the people is our motto and the work we are doing is our duty. People have trusted us and we will try our best to fulfill the

expectations of our people. All the projects that we have started or the projects that have been completed are for our own people. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that better education, training center, sports complex and better providing employment is our first priority and soon the youth of Hub will hear the good news in this regard.

He further said that we are trying to provide facilities to the public as much as possible.

They are the needs of the area and these projects will change the fate of the area. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that the elements responsible for the destruction of the so-called and rejected people do not want development and prosperity in the area, and like the past the want, these areas will remain backward in the future, but now, Insha Allah, this malicious desire of theirs will never be fulfilled. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri assured that he will work day and night for the interests of the people of Hub to solve their problems, regardless of color, race and religion, and to give the people of Hub their legitimate rights and Provision of resources will be the first priority.



ABBOTTABAD: Commissioner Hazara Division, Syed Zaheer Islam presenting bouquet to KP Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry.

DC visits rain hit areas of Hafizabad

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Sundas Irshad visited different areas of the city after rain to review drainage of rain water and cleanliness of sewerage drains. ADCG/ Administrator Municipal Committee Haamadullah, AC Munawar Hussain, Chief Officer MC Ansar Sahi and other concerned officers were also accompanied by DC.

DC visited disposal works and directed the Municipal Officer to use all machinery for disposal of rain water from low lying areas at earliest so that movement and business of people would not be suffered. Administrator MC Hammadullah informed the DC that all sanitary workers are present in field to ensure disposal of rain water and cleanliness and all kind of available machinery is being utilized for improving dis-

posal of rain water.

Meanwhile, Government Girls High School Kalianwala won Chief Minister's Azadi Cup Girls Hockey arranged by the Education Department and District Administration Hafizabad.

According to details, final match of the tournament played between government girls high school Kalianwala and girls higher secondary school Vaneki Tarar. Team of kaliaanwala school defeated team of higher secondary school Vaneki Tarar by two goals while team of girls higher secondary school Vaneki Tarar could not secure goal. The final match was played at the ground of government boys high school No. 1 Hafizabad.

Chief Officer Education Muhammad Anwar Javed, AC Munawar Hussain and DO sports were chief guest of the final match. Heads of girls schools, teachers, female players and students

also present on this occasion.

Chief Minister Punjab Maryum Nawaz Sharif is committed to ensure provision of health facilities to the people at their doorsteps and different steps are being taken in this regard. This was stated by the Member Punjab Assembly Mian Shahid Hussain Bhatti while visiting DHQ hospital Hafizabad. Chief Officer Health Dr. Umer Sharif Rathore, MS Dr. Maqsood Zafar Mann and prominent social worker Ch. Sijjad Zahor Mutmal were also accompanied by him.

Mian Shahid Hussain Bhatti checked diffident department of the DHQ hospital including medical ward and inquire after health of patients admitted in the hospital. He directed the health officers to send report to Secretary Health Punjab about fault of digital X-Ray machine to make functional the machine.



ABBOTTABAD: Inspector General of Police, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhtar Hayat Khan inaugurating Madadgar 15 at Police Lines.

Three die as van falls in gorge F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Three people died and four others were injured when a van plunged into deep ravine here on Friday.

According to details, the accident took place in Tandara near Sherwan area of Abbottabad where a van with seven people on board skidded off road due to failure of brakes and fell into deep gorge. As a result of accident, three people died on the spot while four others were injured. The rescue teams reached the scene and shifted the bodies and injured to hospital.

Two girls shot dead in Larkana F.P. Report

LARKANA: In a tragic incident, two girls shot dead over a domestic dispute in the premises of Rehmat Pur police station in Larkana.

As per details, the police spokesperson said that the incident occurred in Larkana when unknown armed assailants went inside a house and opened fire. The police officials said that the firing resulted in the death of two girls identified as 19-year-old Hafeezan and 17-year-old Farah, whereas one sustained injuries.

Earlier an incident was reported from Swat where a mother with her three daughters found dead in a house located at Dewlai area. According to police reports, the bodies had been lying in the house for three to four days before being found.

The police, along with local residents, had to break into the house to recover the bodies.

Meanwhile, the police officials disclosed that the victim's husband, identified as Sardar Ali, currently residing in Saudi Arabia returned to Pakistan a few days prior to the incident. Shockingly, Sardar Ali called the police from Saudi Arabia and confessed to the murders of his wife and daughters. Authorities are coordinating with international agencies to pursue legal action against the accused and ensure justice for the victims.

DC holds public day F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: On the direction of the Chief Minister KP, district administration, Khyber initiated a public day in the office of Assistant Commissioner, Landi Kotal on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner, Khyber Capt (Retd) Sanaullah Khan flanked by Additional DC (General) Ihsanullah, Additional DC (Relief) Nauman Ali Shah, AC, Landi Kotal Adnan Mumtaz, Tehsil Chairman Haji Shah Khalid attended it. Scores of applicants from across the tehsil called on the district administrative officer and apprised him of their problems.

The complainants lodged their complaint against poor performance of health, education departments and lack of link roads, electricity, sports etc. facilities in their localities. They also expressed their due concern over the deteriorated law and order situation in Landi Kotal and asked him for necessary steps to restore it.

Traffic disruptions torment citizens in Quetta

QUETTA (PPI): Roads leading to the Red Zone in Quetta have been blocked for the seventh consecutive day, causing major traffic disruptions throughout the city.

According to a media report on Friday, authorities have used containers and barbed wires to block access points as a precaution for a planned protest sit-in by the Baloch Yekjehti Committee.

Key areas affected include GPO Chowk, Khatm-e-Nabuwat Chowk, Anscomb Road Chowk, and Hockey Chowk. Roads, leading to red zone have been blocked with contain-

ers and barbed wires. Hockey Chowk, which had been designated as a place for protest demonstration, has also been sealed.

The imminent protest sit-in of Baloch Yekjehti Committee in Red Zone area of Quetta led the district administration to close all roads. The protest sit-in near University of Balochistan is causing traffic jam at Sariab Road. The protest sit-in was also observed at Serena Chowk area of Quetta, creating traffic jam problems at Zarghoon Road, Balochistan provincial assembly road and Jinnah Road. Similarly, workers of

Baloch Yekjehti Committee blocked highways and roads in Panjgur, Chagai, Dalbandin, Turbat, Hub, Khuzdar and Kalat.

For last some days, Quetta has been crippled by severe traffic disruptions due to ongoing protests and roadblocks. The city's Red Zone, a high-security area encompassing key government buildings and diplomatic missions, remains barricaded with containers and barbed wire, affecting major thoroughfares and causing significant gridlock. The unrest began as the Baloch Yekjehti Committee geared for peaceful protest.

Minister orders finalisation of arragemenets for Urs

F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: Provincial Minister for Culture and Tourism Sindh Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah Bukhari directed all concerned officials to make complete arrangements for the annual 281st Urs of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, which is attended by a large number of devotees every year. He said that all possible facilities should be provided to the devotees during Urs.

The minister issued these directions while chairing a meeting regarding the arrangements for the 281st annual Urs of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai at Rest House Bhitt Shah. The provincial minister directed the HESCO administration to avoid load shedding during the Urs days so that the devotees do not face any difficulties. The meeting also discussed security, facili-

ties, and other issues related to the annual Urs.

Talking to the media, the provincial minister said that all lined departments are alert to provide better facilities to the devotees during the Urs. He said that there are many complaints of load shading related to WAPDA, and in this regard, HESCO officers have been strictly directed to avoid load shading during the Urs.

In response to a question, he said that the Latif Award is given on the basis of merit, and the committee decides it. On the occasion the Commissioner Hyderabad, in his briefing, said that a review meeting was held regarding the arrangements, in which all relevant departments were directed to prepare a contingency plan.

While giving his briefing the Deputy Commissioner Matiari Muhammad Yusuf Shaikh, said that all depart-

ment's officials are in close co ordination to him and special arrangements have been made for all the events of Urs Mubarak. He said that the Health Department will set up medical camps where doctors and paramedical staff will be present at all times, and portable washrooms will be arranged for the convenience of the devotees.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Culture Khair Muhammad Kalwar, Commissioner Hyderabad Bilal Memon, Deputy Commissioner Matiari Muhammad Yusuf Shaikh, DIG Tarique Razzaq Dharejo, Chief Administrator Auqaf Syed Attaullah Shah, Director Information Hyderabad Irshad Ali Chandio, Chairman Town Committee Bhitt Shah Sajjada Nashin Dargah Shah Latif Syed Khawar Shah and SSP Matiari Syed Asghar Ali Shah.

DC Kohat chairs CM KP Awami Agenda program

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram has sternly directed the heads of all government departments to ensure strict implementation of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister's Program "Awami Agenda" and ensure that every department does its work within the prescribed deadline.

He gave these instructions while presiding over a special meeting on implementation of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister's Program "Awami Agenda" in his office. The meeting beside the Additional Deputy

Commissioner Kohat Hamid Iqbal and Assistant Commissioners was also attended by the Heads of all government departments.

In the meeting, each department was assigned a task with a deadline and asked to submit the implementation report well in time. The Deputy Commissioner declared that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is personally monitoring the program and the Administrative Secretaries have also been given the task of monitoring the work of their respective departments. The Deputy

Commissioner said that available resources should be used at the earliest and submit a need assessment report for the required resources so that it can be taken up at the appropriate forum. Abdul Akram said that the task of monitoring and implementing this Program of the Chief Minister at the district level has been assigned to the Deputy Commissioners of the respective districts. He warned that any kind of negligence on the public agenda program will not be tolerated anyway and those who do not fulfill their task will be dealt with strictly.

BISP begins fresh survey

SARGODHA (INP): The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) regional office Sargodha declared that all households that underwent the Benazir survey in the years 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019 up to January 2023, or those who have not been surveyed yet, are now eligible for the Benazir dynamic survey.

A comprehensive biometric survey for these households is set to be conducted once again. For women, who have already been surveyed after February 2023, are exempted from the survey and would be considered on the basis of that survey.

According to BISP

Deputy Director Sargodha Raazia Yasmin, the BISP offices across the district would remain open from 08:30AM to 4:00PM from Monday to Saturday to facilitate the beneficiaries, and there would be no fee for survey registration.

Raazia said that for registration for the survey, a household member aged 18 or above was required to complete a specific form and they should visit the nearest BISP office, and bring with them an electricity or gas bill. The survey aims to promptly determine the eligibility of the households.

People were further advised that the government

had outlined various facilities such as health cards, ration subsidies, as well as subsidies on electricity and gas bills, which would be determined on the basis of information gathered in the survey and every household could take part in the survey.

FESCO employee tortured by citizen annoyed over inflated bill: A citizen annoyed over inflated electricity bill brutally tortured an employee of Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO).

According to details, a FESCO employee visited the residence of a consumer in Mela Town of Sargodha to handover the electricity bill.



Curfew imposed in Nigerian state after ‘hunger’ protest

LAGOS (BBC): A curfew has been imposed in Nigeria's second-biggest state, Kano, after protests against the high cost of living were "hijacked by thugs" who engaged in widespread looting and the destruction of property, the governor's office has said. Kano saw the largest crowds on the first day of nationwide protests that forced many businesses to shut. Demonstrators in all major cities took to the streets, chanting slogans such as: "We are hungry." Police fired live bullets and tear gas - and sprayed hot water - to try and disperse thousands of demonstrators in Kano city. Four people were wounded, and taken to hospital. Protesters had earlier set alight tyres to make a bonfire in front of the house of state governor Abba Kabir Yusuf. Looters also broke into a warehouse near his house and people were seen carrying away 25-litre cartons of vegetable cooking oil and mattresses. The curfew effectively bars protests from continuing, with all residents expected to remain at home. The last census in Nigeria, in 2006, put Kano state's population at 9.4 million, with unofficial estimates putting its current population at around 20 million. The protests - called for 10 days - have been organised via social

media and inspired by the recent success of protesters in Kenya who forced the government to scrap plans to increase taxes. Mr Yusuf's spokesman said the protests were peaceful in Kano, but the governor was forced to declare a curfew to "restore order and ensure the safety of our communities" because of "rampant looting, destruction of property and violence" unleashed by "thugs". A court ordered that protesters in the capital, Abuja, keep to the National stadium, which is located on the city's outskirts. But after gathering at the stadium's gate, the demonstrators - who have also been shouting the refrain "End bad governance" - began heading into the city centre. This prompted police to fire tear-gas canisters to try and stop the procession, which affected traffic. The security forces were deployed at strategic locations within the capital, where even banks are closed, and in surrounding towns. In Lagos, Nigeria's economic hub, protesters shouted "ole", meaning "thief" in the Yoruba language - in reference to President Bola Tinubu and his government. Many are angered by President Tinubu's removal of a subsidy on fuel - announced with immediate effect during his inauguration speech

in May 2023. It was aimed at cutting government expenditure, but sent pump prices soaring with a ripple effect on other goods. "Top on our demand is the subsidy removal. The government should reverse that decision," Abuja protester Abiodun Sanusi told the BBC. They also want the government to carry out wide-ranging reforms to the country's electoral system and the judiciary. Before this so-called "day of rage", the government appealed to Nigerians not to take to the streets and give the president time for policies to bear fruit. But Lagos protester Kingsley Uadiale dismissed this saying, "Hunger is the reason why we're all here. You can't beat a baby and ask the baby not to cry." If the Tinubu administration wanted patience then, he said, they should lead by example. "You can't tell us to be patient and you're acquiring a private jet," he said, citing plans to buy new planes worth millions of dollars for Mr Tinubu and his deputy Kashim Shettima. Dabiraoluwa Adeyinka, an activist also protesting in Lagos, said the aim of the demonstration was to get the price hikes on essential commodities reversed. "If they don't yield, we will continue to protest," she told the BBC.

Big Sudan camp pushed into famine

KHARTOUM (BBC): The civil war in Sudan has pushed a camp housing about 500,000 displaced people near the besieged Darfur city of el-Fasher into famine, an independent group of food security experts says. The 16-month conflict and restrictions on aid deliveries were to blame, the Famine Review Committee (FRC) concluded after looking at new data. "The scale of devastation brought by the escalating violence in el-Fasher is profound and harrowing," it said, explaining how Zamzam camp's population had ballooned since April. The war - a power struggle between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) - has created the world's largest humanitarian crisis forcing 10 million people from their homes. It comes as US-mediated talks, scheduled to begin in two weeks, appear to be in jeopardy. The RSF has accepted the invitation to Geneva, but it is unclear whether the army will go following alleged assassination attempt on military leader Gen Abdel Fattah el-Burhan. "The main drivers of famine in Zamzam camp are conflict and lack of humanitarian access, both of which can immediately be rectified with the necessary political will," the FRC said. The committee, linked to the Integrated Food Security

Phase Classification (IPC) - a global initiative by UN agencies, aid groups and governments which identifies famine conditions - analysed two reports: Fewer Net said it was possible that famine was also ongoing in Abu Shouk and Al Salam camps, also near el-Fasher, but there was not enough evidence to conclusively say so. The conditions for classifying an area to be in famine are that at least 20% of households must be facing an extreme lack of food, with 30% of children acutely malnourished and two people out of every 10,000 dying daily from starvation or from malnutrition and disease. Since April the RSF has been battling to take el-Fasher from the army, the only city still under military control in the western region of Darfur. According to the FRC, around 320,000 people are believed to have fled the city, with around 150,000 to 200,000 moving to Zamzam camp "in search of security, basic services and food" in just a few weeks in May. That month the UN expert on genocide prevention said many civilians in el-Fasher were being targeted based on their ethnicity - warning that there was a growing risk of genocide. The violence in Darfur is similar to the ethnic cleansing unleashed by Arab Janjaweed militias on non-Arab communities two

decades ago. The main market in Zamzam camp was now only open intermittently and by June prices had rocketed - by 63% for cooking oil, 190% for sugar, 67% for millet and 75% for rice, the FRC said, giving a glimpse in its 47-page report into what conditions are like in the crowded camp. Famine conditions prevailed in June and July and were likely to persist until October - the harvest season. However, the experts fear that the hunger crisis will not ease much as war has prevented many farmers from planting. The dire situation revealed by the reports about el-Fasher, particularly in Zamzam camp, was "merely the tip of the iceberg", Barrett Alexander, from the aid agency Mercy Corps, warned. "Drawing from our experience with previous famines, we know that widespread deaths have already occurred by the time a famine is officially declared." He added that a recent Mercy Corps assessment in Central and South Darfur had revealed that nine out of 10 children were suffering from life-threatening malnutrition. One of the last aid groups operating in el-Fasher, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), said things were likely to get worse if an apparent blockade on humanitarian aid was not lifted urgently.

16 people killed in Nigeria bombing

ABUJA (AP): A bomb exploded in a roadside market in Nigeria's Borno state killing at least 16 people and wounding dozens of others, police said. The government imposed a 24-hour curfew after the bombing attack, the second in recent weeks. The attack happened at a teashop that hosts mostly locals in Kawori, a rural community in the Konduga area, some 50 kilometers (31 miles) from the state capital Maiduguri, according to local media reports. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack but analysts and some local officials suspected the Islamic militant group Boko Haram, which has since 2009 waged an insurgency in Nigeria and neighboring countries in the Lake Chad region. "This latest bomb explosion targeting civilians is a stark reminder of the continued threat posed by Boko Haram, especially as it is coming after a triple suicide attack" in Gwoza in the southern part of the

state, said Malik Samuel, a researcher on the Lake Chad conflict at the Institute for Security Studies. Local police said the bomb used in Kawori was an improvised explosive device that was planted in the cafe, not a suicide attack. The police said 16 people were killed but did not give a definitive number of other victims who they said were "critically injured" and undergoing treatment in hospitals around the state. The state emergency management agency said about 24 people were seriously injured. Following the attack, young people in the state capital Maiduguri poured onto the streets to join the nationwide protests against Nigeria's worsening cost-of-living crisis, and the police fired tear-gas to disperse them. A spokesperson for the police, Nahum Kenneth Daso, said a 24-hour curfew imposed by the state government was "expedient" to restore order. The insurgency by Boko Haram and its splin-

ter group the Islamic State West Africa Province has created a humanitarian disaster in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad, with more than 35,000 people killed and 2.6 million others displaced over the last 15 years. The groups want to install an Islamic state across the four countries but mainly in Nigeria. West Africa's oil giant of more than 200 million people divided almost equally between a mainly Christian south and a predominantly Muslim north. The Nigerian government has claimed progress against the insurgency, but Boko Haram and ISWAP continue to attack civilians and have expanded into other regions, including central Nigeria where the capital Abuja is located, according to experts and public records on counterterrorism. "Hardly does a day pass without a Boko Haram incident against civilians, particularly in Borno State, but they go unreported because of lack of access to many areas," Samuel said.

India rescue operations speed up with new metal bridge

CHOOALMALA, India (Reuters): The search for survivors and bodies after devastating landslides in Kerala is expected to speed up on Friday, after the army completed construction of a bridge that will help in transportation of heavy equipment to the affected area.

Heavy rain in the southern coastal state of Kerala, one of India's most popular tourist destinations, caused landslides in the hills of Wayanad district, sending torrents of mud, water and tumbling boulders downhill and burying or sweeping people to their deaths as they slept. Rescue efforts were hampered initially after the worst affected area was cut off from the nearest town of Chooralmala as the main bridge was washed away. Heavy vehicles had begun to ply on the 190-foot (58-metre) bridge constructed by army engineers, and drones with earth-sensing technology to find bodies buried in mud are being brought in, the army said in a statement. Rescue teams have deployed additional forces, including swimming experts, to focus on the Chaliyar river and its river banks where bodies are likely to be found. The hope for finding survivors in the debris is low and authorities said they are most likely to only retrieve bodies. However, finding survivors has not been ruled out. The disaster, the worst in Kerala since deadly floods in 2018, has led to the death of 189 people with 206 still missing, according to officials. Local Asianet TV said 292 had been killed.

Experts said the area had received heavy rain in the last two weeks that softened the soil before extremely heavy rainfall on Monday triggered the landslides. Nearly 1,600 people have been rescued from hillside villages and tea and cardamom estates during the last two days, according to authorities, with nearly 350 buildings damaged.

US border migrant crossings fall

NEW YORK (BBC): The number of unlawful crossings by migrants at the US southern border has dropped for the fifth consecutive month, according to official data. US Border Patrol agents apprehended around 57,000 migrants along the border in July - the lowest recorded since September 2020. The numbers are down significantly from December, when around 250,000 migrants were caught crossing the border. President Joe Biden's administration has credited the decrease to recent actions by him to tackle illegal immigration into the US, an election-year political vulnerability for the Democrats. "This is the product of a number of actions this administration has taken," said Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas in an interview with CBS this week. Mr Mayorkas said those actions include an executive order signed last month by President Joe Biden that allows US immigration officials to deport migrants without processing their asylum claims. The measure has been called one of the most restrictive border policies by a Democratic president in recent times, and was criticised by left-wing members of the party.

At the time, the president vowed that his executive order would "help us gain control of our border". He added that "doing nothing is not an option". Government data shows that the number of migrants stopped at the US-Mexico border had dropped even before the order. Border Patrol recorded 141,000 apprehensions in February, 137,000 in March, 129,000 in April, 118,000 in May and 84,000 in June. The figures do not include official border crossings, where the Biden administration has been processing around 1,500 migrants each day through a smart-phone app that schedules appointments between migrants and US border agents.



CHOOALMALA: Search operations are carried out after landslides hit Mundakkai village in Wayanad district in southern state of Kerala, India.

Overwhelming evidence Venezuela opposition won election: Blinken

WASHINGTON (BBC): The US secretary of state has said there was "overwhelming evidence" Venezuela's opposition won the recent presidential election. In a statement Antony Blinken said it was clear Edmundo González, had won the most votes - despite incumbent president Nicolás Maduro declaring a disputed victory. "Given the overwhelming evidence, it is clear to the United States and, most importantly, to the Venezuelan people that Edmundo González Urrutia won the most votes in Venezuela's 28 July presidential election," Mr Blinken said. His intervention comes as the presidents of Brazil, Mexico and Colombia all called on Venezuela to release the full details of last Sunday's election. Last Sunday, the electoral council, which is government-controlled, announced President Maduro had won the election for a third term. But this was immediately disputed by the opposition who said, with access to the majority of receipts from electronic voting machines around the country, it was false. The opposition has said

its own vote tally shows it won the election by a wide margin. Opinion polls ahead of the election had suggested a clear victory for the challenger. President Maduro has previously accused foreign governments of interfering in the election. He has strongly denied electoral fraud and has said the opposition has instigated a coup by disputing the result. The announcement of President Maduro's victory set off deadly protests in Caracas. It has also attracted global criticism, with many governments around the world demanding the Venezuelan government release proof of the result. The result has been recognised by Venezuelan allies China, Russia and Iran. But, the US, European Union and other G7 countries have called on President Maduro's government to release detailed voting data. Posting on social media, Mr Blinken said: "Electoral data overwhelmingly demonstrate the will of the Venezuelan people: democratic opposition candidate Edmundo González won the most votes in Sunday's election. Venezuelans have voted, and their votes must count."

The intervention by Mr Blinken is significant. After the last election in 2018 was widely dismissed as neither free nor fair, countries including the US decided to recognise the then-opposition leader Juan Guaido as interim president and imposed sanctions on Venezuela. Mr Blinken said it was "time for the Venezuelan parties to begin discussions on a respectful, peaceful transition in accordance with Venezuelan electoral law and the wishes of the Venezuelan people". Opposition leader María Corina Machado, who says she is in hiding, has called for mass demonstrations on Saturday. Speaking to the Wall Street Journal, Ms Machado said Mr Maduro did not win the election. She claimed her party's candidate, Mr Gonzalez, won by a landslide and Ms Machado said she could prove this because she had receipts from more than 80% of polling stations. Ms Machado appealed for help, saying it was now up to the international community to decide whether to tolerate what she called an illegitimate government.

After 2,043 days in a Russian prison, Paul Whelan finally heads home

MOSCOW (BBC): Paul Whelan must have doubted this moment was ever going to come. It has been 2,043 days since Federal Security Service (FSB) agents in balacavas burst into his Moscow hotel room, pinned him to the ground and announced he was being arrested for espionage. I followed Mr Whelan's case closely in Moscow from the very start and remember the day he first arrived in court looking more like a dazed librarian than a dastardly intelligence agent. His hands were cuffed and he was cradling a cardboard box containing his prison lunch. He was too nervous to say much, at first, and I found out later he was being interrogated and threatened. As time passed Mr Whelan found his voice and began to denounce his jailing, loudly. Russia thinks it has caught James Bond, in how he put it one day, but in fact it got Mr Bean on holiday. After he was sentenced to 16 years, we spoke at length by phone from prison - Mr Whelan always insisted on his innocence. Born in Canada to British parents with Irish roots, he is a citizen of four countries - which

made his arrest a big deal diplomatically. Long before any trial, Russia's foreign minister claimed Mr Whelan had been caught "red handed" committing espionage. The court later heard he had been trying to get secret information from a friend - actually an FSB intelligence agent. But no evidence was ever made public. Mr Whelan, a former US Marine, was a fan of Russia and had visited several times. When he was arrested, he was in Moscow for the wedding of an American friend to a Russian woman and had spent the morning leading the guests around the Kremlin, including the locals. After his detention, I scoured his social media accounts for any contacts or clues. Some people were too nervous to talk, given the serious charge. But, all those who agreed to speak laughed at the idea that their friend could be involved in espionage. "If he's a spy," one of them wrote to me, with multiple exclamation marks, "then I'm Michael Jackson". For a long time, Mr Whelan was relentlessly upbeat about his fate. He was convinced the US government would get him out, even as

relations between Russia and the West slid from awful to much worse. Conditions in his prison camp, IK 17, were tough, locked up with "child rapists and murderers" as he once put it. He studied Russian - even Tajik - wrote letters, read spy novels. The rest of his time was spent sewing clothes in a prison workshop and the nights were interrupted, regularly, by the guards. They would shine a torch in his face to check he had not escaped. Despite all that, Mr Whelan told me he made a habit of singing his four national anthems out loud each morning - to annoy those guards and to keep his spirits up. He called himself a political hostage and told me repeatedly the FSB agents who took him - even the judge who convicted him - had all assured him he would be swapped. It is why he didn't bother appealing his sentence. But as time passed, so did two other prisoner exchanges between Russia and the US, and both times Mr Whelan missed out. So when we spoke late last year, he admitted he felt abandoned by his government. Officially designated "wrongfully detained", he

had been assured he was a priority, Mr Whelan told me. Then he had been "left in the dust". That day on the phone he was despondent and frustrated like I had never heard before. Aware talks to free Evan Gershkovich - the US journalist accused of espionage - were under way, he worried he had been left behind again. Mr Whelan's parents were ageing, his beloved dog Flora had died, he reminded me. He felt his life was ebbing away. Earlier this week, as rumours of a prisoner swap began flying, I called Mr Whelan's old lawyer, Olga Karlova. She had seen the reports and told me she had written to IK 17 asking whether Mr Whelan was there. There was no reply. It was a key sign an exchange was happening, likely a major one, although nothing was confirmed until it was all safely under way and could not be derailed. Two days on, I've been watching pictures of Mr Whelan boarding a plane - no handcuffs, no prison uniform. He looks a little dazed, presumably exhausted. But five years after he landed in Moscow for a wedding party, he is at last heading home.

Democrats begin process to nominate Harris for president

WASHINGTON: The Democratic Party has begun the process of formally nominating Kamala Harris as its candidate for the United States presidential elections, less than two weeks after the vice president officially launched her campaign. Democratic National Convention delegates began officially selecting their nominee for president in what's known as a virtual roll call. Harris, who was thrust into the presidential race last month after President Joe Biden dropped his bid for re-election, is the only candidate being considered in the roll-call vote. Typically, the roll call is held at the party's national convention, a large in-person gathering held every four years to select the Democratic presidential nominee. But this year,

Democrats have chosen to use an electronic voting system that is poised to see Harris secure the nomination before the Democratic National Convention later this month in Chicago. Here's what you need to know about the process. The roll call is basically a vote. Nearly 4,700 delegates are selected to represent states and territories across the US. They typically cast votes at the party convention to choose the presidential nominee based on primary and caucus results. But this year - as during the last election cycle - the delegates are voting on an online platform set up by the Democratic National Committee (DNC). On a rolling basis, each delegate is getting a "personalised and watermarked" form to cast their vote, US media outlets have reported. To win the nomination, Harris

needs the support of at least 1,976 delegates. But her ability to clinch the nomination isn't in doubt, with The Associated Press news agency reporting last month that she had far exceeded that threshold. Since the vice president had no challengers for the nomination, the electronic voting opened on August 1, as per DNC rules. It will last several days, with the vote set to close at 6pm on the US East Coast (22:00 GMT) on Monday. The party had planned to hold a virtual roll call even before President Biden dropped out of the race amid concerns about his age and ability to serve another term in office. That's because the state of Ohio had set an August 7 deadline to get on the presidential ballot there. That date came well before the in-person party convention, set to start on August 19.

Democrats feared Republicans could try to keep Biden out of the running if the nomination process had not been completed by the Ohio deadline. Jaime Harrison, the chairman of the DNC, said in a statement in May that the virtual roll call would "ensure that Republicans can't chip away at our democracy through incompetence or partisan tricks and that Ohioans can exercise their right to vote for the presidential candidate of their choice". While Ohio has since moved its registration deadline back, Democrats expressed concern that Republicans could still challenge a candidate who has not been confirmed before August 7. That's why they continued with their plans to use the virtual roll call with Harris as the presumptive nominee. — Aljazeera

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Funny thing before Biden exit

A funny thing happened in the hours after the exit of Joe Biden from the US presidential race and the entrance of Kamala Harris in his place: a huge and genuine surge of excitement for a candidate who had previously failed to inspire. This wasn't just expediency. In the 48 hours after Harris became the Democrats' presumptive nominee, donations came in amounting to more than \$100m and there was a reported 700% rise in voter registrations. It was overwhelming and igniting; the feeling that this was someone who could actually win.

The oddest thing about this - apart from the ongoing sense of history happening in real time - was the lightning speed of the adjustment. It was like looking at a Magic Eye picture or a drawing by MC Escher. Superficially, nothing about Harris had changed since her abortive run for president in 2020. She was still prone to moments of awkwardness. It was still unclear entirely where her politics lay. Held up against the drama of Biden's agonising exit, however, Harris's relative youth, energy and sheer coherence made one want to clap for joy. For reasons that, four years ago, made many of those on the left suspicious of Harris, the 59-year-old suddenly looks a lot like the perfect candidate to fight and defeat Donald Trump.

Certainly Trump's team caught this vibe and the scramble to counter it has been pure comedy gold, featuring a lot of people running around trying to find bad words for a lady politician. Within days of Harris's ascent, Trump was calling her "crazy", "nuts" and "dumb," an auto-response that even his supporters at the back might be starting to twig is a generic line of attack. Trump's surrogates, meanwhile, floundered in similar style. When John Kennedy, a Republican senator for Louisiana, referred to Harris on Fox News this week as "a bit of a ding-dong" - American for silly woman - the remark was so embarrassing that even the Fox host felt obliged to push back.

These attacks will inevitably narrow and personalise. But on the evidence of the first 10 days of Harris's candidacy, the Republican machine is struggling to find a workable way to undermine her. JD Vance, a man so palpably unappealing that he seems to have spooked even those who think that Trump is a good thing, had this week to defend remarks he made several years ago attacking Harris for not having children. (She is the stepmother of two.) There are circumstances in which this kind of mockery still works, but it doesn't work here, and Vance, at 39, looked properly absurd - like a Victorian hologram poised to break out the word "spinster" - for making a song and dance about motherhood. And while Harris has, to date, not been a particularly assured politician, she seems to know instinctively how to handle Trump. With a smirk that does more work than all of Clinton or Warren's earnest attempts to debate him, Harris meets Trump at the demotic level and states the bleeding obvious: "These guys are weird." It works because it's true, but also because she's doing the thing Trump hates above all other things: she's laughing at him.

This prisoner swap has come at a high cost

A MID the desolation of the war in Ukraine and its fallout, the West can allow itself one moment of celebration today to mark the release of several high-profile Russian political prisoners. In what can confidently be called the largest prisoner swap with Russia since the Cold War, the West has secured the release of the Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, Russian opposition politicians Vladimir Kara-Murza and Ilya Yashin and former US marine Paul Whelan, amongst others.

Some of those released, such as Gershkovich, Whelan and Kara-Murza, have become well known in the West since their wrongful incarcerations. Others, such as the artist Sasha Skochilenko, who was sentenced to seven years in jail last year for swapping supermarket stickers with anti-war messages, less so. All those being released to the West by Russia were innocent of the crimes the Kremlin accused them of; treason, spreading fake information and discrediting the Russian army, espionage.

The same cannot be said of those the West has traded them for. Returning to Russia today are the married Russian spies Artem and Anna Dultsev, imprisoned until today in Slovenia, and the hitman Vadim Krasikov, serving a life sentence in Berlin for the murder of a Chechen dissident in 2019. Meanwhile, Vladislav Klyushin and Roman Seleznev are common criminals: both had been serving sentences in the US for, amongst other things, fraud. Handing them over to freedom in Russia before justice has run its course is a bitter pill to swallow.

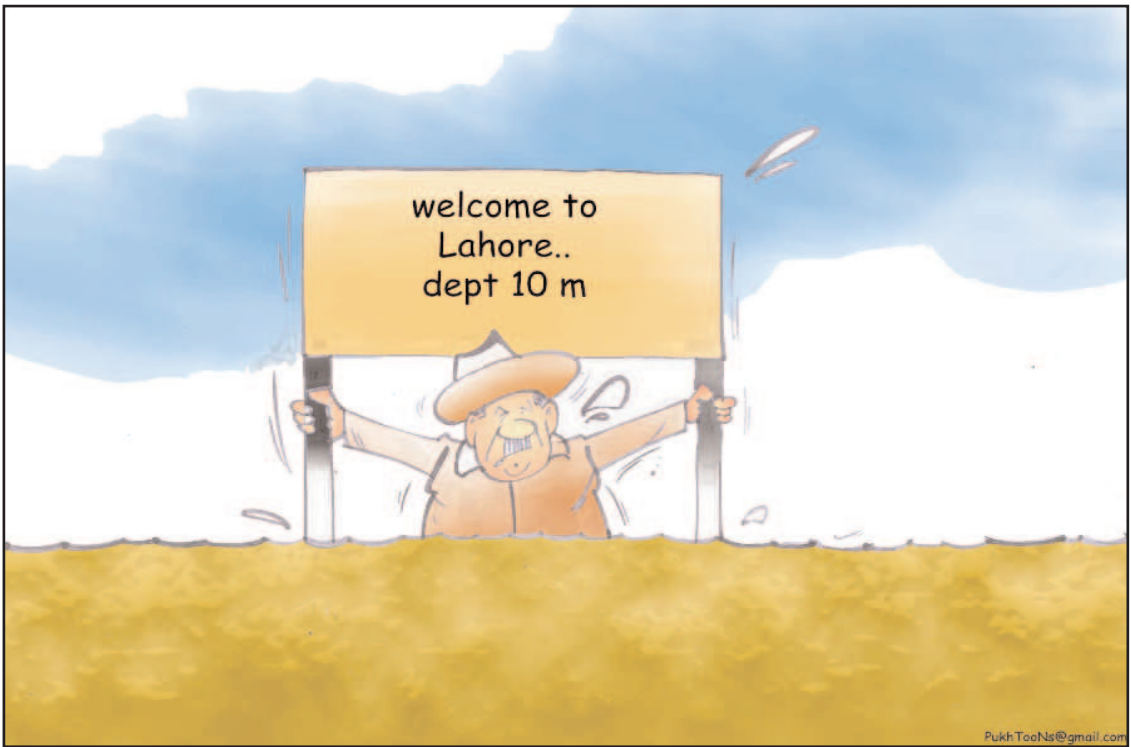
The Kremlin's motivation for releasing so many of what were in reality political hostages in one fell swoop is, as yet, unexplained. Some have suggested that, with November's US presidential election drawing ever closer, and great uncertainty as to what the diplomatic landscape will look like in its aftermath, there was an desire on both the Russian and Western sides to seal a deal before their many months of negotiations were frittered away by a change of administration in the White House. Joe Biden's decision last month to step away from the presidential race may have made the decision a little easier for the Kremlin to accept.

But Russia's decision to negotiate and agree to the largest prisoner swap in 35 years has left Putin without a stockpile of political pawns to manipulate the West with. This should concern us. With the war in Ukraine still raging, it would be a mistake to regard today's prisoner swap as a thaw of any kind in West-Russia relations. So what will Putin do next?

Sooner or later, Putin may have to sit down at the negotiating table opposite Ukraine and its western allies to hash out an end to the bloody conflict he began two and a half years ago. Could the behind-the-scenes negotiations for today's exchange have been a way for the Kremlin to test the water for the West's receptiveness to striking a deal with Russia ahead of any peace negotiations? And if things don't go his way, could the President sanction the arrests and false imprisonment of yet more Westerners? Today the West can breathe a sigh of relief that innocent people can be brought to safety. But the danger posed by Russia has by no means passed.

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India's ethnic cleansing in Kashmir, Hindu extremism and global indifference

Arshad Malik

THE Third consecutive tenure for Prime Minister Narendra Modi has one implication for regional security and another for Kashmiri Muslims. For the region India will aggressively try to assert itself militarily in the region. Many international security experts believe that India's Hindu extremist ruling party, BJP, would function as a natural house for military jingoism and aggressiveness.

This aggressive behavior is likely to be displayed against Pakistan. For Kashmiri Muslims, the situation could not be more clearly directed towards ethnic cleansing, where Indian military and Hindu extremist thugs of India's ruling party would engage in all sorts of acts of brutalization of Kashmiri Muslims. India's ruling party clearly has a plan for Kashmiri Muslims-first it wants to reduce the size of the ratio of Kashmiri Muslims in the population of State of Jumma and Kashmir, second it wants to humiliate Kashmiri Muslim by employing rape of Kashmiri women as a weapon of war and third it wants to settle Hindu extremists groups in Kashmir by facilitating them financially to purchase properties in the state of Kashmir. Ethnic cleansing has been going on in Kashmir for decade.

Hindu terrorist organizations, such as RSS, its affiliates, and the armed Village Defense Committees, are committing ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Muslims in the Jammu region. Since 2014, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government took over, Hindu terrorists had been empowered with full support from the state machinery, more so in IOK, causing displacement of scores of Kashmiri Muslim families, by design. Genocide, state terrorism, settlement of non-Kashmiris and other tools are being employed to bring about demographic change.

In December 2022 Indian military and police started confiscating properties of Kashmiri freedom fighters in Kashmir valley. Several of the latest property seizures were conducted by a newly constituted local police force called the State Investigative Agency. Indian authorities claimed that Kashmiri freedom leaders' properties worth 1

billion rupees [\$12.1 million] were seized in several districts of the valley. The agency also said it has identified 188 properties belonging to Jamaat-e-Islami whose owners either have been "notified or are under the process of being notified for further legal action." This resulted in helpless Kashmiri families becoming refugees in their own land.

India government is conducting a well thought out strategy to kill, harass, torture, and humiliate Kashmir Muslims. Kashmiri leaders as well as the Pakistan government has been attracting the attention of world public opinion towards the new situation where Indian military and Hindu extremist thugs were engaged in massacre of Kashmiri Muslim in the Indian held Kashmir. This has been happening in various parts of Kashmir as Kashmiri Muslim leaders are reporting killings of Kashmiris throughout the valley and in the region of Jumma.

Following the unilateral Indian act to revoke the special status of India-occupied Kashmir (IOK), there have been developing signs of the Indian government facilitating RSS and Shiv Sena Thugs to dominate the public, social and political life in Jumma and Kashmir. There is no possibility that Shiv Sena and RSS would succeed in their evil designs given the resilience shown by the Kashmiri nation over the decades. But nevertheless, the crude methods adopted by Hindu extremist thugs and the Indian military could result in thousands of deaths in Kashmir. In fact, thousands have already lost their lives in Kashmir.

The most inhuman aspect of Indian strategy is to use rape as a weapon of state policy in Kashmir to terrorize and humiliate Kashmiri people. This is a strategy devised to control the population of Kashmir by instilling fear in their hearts. A report in the international media titled "The Indian Troll Army's Obsession with Rape" by C J Werleman stated that "The Indian military has already demonstrated its willingness to use rape, sodomy, and torture as an 'instrument of control' in Kashmir, as documented in a 560-page report submitted to the United Nations.

Reports emanating from

Kashmir suggest that after the revocation of Article 370 the Hindu thugs have joined hands with Indian military in using rape as a tool of terrorizing Kashmiri Muslims. Both the Indian military and Hindu

Extremist thugs get encouragement from the Indian government and ultra-Hindu nationalists. On August 10, 2019 the then Chief Minister of Haryana, Manohar Lal Khattar, an old diehard Hindu nationalist, openly suggested men from his state to acquire wives from Kashmir. He stated in his speech, "Now some people say, Kashmir is open, they [brides] will be brought from there. But jokes apart, if [gender] ratio is improved, then there will be a right balance in society." This type of thinking that dreams of changing the demographic complexion of Indian Held Kashmir is generally prevalent among Hindu extremist groups which are affiliated with BJP. They are clearly following a policy of displacing Kashmiri Muslims from their abodes and pushing them into Azad Kashmir.

The worst part of the whole situation is the fact that the world public opinion has not come out of its slumber as far as the plight of Kashmiri Muslims is concerned. Kashmir doesn't seem to prick the conscience of the world leaders who never miss an opportunity to praise Narendra Modi as a world class statesman. Narendra Modi became persona non grata for the American liberals who wanted to pursue human rights as a foreign policy objective when news about the Gujarat massacre started to break in 2002. There were reports that the US State Department, a natural habitat for American liberals, wanted to decline Modi's American visa, who was serving as the Chief Minister of Gujarat, a state in Western India where Muslims were slaughtered like sheep by Hindu extremists.

The turnaround in American attitudes towards Modi became palpable when Modi became Prime Minister for the first time after the BJP swept the parliamentary elections in May 2014 for two reasons. The US estimated that Modi's India could act as a market for American military and consumer products, and Modi's India could act as a bulwark against the rising

power of China. Now, Modi shares a place at the high table with Western political leaders in several multilateral forums.

The economic prospects of India-US relations and India's military and strategic potential against America's superpower rival, China, has led to a turnaround in Modi's fortunes from persona non grata to an Asian political leader most favored by Washington.

Two explanations could be put forward for this facet of World public opinion: Firstly, world public opinion is not familiar with what is happening with Kashmiri Muslims. The leaders of western democracies only speak on an issue of international dimension when their public opinion takes it into consideration or if it is reflected in the media. I was shocked by the result of a search I conducted on google when two words genocide and Kashmir always gave stories about Kashmiri Pandits exodus from Kashmir. Google gave out only one story about Kashmiri Muslims and their ordeal at the hands of Indian military and Hindu extremist thugs.

So, there is a possibility that world public opinion is not completely familiar with Kashmir Muslim plight. Second explanation could be that world leaders are ignoring the plight of Kashmiri Muslims because they don't want to annoy Indian which for them is a large market for their consumer goods as well as their military hardware. In this way the American military hardware will consolidate the position of Hindu nationalism in Indian society through the ruling BJP. The BJP is considered by many military experts as a natural habitat for military jingoism from the Indian state. There are experts who believe that Americans now want to enlist the Indian military as part of a collective deterrence strategy in case conflict erupts in the Taiwan Strait. Americans are providing weapons worth billions of dollars to India.

Kashmiris, however, have demonstrated that the will of the nation is always stronger than state of the art military pieces. Stories of Vietnam, Afghanistan, Algeria and many others will always remind the human race that weapons cannot defeat a nation that has taken the decision to be free.

Truth of Paris Olympics

Rokhaya Diallo

THE Paris Olympics opening ceremony was a stunning spectacle for global audiences, projecting an image of a proudly inclusive and festive France - even if the awkward truth is that, just a few weeks earlier, our country was on the verge of putting a racist far-right party into government. The ceremony's various tableaux were presented as a triumphant display of our different cultures performed by artists of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and genders, and fuelled by references to historical struggles against oppression.

But this unifying narrative introduced an Olympic and Paralympic Games that in reality are not all that inclusive. A few days before the ceremony, Sounkamba Sylla, a French Muslim relay runner, was told that she would be banned from the event if she wore her headscarf. A compromise was finally found: she was allowed to wear a cap for the parade on the Seine - but her situation echoes a larger exclusion. France is the only Olympic participating country in the world to prohibit its female athletes from wearing hijabs.

France's sports minister Amélie Oudéa-Castéra wrongly invoked the principle of laïcité (secularism) in defence of the hijab ban, implying that French athletes are supposed to embody the public sector's neutrality in matters of worship. "There is an essential principle in secularism: the neutrality of public service ... Our athletes embody public service," she said.

In fact laïcité obliges the state and its agents to be secular, and the state guarantees our freedom of belief. The government's dishonest misinterpretation of the secularism principle leaves French Muslim athletes in a unique position: they are the only Muslims who cannot compete in these Olympics with their heads covered - in their own country.

This amounts to shocking "discrimination", according to Amnesty International and other human rights organisations, which regard it as a "breach of multiple obligations under international human rights treaties". It has also sparked outrage among several female athletes from other countries who are able to take part in the Olympics with their hijabs. But the exclusion doesn't take place only on the track or in the stadium. To make these Games happen, Paris had to undertake a programme of intense social cleansing.

According to an investigation by a collective named Le revers de la médaille (The other side of the coin), 12,545 people (including 3,434 minors) were evicted - some of them forcibly - across the Paris region between April 2023 and May 2024, which is a 38.5% increase on the 2021-22 period (twice as many as last year, and almost three times more than in 2021-22 for the minors).

The group alleges that on top of evictions, "harassment" of communities living near the sites hosting Olympic events has been widespread. Tightening security has become the pretext for a "high level of violence and abuse" by the

police against sex workers and victims of human trafficking, particularly those whose administrative status in France may be precarious. According to Mediapart, the violence takes various forms: "The presence of police dogs, insults, chases through the undergrowth, forced removals from trucks and refusal to allow women to put their clothes back on."

Many working-class neighbourhoods have been affected, including Aubervilliers, one of the poorest cities in France located in the banlieues, where part of the community gardens (which had been there for almost a century) were swallowed up by the construction of an Olympic swimming pool.

Another odious policy that has accompanied preparations for the Olympics and Paralympics is that homeless people have been hidden or driven away by such measures as the installation of anti-homeless urban furniture.

Almost 1,000 students were forced to vacate their university accommodation (provided by the official student services organisation) for police officers, firefighters and healthcare workers on duty during the Games. Many of them reported their shock at being met by utterly squalid conditions, including cockroaches, mould and mice. In addition to the filth, what is shocking is that it has taken the Olympics to expose the living conditions of students, despite repeated denunciation by their unions. The reconfiguration of roads for the Games, meanwhile, carries severe consequences for public health - for example, blocking access to one of the largest maternity hospitals in the region. The authorities are now considering opening the reserved lanes for medical emergencies. I find it hard to understand how this was not the default setting.

The Olympics and Paralympics could have been an opportunity to address the fact that 91% of Paris Métro stations are inaccessible to disabled people. But instead this massive problem has simply been neglected.

The doubling of Métro fares (contrary to the bid proposal promise of free public transport), as well as the requirement to obtain a QR code to travel in certain areas of Paris, does not make transportation more inclusive. Many undocumented workers who provide delivery services from restaurants in the restricted zones will be unable to gain access to the precious Sésame card.

The surveillance extends well beyond QR codes. The legalisation of algorithmic surveillance, which allows for real-time behaviour analysis using AI to anticipate supposedly suspicious acts, is a "violation of the right to privacy", according to Amnesty International. This system, fuelled by human biases against certain populations, will be amplified. Moreover, it will persist beyond the Olympic Games. The majestic and captivating fable presented to the world during the opening ceremony barely conceals the many injustices on which these Olympic and Paralympic Games have been built. Paris shone brightly, showcasing its best face, but at what cost?

BBC

‘Flying rivers’ causing devastating floods in India

Navin Singh Khadka

HEAVY rains and floods have affected several parts of India in recent weeks, killing scores of people and displacing thousands of others. Floods are not uncommon in the country - or South Asia - at this time of the year, when the region receives most of its rainfall. But climate change has made monsoon rains more erratic, with massive rainfall in a short span of time followed by prolonged periods of dryness.

Now scientists say that a type of storm, known as an atmospheric river, is making things worse with a significant increase in moisture because of global warming. Also known as "flying rivers", these storms are huge, invisible ribbons of water vapour that are born in warm oceans as seawater evaporates. The water vapour forms a band or a column in the lower part of the atmosphere which

moves from the tropics to the cooler latitudes and comes down as rain or snow, devastating enough to cause floods or deadly avalanches. These "rivers in the sky" carry some 90% of the total water vapour that moves across the Earth's mid-latitudes and, on an average, have about twice the regular flow of the Amazon, the world's largest river by the discharge volume of water.

As the earth warms up faster, scientists say these atmospheric rivers have become longer, wider and more intense, putting hundreds of millions of people worldwide at risk from flooding. In India, meteorologists say the warming of the Indian Ocean has created "flying rivers" that are influencing monsoon rains between June and September. A study published in the scientific journal Nature in 2023 showed a total of 574 atmospheric rivers occurred in the monsoon season in India

between 1951 and 2020, with the frequency of such extreme weather events increasing over time. "In the last two decades, nearly 80% of the most severe atmospheric rivers caused floods in India," it said.

A team of scientists from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and the University of California, who were involved in the study, also found that seven of India's 10 most severe floods in the monsoon seasons between 1985 and 2020 were associated with atmospheric rivers. The study said evaporation from the Indian Ocean had significantly increased in recent decades and the frequency of atmospheric rivers and floods caused by them has increased recently as the climate has warmed. "There is an increase in the variability [more fluctuations] in the moisture transported towards the Indian subconti-

nent during the monsoon season," Dr Roxy Matthew Koll, an atmospheric scientist with the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, told the BBC. "As a result, there are short spells when all that moisture from the warm seas is dumped by the atmospheric rivers in a few hours to a few days. This has led to increased landslides and flash floods across the country."

An average atmospheric river is about 2,000km (1,242 miles) long, 500km wide and nearly 3km deep - although they are now getting wider and longer, with some more than 5,000km long. And yet, they are invisible to the human eye. "They can be seen with infrared and microwave frequencies," says Brian Kahn, an atmospheric researcher with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. "That is why satellite observations can be so useful for observing

water vapour and atmospheric rivers around the world," Mr Kahn added.

There are other weather systems like westerly disturbances, monsoon and cyclones that can cause floods as well. But global studies have shown that atmospheric water vapour has increased by up to 20% since the 1960s. Scientists have associated atmospheric rivers with up to 56% of extreme precipitation (rainfall and snowfall) in South Asia, although there are limited studies on the region.

A year earlier parts of Australia had been hit by what politicians called a "rain-bomb", with more than 20 people killed and thousands evacuated. Given the risks of catastrophic floods and landslides they can trigger, atmospheric rivers have been categorised into five types based on their size and strength - just like hurricanes. Not all of them are damaging though, especially

if they are of low intensity.

Some can be beneficial if they land in places that have suffered from prolonged droughts. But the phenomenon is an important reminder of a rapidly warming atmosphere that holds much more moisture than in the past. At the moment, the storm is relatively under-studied in South Asia, compared to other weather events like western disturbances or Indian cyclones that are the other major causes of floods and landslides.

"Effective collaborative efforts among meteorologists, hydrologists and climate scientists is currently challenging as the concept is new in this region and difficult to introduce," said Rosa V Lyngwa, a research scholar at IIT Indore. But as heavy rains continue to pummel parts of India, it's become more important to study this storm and its potential devastating impact, she adds.

Washington’s attempt to thwart maritime peace blatant

Mark Pinkstone

BEFORE the ink had dried on the peaceful, humanitarian agreement China and the Philippines signed on July 21 to end the confrontations over their maritime disputes in the South China Sea, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin descended on Manila to pressure President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to maintain control over Ren'ai Jiao, which is part of China's Nansha Islands.

A day after Beijing and Manila signed the agreement, Blinken announced that he would travel to Laos, Vietnam, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore and Mongolia between July 25 and Aug 3 to reaffirm the work of the United States with its allies and partners in the "Indo-Pacific" region.

In the Laotian capital of Vientiane, Blinken met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Saturday. Wang stated that the US maintains a misguided perception of China, frequently interpreting China through the framework of its own hegemonic logic. He emphasized that China is not the US and has no intention of emulating it.

On Tuesday, Blinken and Austin met with Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo and Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro in Manila to "discuss ways to deepen coordination on shared challenges, including the South China Sea...". But on July 21, a day before the State Department announced the details of the 2+2 meeting, a crucial deal was reached after a series of meetings between Philippine and Chinese diplomats in Manila with an exchange of diplomatic notes aimed at establishing a mutually acceptable arrangement on the Ren'ai Jiao without conceding either side's territorial claims.

The Philippine government issued a brief statement announcing the deal without providing details: "Both sides continue to recognize the need to deescalate the situation in the South China Sea and manage differences through dialogue and consultation and agree that the agreement will not prejudice each other's positions in the South China Sea," the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs said.

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an online statement, saying Beijing and Manila had reached a provisional agreement on "the humanitarian resupply of living necessities" to a Philippine warship which Manila illegally grounded on Ren'ai Jiao in May 1999. Many see this as a move signaling the willingness of two sides to defuse tensions in the South China Sea. The deal calls for the removal of the stranded ship, pending which China would allow the supply of food and other humanitarian aid to the personnel

on the Philippine warship. The Nansha Islands have long been considered Chinese territory, as their inclusion is embodied in the nine-dash boundary drawn up by China as its territorial waters.

However, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam have disputed this at the instigation of the United States, which has a heavy presence in the Pacific theater, comprising more than 616,000 military personnel, civilian employees and dependents in 21 countries.

To ramp up control of the South

expressing respect for it. There was no objection from the US, the United Kingdom, France or the Philippines until massive gas and oil reserves were found around the islands in the 1960s.

At the encouragement of the US, the Philippines announced the creation of a new municipality, Kalayaan, in the southern end of the Philippines. To strengthen its claim, the Philippines grounded an old US warship, the USS Harnett County, on Ren'ai Jiao in 1999, staffed it with a handful of sailors and claimed it as Philippine territo-

Many see this as a move signaling the willingness of two sides to defuse tensions in the South China Sea. The deal calls for the removal of the stranded ship, pending which China would allow the supply of food and other humanitarian aid to the personnel on the Philippine warship. The Nansha Islands have long been considered Chinese territory, as their inclusion is embodied in the nine-dash boundary drawn up by China as its territorial waters. However, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam have disputed this at the instigation of the United States, which has a heavy presence in the Pacific theater, comprising more than 616,000 military personnel, civilian employees and dependents in 21 countries. To ramp up control of the South China Sea, US President Joe Biden met with the heads of state of Japan and the Philippines in the White House earlier in the year, feeding them false information that the potentially oil-rich islands in the South China Sea belong to them and urging them to grab them with help from the US. Since the White House summit, the US has continued its belligerent military maneuvers in the South China Sea and West Pacific waters with its allies, involving war games to provoke China into taking retaliatory action.

China Sea, US President Joe Biden met with the heads of state of Japan and the Philippines in the White House earlier in the year, feeding them false information that the potentially oil-rich islands in the South China Sea belong to them and urging them to grab them with help from the US. Since the White House summit, the US has continued its belligerent military maneuvers in the South China Sea and West Pacific waters with its allies, involving war games to provoke China into taking retaliatory action.

The facts are straightforward. In 1958, the Chinese government declared a 12-nautical-mile territorial sea and included territories like Dongsha Islands, Xisha Islands, Zhongsha Islands, Nansha Islands, and other Chinese islands. Prime Minister Pham Van Dong of Vietnam sent a diplomatic note to Premier Zhou Enlai, supporting China's territorial sea decision and

ry. That was strongly challenged by China, because the Nansha and Xisha islands near Hainan are all part of China's maritime territory.

Incumbent Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is sticking to its guns, claiming that its 200 nautical miles exclusive economic zone is legal under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, a convention which the US recognizes but has not ratified because it does not agree with a clause deemed to be "unfavorable to American economic and security interests".

However, under Article 15 of UNCLOS, the Philippines' claim of 200 nautical miles is unlawful, because it should extend to only 100 nautical miles from the Philippines' Palawan Island. And Article 15 of UNCLOS entails that, "lacking agreement between two States on the delimitation of their territorial seas", the boundary shall be the equidistance line unless his-

toric title or extraordinary circumstances require a boundary at variance with equidistance.

In this regard, history is on China's side. According to British international law professor Anthony Carty, all the islands, shoals, and reefs in the Nansha and Xisha islands, the Zhongsha Islands, Ren'ai Jiao, and Huangyan Island are outside the 100 nautical-mile zone provided by UNCLOS and are situated within China's nine-dash line. Carty has written a book, The History and Sovereignty of the South China Sea, on the subject. During his research, he found that in the mid-1950s, a US under-secretary of state wrote that while the Philippines had no claim to the Xisha Islands, "it is in the US interest to encourage them to make a claim anyway to keep communist China out of the area". And the French ambassador to Beijing wrote in 1974 "that all of this unrest in the South China Sea is due to French interference in the region and is further due to the Americans inciting the Vietnamese to make claims for embarrassing China".

When asked by a Chinese journalist if he saw external forces exploiting the South China Sea dispute, Carty replied that there is absolutely no doubt that this whole dispute is entirely about the Americans trying to make life difficult for the Chinese, and the aggression that is building up against China and the scapegoating of China by the whole of the so-called democratic community of the world is appalling. Academics, including Carty, have produced a litany of treaties and agreements dating back to the US' colonization of the Philippines (1899-1946) that prove beyond doubt that the shoals belong to China. Japan did take control of the islands during World War II, but all the islands should be returned to China after the end of the war according to the 1943 Cairo Declaration and the 1945 Potsdam Proclamation.

Even former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte said Washington is inciting Manila to fight for its rights in the South China Sea. The US has five existing military bases in the Philippines, with four more in the pipeline.

According to USA Today, expanding new bases is part of the US armed forces' realignment strategy along the Pacific Rim. Working with its allies, the US will use sites in Japan, Australia, Guam and the Philippines as quick-response bases against possible attacks by China, which is nothing but scaremongering by the US, because China's foreign policy is based on maintaining peace and stability, and promoting common development, as indicated by its latest peace deal with the Philippines. This is something that the US should take into account when talking with its Asian partners.

White House pushes Biden’s SC proposal despite objections

Patsy Widakuswara

THE White House plans to continue President Joe Biden's push for sweeping reforms of the US Supreme Court during his final months in office, despite the proposal having little chance of passing the Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

"What we welcome is a debate," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in response to VOA's question during her briefing Tuesday. Jean-Pierre said there is broad public support for reform of the court. She sidestepped questions on whether the proposal is mainly a messaging strategy ahead of the November presidential election rather than a legislative goal for Biden, who is not seeking reelection.

"As many times as the president introduced legislation, or some ideas of how the direction of the legislation that's important to the American people, we see a healthy debate," she said. On Monday, Biden urged Congress to eliminate lifetime appointments for Supreme Court justices and establish a system in which the sitting president would appoint a justice every two years to spend 18 years in service on the court. His proposal would "reduce the chance that any single president imposes undue influence for generations to come," Biden said.

Under the American political system, presidents appoint justices who are confirmed by the US Senate and serve on the Supreme Court until they die or resign. The highest court of the land provides the final word on legal interpretations of the US Constitution. Speaker of the House of Representatives Mike Johnson dismissed the plan as part of Democrats' "ongoing efforts to delegitimize the Supreme Court."

"It is telling that Democrats want to change the system that has guided our nation since its founding simply because they disagree with some of the Court's recent decisions," he said in a statement. "This dangerous gambit of the Biden-Harris Administration is dead on arrival in the House." Biden's proposal would "tilt the balance of power and erode not only the rule of law, but the American people's faith in our system of justice," he added.

Six of the nine Supreme Court justices were appointed by Republican presidents, including three by former President Donald Trump. Biden also wants legislation to establish an enforceable ethics code for the court's nine justices. Currently, the justices are free to police themselves under ethics rules that were put in place last year following revelations that Justice Clarence Thomas had received expensive gifts from Republican donors and that the wife of Justice Samuel Alito flew two flags often used by followers of Trump's Make America Great Again movement.

The ethics part of the proposal is "the most politically feasible," said Claire Finkelstein, professor of law and philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania and the director of the Penn Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law. Chief Justice John Roberts' failure to discipline his own members "cast great opprobrium on the court," and makes it "illegitimate to a large degree," she told VOA, adding that there may be bipartisan support "to rescue the court from its own problematic conduct."

The third part of Biden's reform proposal requires lawmakers to ratify a constitutional amendment limiting presidential immunity. An amendment would reverse the court's recent landmark ruling in favor of Trump that presidents are allowed some immunity from criminal prosecution for acts conducted while in office.

"This nation was founded on the principle there are no kings in America," Biden said. "Each of us are equal before the law. No one is above the law. For all practical purposes, the court's decision almost certainly means the president can violate their oath, flout our laws, and face no consequences." Passage of the proposal seem unlikely in light of Republican control of House and the Democrats' slim majority in the Senate.

Passage of a constitutional amendment requires two-thirds support in both congressional chambers, or approval by two-thirds of the states at a special convention. Either way, it would then need to be ratified by three-fourths of the state legislatures. Biden's

proposal is "both a messaging push and a warning to the Roberts court to clean up its act," said Democratic Party strategist Julie Roginsky.

"It underscores the fact that the Supreme Court's recent decisions have posed a grave threat to democracy and that the next president will have an opportunity to shape the court and, with it, the future of our democracy," she told VOA. Only 41% of Americans have a favorable opinion of the Supreme Court, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted in June.

American confidence in the Supreme Court has declined in recent years as more people see the institution as partisan. A majority of Americans (53%) say that they think Supreme Court justices rule mainly on the basis of their partisan political views, according to a 2023 poll by ABC News/Ipsos, up 10 percentage points from 2022. Various polls show that voters of both parties are in favor of term limits for justices, including a Fox News poll in July that show most Americans strongly favor mandatory retirement.

"Biden's proposals bundle some of the most popular reforms while avoiding some of the more politically divisive," said Chris Jackson, senior vice president at Ipsos, referring to a court-packing proposal pushed by some progressives that would expand the size of the Supreme Court to quickly eliminate the court's lean to the right. "It remains to be seen if this will be an effective campaign message for the Harris campaign heading into the election," he told VOA.

Vice President Kamala Harris, the likely Democratic presidential nominee, backed Biden's proposal on Monday. "President Biden and I strongly believe that the American people must have confidence in the Supreme Court," she said in a statement. "Yet today, there is a clear crisis of confidence facing the Supreme Court as its fairness has been called into question after numerous ethics scandals and decision after decision overturning long-standing precedent." Trump, meanwhile, dismissed it. "It's going nowhere," he said in a Fox News interview Monday. "He knows that, too."

VOA

Project 2025 is coming for our kids, too

Veronica Goodman

WORKING a minimum wage job scooping ice cream or lifeguarding at the local pool is a summer rite of passage for many American kids. A growing number of mostly conservative officials and activists, however, have a different idea about what constitutes age-appropriate employment for minors.

Across the country, some officials - overwhelmingly Republicans - are looking for ways to usher underage workers into potentially dangerous jobs like factory work, including having them take late-night shifts. The far-right playbook known as Project 2025 goes so far as to propose that the Department of Labor roll back regulations restricting underage workers from taking "regulated jobs" in "dangerous fields."

On Tuesday, Paul Dans, the director of Project 2025 and a former top adviser in Trump's administration stepped down amid intense criticism including from the former president, amid intense scrutiny from Democrats and their allies who are harshly critical of the program. Even though the president has publicly disavowed it, Democrats are convinced that elements of the conservative blueprint are likely to become policy in a future Trump administration, given the number of former members of his administration who played a role in drafting it.

The extreme policy agenda proposed by the conservative Heritage Foundation argues that underage teenagers offer an opportunity to fill labor shortages in these hazardous workplaces. These efforts come after years of lobbying by conservative industry groups across the country.

The authors of Project 2025 say that in an incoming Republican administration, the Department of Labor should "amend its hazard-order regulations to permit teenage workers access to work in regulated jobs with proper training and parental consent." In short, those revisions would allow teens to work in hazardous jobs. Project 2025's workforce development proposals directly contradict years of legislation ensuring that some jobs are simply never performed by minors.

America's federal child labor laws were passed nearly a century

ago. Prior to that time, it was not unusual for children as young as preschool age to be sent out to help support their families, many of them losing limbs on factory assembly lines or contracting respiratory illnesses in mines.

The goal of the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) was to put an end to the rampant injuries and deaths among child workers. It created protections for minors including common sense restrictions on when, where and how they would be permitted to work - including limits on the number of hours minors could work, the types of jobs they could take and the machinery they could operate.

Research shows that working adult jobs can cause serious health issues for children and impede their education. The effort to weaken child labor laws is part of an alarming - and overwhelmingly conservative - lobbying effort. There is one notable case of New Jersey passing a law increasing the number of hours minors could work, but other than that most of the recent examples are the work of legislatures controlled by Republicans. And the New Jersey example does not go below the floor for minimum hours set by the Fair Labor Standards Act, but just reduces it to that federal standard.

Iowa is the most extreme example of a state increasing the hours in which minors are allowed to work - a measure which only Republicans voted for and passed. Fourteen-year-olds in the Hawkeye State now perform assembly work in factories and meatpacking facilities as part of training programs in direct violation of federal child labor laws.

Meanwhile in Arkansas, Republican lawmakers have removed age verification requirements for hiring children. Republican lawmakers in Florida have proposed allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to work longer hours on school nights. As recent cases around the country have shown, working late while in high school can lead to lost sleep, missed school days and students falling behind on their schoolwork. So, while we've come a long way in discouraging child labor over the past century, recent years have seen some alarming reversals in those values. A growing number of

Republican politicians seem intent on dragging the nation backwards to an era when children performing dangerous and backbreaking labor was nothing out of the ordinary.

In fact, according to the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute, since 2021, 31 states have introduced legislation to weaken existing child labor laws, and nearly half of those have successfully passed them. These laws include alarming provisions that would extend the number of hours minors can work; lift restrictions on children doing hazardous work; eliminate parental permission and work certification requirements; and even allow underage children to serve alcohol. And some employers are not even waiting for the passage of laws loosening restrictions on employing minors. Since 2019, there has been an 88% increase in cases in which children were found to be employed in violation of child labor laws. Last year alone, the Department of Labor assessed more than \$8 million in penalties, an 83% increase from the prior year.

We've recently seen the dangers of children illegally performing hazardous work around the country, in some instances leading to their deaths at sawmills and slaughterhouses, while others have lost their lives while working with industrial equipment. These are the sorts of outrageous cases - often leading to tragedy - that would likely become even more common if Republicans continue to weaken protections for working minors.

So what's causing this race to the bottom by the right to erase decades of hard-fought labor protections for our most vulnerable Americans? It seems to be linked to our historically low unemployment rates and, consequently, our tighter labor supply. Some proposals by legislators have even come in direct response to lobbying by industries like restaurants and hospitality, as more employers report difficulties finding workers in a booming economy. But to state the obvious, caving to special interests geared at getting more kids working longer hours or in dangerous jobs is a terrible, even immoral, approach to workforce development.

Democrats have responded to this alarming rise in demand for child workers, including the increase in child labor violations by introducing counter measures that would modernize our labor laws to better protect young workers. Proposed bills like the federal CHILD Labor Act would go a long way toward ensuring companies that violate the law are appropriately penalized, that there is more transparency and accountability across supply chains. In some states, lawsuits against employers can be filed by the parents or guardians of children seriously injured on the job.

Republicans who are genuinely interested in providing minors the opportunity to work without putting them in harm's way should look at the ways some states are investing in their workforce through education and training. There are other options available to policymakers to help boost workforce participation in the short term without risking children's health and safety. Examples include investing more in federal workforce development programs and expanding access to education and training services across state workforce systems.

Gov. Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania is making major investments in career pathways, pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships. Some other states are helping students navigate career options and pursue educational opportunities, exposing them to the skills necessary to enter and thrive in the workforce. These are safer and more constructive ways to prepare young people for job opportunities. It should go without saying that children don't belong in dangerous factories or working overnight shifts. They deserve to be safe and protected, including when they become old enough to legally work. Instead of exploiting the labor of minors to appease business interests, policymakers should look at the ways responsible leaders are making sound choices to develop and expand the pool of trained workers. For decades, having children perform dangerous tasks in unsafe settings has been understood to be an egregious moral, societal failing. It's appalling that so many Republican politicians want to take us back there.

CNN

State hostage-taking may well worsen

Bob Seely

IAM delighted for Yevgenia Kara-Murza, the vivacious and charismatic wife of Vladimir Kara-Murza. Vladimir Putin had not only imprisoned her brave husband, but twice tried to murder him. Thursday's prisoner swap, the largest for decades, means that Yevgenia will have her husband back, to nurse to health. Their friends in our Parliament will be delighted, and frankly relieved that he is still able to taste freedom once more.

But there is a more troubling side to this story: from the way that Putin will milk this event at home, to the dark reality that the Russian leader will now see hostage-taking as - quite literally - a get out of jail free card for the assassins, saboteurs and spies his regime sends around the world, to murder, steal or cause chaos.

Putin's priority on Thursday was to reassure Russia's overseas espionage agencies - primarily the SVR and the GRU, his thuggish military intelligence - that he would get their people back, no matter what. Above all, the FSB security agency wanted Vadim Krasikov, organised crime killer turned state assassin. The SVR and the GRU would have wanted their "illegals" - spies living permanently in a country with fake IDs and backstories - returned by Slovenia and Norway too.

Others freed appeared to have overlapped organised crime and espionage, showing the deep connection between the two in Russia. The swap will play big in the Russian

media. Russian society, especially older citizens, will be reminded of the "glory days" of the Soviet Union, when it was the equal of the US. By reviving this kind of trade, Putin is showing himself to be the leader who stands up to the West and forces the US to listen.

But Thursday's prisoner swap only threatens to make state hostage-taking by our enemies worse. Evan Gershkovich, the Wall Street Journal reporter, was an innocent man arrested, imprisoned, charged and found guilty by a Russian state that considers itself in conflict with the West.

Krasikov was a hit-man imprisoned for murder. Putin will learn from this that his ruthlessness pays off. He will reckon he can always get his people out of Western prisons.

If Britain had captured, tried and imprisoned the Skrypal poisoners from GRU unit 29155, I fear that, at very least, they too would have been on Putin's list. UK citizens might have been seized in Moscow or elsewhere as leverage.

Russia is not the only adversary to blatantly use state hostage-taking as a bargaining tool. Iran took Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe while China seized Canadians, as well as staging Jimmy Lai's despicable show trial in Hong Kong. I went to the FCDO (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) on more than one occasion at the request of Kara-Murza's friends and family, and also at the request of people connected with Alexei Navalny. When I

asked about prisoner swaps, I was given a straight "no". I understood the reason, although it was frustrating.

If this deal today had been done earlier, might it have included Navalny, a man who could have conceivably been a rival to Putin for power? Or was Putin always determined to murder Navalny, someone he hated so much he refused to use his name until he was dead? Vladimir Kara-Murza was a British subject, so we could justifiably argue harder for him. David Cameron and the FCDO pushed his case with the US, as did other good people such as Bill Browder, the Putin critic, and Parliamentarians from all sides.

It is a good thing that there are fewer political prisoners in Russian jails on Thursday night. As Navalny's wife Yulia tweeted on hearing the news: "No one should be held hostage by Putin, subjected to torture, or left to die in his prisons." Yet the reality of today is that Putin has, again, taken innocent people as hostages to get his spies and crooks home. Balancing our desire to see our people protected, while refusing to give in to this kind of blackmail, is a continuing conundrum for law-governed Western states.

The danger is that, as international rivalries grow more tense, state hostage-taking by our adversaries will become worse. There are no easy answers, but for families of those now free, there is at least the joy of seeing their loved ones safe, and alive.

The Telegraph



PESHAWAR: Presiden of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fuad Ishaq preseting a shielf to International Organization for Migration outreach team manager Livelihood Ozz Azzi.

SCCI welcomes EDF for terrorism and natural calamities-hit SMEs of KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq welcomed Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) for terrorism and natural calamities-affected small and medium enterprises (SMEs) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The SCCI chief urged International Organisation Migration (IOM) to ensure direct release of grant to SMEs under simple procedure, especially provision of maximum share for women in this grant for their economic prosperity and progress.

Fuad Ishaq made these remarks during a meeting with EDF Outreach team from IOM Manager head-

Ozz Azzi held here at chamber house on Friday.

Other members of the visiting team include National Program Manager Ahsan Zia, Team Lead Majida Sultana and Program Assistant Syed Awais.

On the occasion, the SCCI Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan and Secretary Sohail Anjum were present.

Ozz Azzi briefed the meeting about EDF and informed that grant up to Rs5million will be given to more than 120 SMEs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Officials said funds will be available for companies and business community affected by war or natural disasters in various trades, aimed at reviving and promoting these

businesses.

Apart from restoration of businesses, they said financial assistance would be provided for provision of basic necessities, improvement in basic infrastructure, and social economic uplift of war or calamity-hit areas.

Ozz Azzi requested SCCI to cooperate in the provision of grant to registered SMEs.

Fuad Ishaq on the occasion assured the chamber will arrange an awareness session to benefit maximum SMEs and members for this initiative.

SCCI chief while talking about Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan, said the IDBP has played a significant role in the establishment of new industries and job

creation.

He called for reactivation of DFIs.

Fuad Ishaq informed incumbent provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa announced Rs10billion interest-free loan scheme for youth in the fiscal budget, which is a welcome step.

The SCCI chief said KP was the worst affected province for terrorism and natural disasters. He stressed the need to enhance the ratio of EDF for the province and also called for a simplifying procedure for disbursement of this grant to SMEs to take maximum people from this initiative.

On the occasion, Fuad Ishaq assured an EDF help desk will be set up at the chamber house.

SBP injects Rs 9.567 trillion into market

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) injected Rs 9,567.25 billion into the market on Friday through reverse repo purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah-based Open Market Operation (OMO).

According to OMO results issued here, the SBP conducted an Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) on August 02, 2024, for 7-day and 28-day tenors and

accepted 44 bids cumulatively amounting to Rs9,482.25 billion.

- Advertisement - The central bank received 16 bids for a 7-day tenor cumulatively offering an amount of Rs982.25 billion at the rate of return ranging between 19.56 to 19.62 percent while 29 bids were received for the 28-day tenor offering an amount of Rs8,807.95 billion at the rate of return ranging between 19.55 to

19.62%.

The SBP accepted all 16 quotes for a 7-day tenor amounting to Rs982.25 billion at 19.56 % rate of return while 28 quotes for 28-day tenor amounting to Rs8,500 billion were accepted at 19.56% rate of return.

Meanwhile, the central bank also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations for 7-day and 28-day tenors and

injected Rs85 billion in the market.

For the 7-day tenor, the SBP received one bid amounting to Rs85 billion (face value of collateral) at 19.58% rate of return while one bid was received for 28-day tenor amounting to Rs30 billion at 19.57% rate of return.

The central bank accepted the bid for 7-day tenor at 19.58% cut-off rate while the bid for 28-day tenor was rejected by the SBP.

DKT Pakistan concludes 4-day training on maternal, reproductive health

F.P. Report

LAHORE: DKT Pakistan successfully conducted a four-day intensive training session focused on critical aspects of maternal and reproductive health. The session, which took place from July 29 to August 1, 2024, was attended by 27 Lady Health Visitors (LHV's) and various Health Officers (CHOs). This training is part of DKT Pakistan's Self-Employment of Women (SEW) in the private health sector project of constructing 200 new clinics in KPK and Punjab, with the support of KfW Development Bank, Germany.

Master trainers Dr. Asma and Dr. Samreen led the training, covering essential procedures such as Manual Vacuum Aspiration (MVA), Postpartum Family Planning (PPFP), Post-Abortion Care (PAC), Intrauterine Contraceptive Device (IUCD) insertion and removal, infection prevention, abortion management, third-stage labor care, and comprehensive anti-natal and post-natal care.

The closing ceremony was graced by esteemed dignitaries, including Dr. Khalil Ahmed - Additional Director General Health, Government of Punjab and Program Director, IRM-NCH&NP, Ms. Sabeen Nasir, Additional Director, IRMNCH, Capt. Ret. Usman, Additional Director, Family Planning, Mr. Arfan Sarwar - Planning and Development Department, Punjab, Dr. Zafar Khan - Consultant GOPA, Ammar Kamran - Deputy Senior Manager Projects, DKT Pakistan

Mr. Ammar Kamran, welcomed all dignitaries to the event and thanked participants for attending the training with great interest. He briefed the audience on KfW's SEW project and DKT's scope of work under this project.

Dr. Khalil Ahmed congratulated all the participants and briefed them about the importance of the Dhanak clinics being built for them and the expectations of Department of Health and Government of Punjab from these providers. He ensured his continued support to DKT and SEW clinic operators.

During the ceremony, the dignitaries underscored the importance of empowering women, enhancing their livelihoods, and ensuring high-quality health care services across Pakistan. They emphasized

that robust health care infrastructure and skilled health professionals are pivotal in achieving these goals.

In a significant development, Ammar Kamran announced a new initiative under the SEW project. This initiative will connect LHVs with leading hospitals, offering them enhanced hands-on experience and training. This strategic move aims to equip LHVs with the practical skills required to perform procedures independently in their clinics, thereby improving the quality of care in communities.

DKT Pakistan remains committed to advancing maternal and reproductive health services and looks forward to the positive impact of this training on the health outcomes of women and families across the nation.

PSX turns bullish, gains 485 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Friday, gaining 485.68 points, a positive change of 0.62 percent, closing at 78,225.98 points against 77,740.31 points on the last working day.

A total of 443,483,358 shares were traded during the day as compared to 278,986,985 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 20.497 billion against Rs 13.094 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 439 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 236 of them recorded gains and 142 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 61 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Energyico PK with 66,993,533 shares at Rs 4.00 per share, The Organic Meat with 18,623,103 shares at Rs 44.67 per share and Pak Elektron with 17,306,367 shares at Rs 26.81 per share.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 129.67 per share price, closing at Rs 7,029.67, whereas the runner-up was PIA Holding Company Limited with a Rs 64.68 rise in its per share price to Rs 991.65.

Intel set for biggest slide in 24 years

NEW YORK (Reuters): Intel (INTC.O), opens new tab was set to erase nearly \$25 billion in stock market value on Friday in potentially its worst selloff since 2000 after it suspended dividend and slashed workforce to fund a costly turnaround for its chip-making business.

The company's stock fell nearly 21% in premarket trading after Intel late on Thursday forecast quarterly revenue below estimates and announced 15% job cuts, raising worries about its ability to catch up with Taiwan's TSMC (2330.TW), opens new tab and other chipmakers.

Intel's issues are now approaching the existential in our view," Bernstein analyst Stacy Rasgon said. He said there would be "going concern" talks in other circumstances, but Intel could add \$40 billion in cash to its balance sheet by the end of 2025 through the moves, as well as subsidies and partner contributions.

"Intel will survive (in some form) to continue the fight," Rasgon said. Shares of other chip firms also fell, with Arm, Micron Technology (MU.O), opens new tab, GlobalFoundries (GFS.O),

opens new tab and U.S.-listed shares of TSMC trading down between 2% and 5.1%.

Wall Street darling Nvidia (NVDA.O), opens new tab was 4% lower after a report about an investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Santa Clara-based Intel was once the world's leading chipmaker, with the "Intel Inside" logo a valuable marketing feature on personal computers in the 1980s and 90s.

Part of the dotcom era's Four Horsemen - along with Cisco Systems (CSCO.O), opens new tab, Microsoft (MSFT.O), opens new tab and Dell (DELL.N), opens new tab - Intel's stock market value peaked at nearly \$500 billion in 2000 before slumping that year and never fully recovering.

It continued to dominate in hefty PC chips, but was caught off foot by the launch of Apple's (AAPL.O), opens new tab iPhone in 2007 and other mobile devices that demanded lower power and less pricey processors.

If Friday's losses hold, Intel's market value would fall to about \$100 billion, equivalent to less than 5% of Nvidia's and about 40%

of Advanced Micro Devices' (AMD.O), opens new tab, the two PC chip-makers it heavily dominated for decades until recently.

The selloff was also set to leave Intel worth less than Applied Materials (AMAT.O), opens new tab and Lam Research (LRCX.O), opens new tab, companies that supply equipment for Intel's fabrication plants.

"Eliminating the dividend may pressure the share price because it will knock Intel out of any ETFs, indices and fund strategies that only include dividend payers," said Michael Schulman, chief investment officer of Running Point Capital.

"Intel has been one of the forgotten horsemen of technology the last couple decades. Never overtaking its year 2000 highs and struggling to get earnings back to where they were before the AI revolution."

Its server chip business has been taking a hit for several years as companies prioritize spending on AI chips, where it lags rival Nvidia, which has become one of the world's most valuable firms thanks to booming demand for its processors.

Amazon shares tumble on slowing online sales growth

NEW YORK (Reuters): Shares of Amazon.com (AMZN.O), opens new tab fell more than 8% on Friday after the online retailer reported slowing online sales growth in the second quarter and said consumers were seeking out cheaper options for purchases.

The commentary from the online shopping behemoth is in line with recent value-conscious consumer behaviour, ahead of retail giant Walmart's (WMT.N), opens new tab quarterly results later this month.

Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said on a post-earnings call that customers were trading down on price when they could. The company's shares were trading at about \$169 before the bell. Amazon was set to lose about \$157 billion in market value, if the losses hold.

"Consumer spending trends facing retail peers appear to have finally caught up with Amazon's P&L," MoffettNathanson analyst Michael Morton said. Amazon's online stores

sales rose 5% in the second quarter to \$55.4 billion, compared with growth of 7% in the first quarter.

The company's quarterly profit and cloud computing sales, however, beat analysts' estimates.

Revenue at Amazon Web Services, its cloud unit, rose a better-than-expected 19% to \$26.3 billion, days after Microsoft's (MSFT.O), opens new tab cloud division Azure fell short of market estimates and sparked more concerns around Big Tech's hefty AI spend.

Seattle-based Amazon is playing catch up with rivals Microsoft, which partners with OpenAI, and Google (GOOGL.O), opens new tab in developing its own so-called large language models that can respond nearly instantly to complicated queries or prompts.

Amazon's forward price-to-earnings ratio for the next 12 months, a common benchmark for valuing stocks, was 33.92, compared with Alphabet's 20.46 and Microsoft's 30.88, according to LSEG data.

Meanwhile, Amazon.com (AMZN.O), opens new tab reported slowing online sales growth in the second quarter and said cautious consumers were seeking out cheaper options for purchases, sending shares down nearly 8%.

The after-hours stock drop came despite second-quarter profit and cloud computing sales that beat analyst estimates. Amazon shares had gained over 20% this year through the session close on Thursday, and investors were disappointed that the company forecast current-quarter sales below Wall Street estimates.

Amazon's CFO, Brian Olsavsky, told reporters on a call that consumers "are continuing to be cautious with their spending trading down."

He added, "They are looking for deals," and noted that lower priced products were selling briskly.

CEO Andy Jassy agreed, adding on a call with analysts that customers were trading down on price when they could.

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The U.S. unemployment rate jumped to near a three-year high of 4.3% in July amid a significant slowdown in hiring, heightening fears the labor market was deteriorating and potentially making the economy vulnerable to a recession.

The increase in the unemployment rate from 4.1% in June marked the fourth straight monthly increase, the U.S. Labor Department reported on Friday.

It has risen from a five-decade low of 3.4% in April 2023. The labor market is slowing, driven by weak hiring, rather than layoffs, as the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes in 2022 and 2023 weigh on demand.

The employment report also showed the increase in annual wages last month was the smallest in more than three years, effectively sealing the case for the U.S. central bank to cut interest rates in September.

"The latest snapshot of the labor market is con-

sistent with a slowdown, not necessarily a recession," said Jeffrey Roach, chief economist at LPL Financial.

"However, early warning signs suggest further weakness. If the labor market weakens further, markets will likely price in three cuts this year."

Nonfarm payrolls increased by 114,000 jobs last month after rising by a downwardly revised 179,000 in June, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics said. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast payrolls would advance by 175,000 jobs after a previously reported gain of 206,000 in June.

Estimates ranged from 70,000 to 225,000. The survey of establishments part of the report also showed employment gains in May were revised down by 2,000. The BLS said Hurricane Beryl, which slammed Texas during the survey week of the July employment report, had "no discernible effect" on the data.

The household survey, however, showed 436,000 people reported that they could not report to work because of bad weather last month, the highest on record for July.

The average workweek fell to 34.2 hours from 34.3 hours in June, also suggesting that Beryl had an impact on the labor market.

The healthcare sector continued to lead employment gains, with payrolls rising by 55,000 jobs last month. Construction payrolls increased by 25,000 jobs. There were also employment gains in the transportation and warehousing, social assistance and government sectors.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell told reporters on Wednesday that while he viewed the changes in the labor market as "broadly consistent with a normalization process," policymakers were "closely monitoring to see whether it starts to show signs that it's more than that."

U.S. Treasury yields dropped and U.S. stocks opened sharply lower after the data. The dollar fell against a basket of currencies.

Average hourly earnings rose 0.2% last month after climbing 0.3% in June. In the 12 months through July, wages increased 3.6%. That was the smallest year-on-year gain since May 2021 and followed a 3.8% advance in June.

Though wage growth remains above the 3%-3.5% range seen as consistent with the Fed's 2% inflation target, it extended the run of inflation-friendly data.

The Fed on Wednesday kept its benchmark overnight interest rate in the 5.25%-5.50% range, where it has been for more than a year.

The central bank, however, opened the door to reducing borrowing costs as soon as its next meeting in September. Financial markets are also expecting rate cuts in November and December.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor arranges and displays colorful seasonal fruits each fruit attracts customers with its fresh appeal at H-9 weekly bazaar in Federal Capital.



In brief

Lin wins controversial first bout in Paris

PARIS (Agencies): Taiwanese boxer Lin Yu-ting, whose inclusion at the Paris Olympics has sparked controversy after she was reported to have failed a gender test last year, won her first bout of the Games in the women's division. Lin - like Algerian Imane Khelif, who progressed on Thursday - was banned by the International Boxing Association (IBA) but has been allowed to compete at the Olympics, which are run by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The 28-year-old entered the arena to cheers, which were followed by some boos, before beating Sitora Turdibekova in the 57kg category. Whereas Khelif's bout against Italy's Angela Carini lasted just 46 seconds, this went the full three rounds - with Lin victorious by unanimous decision. Only one of the five judges awarded a round to Uzbekistan's Turdibekova. The pair shook hands afterwards. Turdibekova did not stop to speak to the broadcast media - and her team quickly left the venue. Lin stopped briefly, but did not answer a question. The controversy has engulfed the Olympics after Italian boxer Angela Carini withdrew from her bout with Khelif on Thursday, saying: "I had to preserve my life." She apologised to the Algerian on Friday for not shaking hands following the bout. The IBA has said Lin and Khelif were banned "to uphold the level of fairness and utmost integrity of the competition". Lin was stripped of a bronze medal at last year's World Championships. Last June, the IBA - a Russia-led body - was stripped of its status as the sport's world governing body by the IOC. The IOC says the pair were "suddenly disqualified without any due process". Lin, who now has a career record of 41 wins and 14 defeats, is a three-time World Championship medalist and two-time Asian champion. Turdibekova, aged 22, was competing at her first Olympics.

Murray bows out of tennis with Olympics defeat

PARIS (Agencies): Andy Murray said he was retiring "on my terms" as his trophy-filled career came to an emotional end at the Paris Olympics 2024 on Thursday, closing another chapter on tennis's golden generation. The former world number one and three-time Grand Slam title winner slipped into retirement aged 37 when he and Dan Evans lost in the men's doubles quarter-finals at Roland Garros. American pair Taylor Fritz and Tommy Paul delivered the knockout blow with a 6-2, 6-4 victory on a packed Court Suzanne Lenglen. Britain's Murray had already announced that the Paris Olympics 2024 would be his last event. "I'm proud of my career, my achievements and what I put into the sport," said Murray. "Obviously it was emotional because it's the last time I will play a competitive match. But I am genuinely happy just now. I'm happy with how it finished." He added: "I'm glad I got to go out here at the Olympics and finish on my terms because at times in the last few years that wasn't a certainty." Just a few hours after Murray had made his exit, he cheekily wrote on X: "Never even liked tennis anyway". Career-long rival Novak Djokovic described Murray as "an incredible competitor". "One of the greatest warriors tennis has seen. His fighting spirit is definitely something that I'm sure is going to inspire many generations to come," said Djokovic.

Shooter Kishmala Talat knocked out of Paris Olympics



PARIS (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan shooter Kishmala Talat bowed out of the ongoing Paris Olympics 2024 as she failed to advance into the next round of the Women's 25m pistol event here at the Chateauroux Shooting Centre.

Kishamala finished 22nd with a final score of 579-18x, miles away from sealing a berth in the final round.

Hungary's Veronika Major led the standings with a 592-27x which equalled the Olympic Record while India's shooting sensation Manu Bhaker continued to prove her mettle as she secured the second position.

Bhaker registered 590-24x. The 22-year-old is enjoying a dream run in the Paris Olympics.

She claimed the first medal for India in the Games by capturing a bronze in the Women's 10m Air Pistol before imitating the same feat with compa-

triot Sarabjot Singh in the 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team, a few days later.

Meanwhile Kishmala Talat, prior to that, featured in two 10m air pistol events in mixed and women's categories. The 22-year-old failed to advance in each of the competitions.

The Pakistan duo of Kishmala and Gulfam Joseph could only manage 571 points out of 600 and finished 14th out of 17 in the 10m Air

Pistol Mixed Doubles.

As a result, both Pakistan shooters Joseph and Kishmala Talat were knocked out of all 10m air pistol competitions.

Kishmala Talat also suffered the same fate in the individual category as failed to qualify for the 10m women's air pistol final after finishing 31st out of the 44 shooters. She scored a total of 567 points out of across six series.

Pakistan out of another medal race as sprinter Faiqa falters in Paris

PARIS (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's only sprinter competing in the ongoing Paris Olympics 2024, Faiqa Riaz, failed to progress in the Athletics event.

Faiqa competed in Heat 2 of the preliminary round of women's 100-meter race and could finish sixth.

The qualification scenario was such that the top three athletes from each of the Heats were supposed to advance to the first round while five more athletes, boasting next best timings were supposed to join them.

Meanwhile, Faiqa Riaz failed to achieve any of the aforementioned feat to ensure his qualification as she took 12.49 seconds in the 100-meter race.

Prior to that, Pakistan shooters Kishmala Talat and Gulfam Joseph alongside swimmers Jehanara Nabi and Ahmed Durrani failed to progress further in the ongoing Paris Olympics.

The duo of Joseph and



Kishmala competed in 10m air pistol mixed doubles but failed to make it into the next round. The Pakistan shooters could only manage 571 points out of 600 and finished 14th out of 17.

As a result, both Pakistan shooters Gulfam Joseph and Kishmala Talat have been knocked out of all 10m air pistol competitions.

However, Kishmala will represent Pakistan in the 25m Pistol Women's qualification on August 2 while Ghulam Mustafa Bashir will partake 25m Rapid Fire Pistol Men's Qualification on August 4. Remember, Pakistan had

an unwanted start to their Paris Olympics 2024 campaign as their shooters Gulfam Joseph and Kishmala Talat failed to qualify for the 10m air pistol finals in respective categories.

The same was the case for the country in swimming as Durrani and Jehanara failed to qualify for the next round in their respective events.

Ahmed Durrani participated in the men's 200-meter freestyle swimming event and unfortunately finished last in his heat.

Later, he ended up in 25th place out of 25 swimmers. His time was 11 seconds slower than the swimmer who secured the final spot for the semifinals.

In the women's 200-meter freestyle swimming competition, Jehanara Nabi finished in 26th place out of 30 swimmers. Despite putting up a strong effort, she was unable to break into the top 16.

Swabi Hockey League to register players by Aug 10

PESHAWAR (APP): Preparations are underway for the smooth conduct of the most awaited hockey event, Swabi Hockey League, President All Sports Association Hussain Bacha told APP on phone here Friday.

He said they have fixed August 10, 2024 for the players registrations and after that, the dropping of the players will be started with captains of each of the participating teams would select their players turn-by-turn.

Hussain Bacha said the Swabi Hockey League is the annual feature of the District Hockey Association. "Swabi Hockey League" is going to commence in the month of August for which 10 at Mansabdar Ground, near Karnal Sher Khan

Shaheen Nishan-e-Haider.

Hussain Bacha said that all the hockey players in Swabi should ensure their registration with the elected heads of their clubs and with the officials of the League well before August 10, 2024. He said the players of Kalu Khan should contact Tauqeer and Shayan for registration, players of Dubiyan village and Kakakhel should contact Rizwan and Atif, Yar Hussain's players from Shanzeb and Mansabdar and Karnal Sher Khan village players should contact with Nawab Ali while the players of Salim Khan kheli are advised to contact Tajul Islam and Abbasin and players of Murghoz should contact with Tariq. He said that the Swabi

Hockey League would be organized under the aegis of District Hockey Association Swabi while dropping of players would start soon after August 10, 2024. Teams will also be formed soon after as each team will consist of 12 players. Eight-A-Side League would be playing members and four of them out of 12 team members would be reserved, he said.

He said before this, Kalo Khan village hosted the Swabi Hockey League in befitting manners. He disclosed that the District Swabi Hockey Association has a total 14 clubs. He also thanked Shaheen Khan, President District Hockey Association, Swabi and Secretary Syed Bakhat for extending all out support.



COLOMBO: Wanindu Hasaranga injected momentum into Sri Lanka's innings, Sri Lanka vs India 1st ODI.

It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan's only sprinter competing in the ongoing Paris Olympics 2024, Faiqa Riaz, was knocked out of the Games after failing to progress into the next round of the Athletics event.

Hopes hinge on Arshad Nadeem as five of 7 Pakistani athletes exit Olympics: Pakistan suffered another blow on Friday as two more athletes bowed out of the Paris Olympics 2024 without any medal with many hopes hinge on Javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem.

Sprinter Faiqa Riaz was eliminated from the Olympics after she failed to qualify for the next round in 100-meter race in Heat 2.

She finished sixth with a timing of 12.49 seconds in preliminary round of 100-meter sprint. As per the rules, top three players from all four Heats are picked for the first round.

Asalanka takes two in two as Sri Lanka-India ODI ends in tie

COLOMBO (AFP): Sri Lanka skipper Charith Asalanka took two successive wickets to force a tie in the opening one-day international after India's total ended level with the hosts on Friday. Asalanka, an off-spinner, bowled the 48th over with India, chasing 231 for victory and needing five from 18 balls at Colombo's R. Premadasa Stadium.

Asalanka trapped a fighting Shivam Dube lbw for 25 as the ninth wicket and then dismissed Arshdeep Singh to bowl out India for 230 in response to the hosts' 230-8.

With no Super Over on offer, the match ended in a tie -- the second such result between the two teams in 50-over format -- and the teams go into the second of the three matches 0-0. "We felt 230 was enough, should have done better to restrict them further," said Asalanka. "I thought the wicket turned more in the afternoon. Once the light was on it was easier to bat..."

Dunith Wellalage stood out with his unbeaten 67 in Sri Lanka's innings and then took two wickets including skipper Rohit Sharma for 58 with his left-arm spin. Wanindu Hasaranga, a leg-spinner, and Asalanka took three wickets each to rattle the Indian batting with regular strikes. KL Rahul, who made 31, and Axar Patel, who scored 33, attempted to put the chase on track in their sixth-wicket partnership of 57 but after they departed India slipped. Dube, a left-hand batsman, attempted to hit back with his two sixes in his 24-ball knock but failed to take the team over the line.

Big guns return Rohit and Virat Kohli, who made 24, joined the ODI team after the tourists swept a T20 series 3-0 under Suryakumar Yadav.

"The scores are gettable, you have to bat well to get that," said Asalanka. "We batted well in patches, there was no consistent momentum. We started well but knew the game would start once spin comes on." Rohit and Kohli retired from T20 internationals after India's World Cup triumph in Barbados in June. They are both part of the ODI and Test set-up with Rohit as leader.

Batting collapses made Sri Lanka suffer in the T20 matches and another scare was on the cards when the home team lost half their side in the 27th over after in-form opener Pathum Nissanka departed for 56.

Wellalage put on key partnerships including a 46-run eighth-wicket stand with Akila Dananjaya, who made 17, to take the attack to the opposition. Wellalage batted with grit as he picked the gaps and was excellent in running between the wickets to put India's fielders under pressure. Janith Liyanage and Hasaranga made useful contributions with 20 and 24 runs.

Left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh and left-arm spinner Axar Patel took two wickets each. Sri Lankan handed an international debut to pace bowler Mohamed Shiraz after quicks

Matheesha Pathirana (shoulder) and Dilshan Madushanka (hamstring) were ruled out of the series with injuries.

Pakistan Street Child Football team reaches semi-final

OSLO (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Street Child Football Team registered a thrilling 3-2 victory over Team Germany JSG Leinetal to qualify for the semi-final of the ongoing Norway Cup 2024.

The Pakistan U17 team, playing under the name of Muslim Hands FC, came from behind to snatch a sensational victory over Germany, courtesy of a last-minute winner.

The national team scored one goal in the first half and two in the second. For Pakistan, Mohammad Kashif scored a brace while Mohammad Junaid chipped in with a strike. Pakistan street child football team will compete in the semi-

final later today.

The team faced a notable challenge for the first time in the ongoing tournament on Thursday when they squared off against Strindheim Toppfotball in the pre-quarterfinal.

However, the Pakistan team dealt brilliantly with the pressure as they secured a thrilling 3-2 victory over Strindheim Toppfotball with a late strike in the dying minutes. For Pakistan, Ubaidullah, Mohammad Kashif and Isa Khan scored one goal apiece.

Earlier that day in the playoff stage, the national team registered a thumping 5-0 victory over CharlottenLund SK 1 to book their spot in the pre-

quarterfinals.

For the unversed, the Pakistan street child football team finished as the runners-up of the previous edition of the Norway Cup after falling to a 9-10 defeat on penalties against Sola FK.

Pakistan street child football team entered the final after remaining unbeaten in seven games.

The national team scored the most goals by any team in the tournament and also recorded the largest victory in the tournament's history when they blew Frigg Oslo FK 11-1. For an exceptional tournament, Pakistan's Asad Nasir was adjudged the player of the Norway Cup 2023.

Butt opens up about Waqar Younis' new role in PCB

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Former Test captain Salman Butt has opened up about Waqar Younis returning to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in a major role.

Waqar has recently taken charge as Adviser for Cricket Affairs to the PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi, according to reports.

The former head coach will oversee all the decisions regarding international and domestic selection committees, players' No Objection Certificates (NOCs) and other important cricket matters in his new role.

Meanwhile, Naqvi's responsibilities are limited to overseeing administrative affairs, with a current emphasis on addressing the organizational issues related to the upcoming ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025.

During an interview with a local sports outlet, Salman Butt wished Waqar well for his new role, while

acknowledging his legendary status in Pakistan cricket.

"Waqar bhai has been my coach and is a legendary cricketer, there is no doubt about that. I am not in a position to advise him, I wish him all the very best for this role," Butt said.

Butt also emphasized that Waqar's new role is distinct from his previous position as a coach and requires a positive vision and decisive decision-making. He encouraged the former captain to take the necessary steps to steer Pakistan cricket in the right direction.

"I really hope this time around he makes some decisions. He should do what is necessary and get it done. I think he should make correct decisions; if he has the vision, implement it," he further added. "Don't go after people who have been there for ages and have done nothing. I think it's a huge opportunity for him, not an easy one certainly. If he is able to make correct decisions, something better might come up."

Previously, another former captain Younis Khan, during an interaction with the media on Wednesday, backed PCB Chairman Naqvi's decision to hand the reigns of the cricket affairs to Waqar Younis.

"I've played under Waqar Younis and I think it's a good sign that he's coming back to the cricket board," said Younis. "He has the opportunity to solve the [cricketing] issues."

Younis further commented on the recent dip in the Pakistan men's cricket team's performance and emphasized the need to improve the infrastructure.

"Pakistan's performance used to be on the top in the past. I think we need to work on our infrastructure," Younis said.

Alcaraz storms into Olympics tennis final

PARIS (AFP): Carlos Alcaraz became the youngest man to reach the Olympic Games men's tennis final on Friday when he thrashed Felix Auger-Aliassime.

Alcaraz, 21, swept to a 6-1, 6-1 victory over the Canadian in just 75 minutes and will meet Novak Djokovic in Sunday's final if the top-seeded Serb overcomes a knee injury and Italy's Lorenzo Musetti in the second semi-final.

"It has been an objective since the start of the year to try and win the gold medal and now we have one match left to try and get it done," said Alcaraz. "I want to have fun in the final and do the business."

Spanish star Alcaraz, playing on the same Roland Garros court where



he won the French Open in June, broke the 19th-ranked Auger-Aliassime three times in the first set, racing away with six consecutive games.

Alcaraz broke again in the fourth and sixth games of the second set on his way to claiming a fourth successive win over the Canadian having lost the first three of the pair's series.

Richardson cruises through Olympic 100m heat

PARIS (AFP): Sha'Carri Richardson launched her bid for Olympic redemption with a comfortable victory in the opening heats of the women's 100 metres at the Stade de France on Friday.

The reigning world champion -- aiming to become the first American since Gail Devers in 1996 to win Olympic 100m gold -- sailed through her heat in 10.94sec.

The 24-year-old Texan burst out of the blocks smoothly and was quickly into her stride before pulling away early on and then shutting it down well before the finish line to loud applause.

Richardson is competing in Paris three years after her dreams of Olympic gold in Tokyo were wrecked by a positive test for marijuana following her victory at US trials.

However the flamboyant track star roared back to the pinnacle of her sport with a surprise victory at last year's World Championships in Budapest and is considered the hot favourite for her



event in Paris.

Jamaica's reigning Olympic 100m and 200m champion Elaine Thompson-Herah is unable to compete in Paris due to injury, while another Jamaican, Shericka Jackson, has withdrawn from the 100m to concentrate on the 200m.

That leaves Saint Lucia's Julien Alfred as Richardson's main rival. Alfred won her heat in 10.95sec on Friday but declined to speak to reporters following the race.

The fastest time in Friday's morning heats belonged to the Ivory Coast's Marie-Josée Ta Lou-Smith.

35-year-old veteran, sil-

ver medalist in the 100m at the 2017 World Championships, clocked 10.87sec to win her heat ahead of Jamaica's Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, the 2008 and 2012 Olympic 100m gold medalist.

Fraser-Pryce, 37, was second quickest in the heats with a time of 10.92sec.

"It went okay," Fraser-Pryce said after her race.

Britain's Daryll Neita was third quickest in 10.92sec, fractionally behind Fraser-Pryce.

Richardson will return for Saturday's semi-finals where she will be aiming to reach the final later in the day to claim one of the first high-profile golds of the athletics competition.



In brief

IRSA releases 482,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 482,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 534,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1531.00 feet and was 133.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 329,200 cusecs and 301,500 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1203.80 feet, which was 155.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 34,700 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 318,700, 213,800, 151,600 and 78,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 83,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 60,400 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Govt to start pink buses for female students

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has announced on Friday that on the direction of Prime Minister of Pakistan, the dedicated pink buses would be soon available from 7th August for girl students and female teachers in Islamabad. According to the Ministry, these pink buses will operate on all major routes, connecting rural areas to urban centers, making it easier and safer for them to commute. Sharing the details of key benefits, the Ministry said that this project would ensure free, safe and convenient transportation for girl students and female teachers. However, dedicated buses will reduce travel time and increase accessibility. It will also encourage girls' education and women's empowerment. The buses will connect rural areas to urban centers, promoting inclusivity, it added. The buses will ply on all major routes of Islamabad, and would connect rural areas to urban centers, including educational institutions. The dedicated buses will be introduced in phases, while regular monitoring and evaluation would ensure their smooth operation. This initiative aims to promote girls' education, women's empowerment, and inclusive development in Islamabad.

RPO holds 'Khuli Kutcheri'

RAWALPINDI (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO), Rawalpindi Region, Babar Sarfraz Alpa under the Punjab government's open door policy held a 'Khuli Kutcheri' here on Friday in Jamia Mosque Usmania Jhanda Chichi to address the grievances of the people. According to an RPO Office spokesman, the RPO issued directives to the officers concerned to take action and submit detailed report on the complaints submitted by the citizens in 'Khuli Kutcheri'. The RPO on the occasion said, "the 'Khuli Kutcheries' are being held to provide the citizens immediate relief and addressed their complaints besides it also helped improve standards of policing." The RPO issued orders to the officers concerned to complete inquiries and send reports within the given time frame. The RPO further said that all-out efforts were being made to ensure the dispensation of speedy justice purely on merit to the people and improve service delivery standards in the region. The spokesman informed that the RPO was holding 'Khuli Kutcheries' here to provide relief to the citizens.

Pak, Turkiye enjoy strong brotherly relations: Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Turkiye to Pakistan, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Pacaci said Pakistan and Turkiye have a long historical, friendly and fraternal relationship and we hope that the new generations of both countries will further strengthen this relationship. Addressing the certificate distribution ceremony of the two-week summer camp organized by Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in collaboration with Yunus Emre Institute, Pakistan here Friday, Dr. Mehmet Pacaci, mentioned that these activities will bring the younger generations of the two countries closer, ultimately strengthening the relationship.

The Ambassador also extended congratulations to the university and the Yunus Emre Institute for arranging the camp.

Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir said that Pakistanis and Turkish people considered each other as their second home. Turkish children are eager to learn Urdu, and Pakistani children are enthusiastic about learning Turkish, he said and added that there were similarities in the history and culture of the two countries, and the moon and star on the flags of both countries symbolized our unity.

Director International Exchange and

Collaboration, AIOU, Dr. Zahid Majeed said that in 10 days, 34 children aged 5 to 13 years were taught Turkish language, calligraphy and archery, Turkish traditional game Mangala was also taught.

He said that they would organize summer camp in Skardu and Gilgit with the support of Yunus Emre Institute. Director, Yunus Emre Institute, Pakistan, Dr. Halil Tokar stated that Turkish people had deep affection for Pakistanis, and to ensure that this love was passed down to the new generation. Later, the children performed Turkish songs and shared jokes in front of their parents and university faculty.

Rana Mashhood appointed Commonwealth Year Youth Champion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Commonwealth Secretary-General RT Patricia Scotland on Friday conferred the "Commonwealth Year Youth Champion" award to the Chairman of Prime Minister Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan for his unwavering commitment and hard work to empowering youth.

While inaugurating the Exhibition and Launching of the Prime Minister Youth Programme (PMYP) initiatives ceremony here at the Prime Minister's office, RT Patricia Scotland said that Rana Mashhood has done an outstanding job in providing opportunities, resources and support to the youth and taking crucial steps for empowering youth through various initiatives and programmes.

Recognizing the services of Chairman PMYP, she expressed her gratitude to Rana Mashhood by calling three times Hip; Hip; Yeh, Yeh as per Commonwealth

traditions.

She said that the commonwealth distinguishes the courage and determination of the PMYP team for the country's youth as young people are the driving force to bring a change.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General inaugurated the six initiatives of the PMYP by pressing the button including Commonwealth Asia Youth Alliance, Digital Learning Portal, LOGO for National Volunteer Corps, AI education programme in collaboration with British Council and Intel corporation and setting up of Commonwealth Youth Parliamentary Forum.

Earlier speaking on the occasion, the Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood acknowledged the love and passion of the Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland for Pakistan and for strengthening the relations with the Commonwealth.

He said that the mutual

interest between Pakistan and the Commonwealth will help promote cooperation in various fields of youth development programmes.

The PMYP's Chairman emphasised the potential of Pakistani youth and highlighted the initiatives originated by the Youth Program to promote their growth.

In the end, RT Patricia Scotland awarded Rs 100,000 prize to the winner of the National Volunteer Corps Logo designer Miss Aqsa from Baluchistan while Prime Minister motivational awards were given to students of various educational institutions on their outstanding performance in different fields.

Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood also presented souvenirs to the Commonwealth General Secretary RT Patricia Scotland for her services for the betterment of the countries of the Commonwealth and Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan in a meeting with speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmad Khan.

27 outlaws held; drugs, weapons seized

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) apprehended twenty-seven outlaws from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession.

A police spokesman said on Friday that responding to the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Police intensified crackdown against the criminal elements to eliminate crime from the city.

The Secretariat police team arrested an accused namely Zahir Abbas and recovered one 30-bore pistol from his possession, while police team arrested two accused namely Atif Khan and Naqib Ullah involved in illegally selling petrol.

The Sumbal police team arrested an accused namely Abdullah and recovered one 30-bore pistol from his possession, while the police team arrested an accused Muhammad Ikram

involved in illegally selling petrol.

Likewise, the Ramna police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Javed and recovered 247 grams hashish from his possession.

The Noon police team arrested an accused namely Ameer Haider and recovered one 12 bore gun from his possession. The Shams Colony police team arrested an accused namely Nasib and Zohab and recovered one pistol and 80 litres of liquor from their possession.

Similarly, the Khanna police team arrested four accused namely Muhammad Atiq, Muneeb Zulfiqar, Muhammad Ansar and Waqas and recovered 800 grams hashish, 300 grams heroin and one 30 bore pistol from their possession.

The Sihala police team arrested an accused Faisal Rehan and recovered 210 grams hashish from his possession.

Furthermore, the Humak police team arrest-

ed an accused namely Waqar involved in illegally selling petrol. The Bani Gala police team arrested an accused namely Shahbaz and recovered 180 grams heroin from his possession.

Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

During the crackdown against proclaimed offenders and absconders, the Islamabad Police teams arrested eight absconders and targeted offenders from various areas of the city.

DIG Islamabad Syed Ali Raza directed the police officials to further intensify the crackdown against the criminal elements. "Safety and security of the citizens is our foremost priority and no laxity will be tolerated in this regard".

Citizens are urged to cooperate with police and report any suspicious activity or information through the emergency helpline "Pucar-15" or the "ICT-15".



ISLAMAAD: A large banner hangs over the Zero Point Bridge in Federal Capital, observing a commemorative 5 August 2019 as a Black Day in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. —APP Photo

BISP pivotal role in crisis caused by climate change acknowledged

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Sherry Rehman Friday acknowledged the role of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) during the crisis caused by climate change and disasters.

During her visit to the BISP headquarters, Senator Sherry Rehman praised BISP's achievements, describing it as a success story for Pakistan.

She underscored the importance of international partnerships and maintaining strong relationships with donor organizations for the continued support and well-being of BISP beneficiaries.

Earlier, Sherry Rehman was briefed on BISP's core initiatives, with a special emphasis on its role in addressing the crises caused by climate change and natural disasters.

Earlier, speaking on the occasion, Chairperson BISP, Senator Rubina Khalid along with Additional Secretary Dr. Muhammad Tahir Noor, provided an overview of BISP's crucial interventions, particularly during the devastating floods of 2022.

They highlighted that BISP was the first to reach flood-affected communities across the country through its dynamic database, disbursing Rs. 70 billion to 2.7 million families in need.

Senator Rubina Khalid also discussed BISP's proactive measures to handle emergencies caused by climate change.

She introduced the Hybrid Social Protection Scheme, designed to promote savings culture among beneficiaries, ensuring they are better prepared for unforeseen climatic events.

Additionally, Senator Rubina Khalid shared BISP's ongoing efforts to implement a transparent payment mechanism in consultation with the State Bank, following the directives of President Asif Ali Zardari.

This initiative aims to enhance transparency and uphold the dignity of women beneficiaries.

IHC stops action against DG NADRA

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday suspended the decision of the National Database Regulatory Authority (NADRA) and Higher Education Commission (HEC) related to the non-verification of the degree of Director General (DG) NADRA. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani of IHC heard the case. It may be mentioned here that the HEC had blacklisted the account of NADRA's DG for degree verification. The court stopped the two institutions from taking any legal action against the petitioner while suspending their orders. The court adjourned further hearing of the case till October 1. It may be mentioned here that the NADRA had included its DG in the pool over the non-verification of his degree.

11 held for carrying illegal arms

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 11 illegal arms holders and recovered arms and ammunition from their possession during a crackdown. According to police spokesman, Chakri police held 11 illegal arm holders namely Sakhawat, Rehman, Danish, Muhammad Ali, Zulfiqar, Adil, Mehmood, Miraj, Shahid, Hasmat and Zar Umar and recovered 3 Kalashnikov, a sub-machine gun, magazines, a large number of bullets from their possession. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. SP Saddar commanded police team and said that strict action would be continued against those carrying illegal weapons.

Kiyani urges opposition to choose solutions over agitation

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to promote constructive politics and find solutions to the country's pressing issues, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader Bilal Azhar Kayani Friday urged the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) leadership to adopt a collaborative approach with the government, cautioning against the 'politics of agitation' that could only further exacerbate the situation.

Talking to a private news channel, he said Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has already initiated efforts to address the pressing public issues and alleviate the burden on the poor.

The government has launched several initiatives aimed at providing relief to the most vulnerable segments of society, including increased funding for social

welfare programs, and measures to reduce inflation.

The government has been engaging in negotiations with the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) leadership to address the shared concerns of public issues, with multiple meetings held in recent weeks, he mentioned.

These discussions have focused on finding common ground and collaborative solutions to pressing problems, including inflation, unemployment, and social inequality, he added.

We are ready to work for alleviating the suffering of the common man and bring improvement in overall governance of the country, he highlighted.

The government has assured the JI leadership that their concerns will be taken seriously and incorporated into policy deci-

sions, paving the way for a united front in tackling the challenges facing the nation, he added.

Responding to a query about PTI protest call, he said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has been accused of lacking a genuine public issue agenda, instead prioritizing the personal politics of Imran Khan.

The government is not succumbing to pressure from the PTI's agitating politics, and is instead focused on implementing its policy agenda and addressing the pressing issues facing the nation, he said.

To another query, he said the government has reiterated its commitment to addressing the pressing public issues facing the nation, and is seeking constructive solutions from the opposition parties.

BISP-NADRA to explore mutual avenues for better service

ISLAMABAD (APP): Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) have joined hands to explore mutual avenues for enhanced collaboration. This was agreed during a meeting between Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid and Chairman of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) Lieutenant General Muhammad Munir Afsar, held here.

The Chairman of NADRA commended the impactful initiatives undertaken by BISP, particularly highlighting how BISP has

significantly complemented NADRA's nationwide efforts in registering women and juveniles.

The key areas of cooperation agreed upon during the meeting include NADRA's full support for BISP's initiative to deploy Mobile Registration Vans (MRVs) in remote regions, especially in Balochistan and Sindh.

This collaboration aims to enhance the accessibility of BISP services in these areas. Additionally, BISP and NADRA staff will be collocated in Union Councils where NADRA is implementing its pilot project, which aims to amplify BISP's outreach and ensure increased bene-

ficiary registration.

Furthermore, NADRA will provide requisite support at BISP Provincial Offices to address issues faced by BISP beneficiaries related to NADRA services.

This enhanced cooperation will further streamline operations, reinforcing the collective mission of both organizations to serve the citizens more effectively.

Senator Rubina Khalid expressed her gratitude for NADRA's support and emphasized the importance of this collaboration in improving service delivery to the citizens. The Chairman of NADRA reiterated his commitment to work closely with BISP to achieve shared goals.

Senate body reviews regulatory performance, emphasizes accountability

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat on Friday reviewed the regulatory performance, emphasized the accountability and legislative reforms in various departments to get desirous results.

The meeting was presided over by Senator Rana Mehmood-ul Hassan. Senator Saifullah Sarwar Khan Nyazee, Senator Mohammad Abdul Qadir, Senator Jam Saifullah Khan, the Secretary of the Cabinet Division, the Chairman of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), senior officials from the Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), Ministry of Interior and other affiliated departments were present on the occasion, said a press release.

The meeting commenced with a briefing on the functional structure of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), its

mandate, the formation of its authority, and its regulatory values.

The officials, while reporting on the principles of regulation, emphasized that their focus is to ensure regulation is consistent, transparent, and open to the general public. Data on NEPRA's performance over the last three years was also presented to the committee members. The officials presented information on tariff determinations, adjustments, and transmission service charge components.

Senator Mohammad Abdul Qadir recommended that NEPRA provide a special briefing on the power sector, as the lack of accountability could lead to unrest in the country. Senator Saifullah Khan Nyazee advised that an audit report be provided to the committee members, and a forensic audit of the IPPs was unanimously recommended. The Chairman of the Committee, Senator Rana Mehmood

ul Hassan, advised the officials to come up with solutions, as the entire nation bears the brunt of inefficiency in tariff monitoring. He also suggested that the officials ensure accountability in the determination of tariffs and report on the authority responsible for overseeing this matter.

Additionally, senior officials from the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) briefed the committee members on its operations and performance. The meeting also covered the outlook for oil and gas licenses and complaint resolution. Senator Mohammad Abdul Qadir suggested that OGRA should enhance legislation by implementing area responsibility. The committee members expressed serious concern over the loss of precious life caused by the cylinder blast. They recommended increasing the penalties and fines for unauthorized cylinder manufacturing.

Afghan, Iranian hikers scale Shah Foladi Peak

HERAT (Ariana News): The National Olympic Committee said Friday a team of 11 hikers from Afghanistan and Iran successfully climbed up Shah Foladi, a peak in the Koh-e-Baba Mountain, which stands at 5,140 meters high. The committee stated that the hikers included seven athletes from Herat, three from Bamiyan and one from Iran.

Five killed in traffic accident in Bamiyan

BAMIYAN (Amu TV): As traffic accidents continue to rise across the country, a collision in Bamiyan province on Friday killed five people, including two women, and left two others injured. Taliban-run National broadcaster, RTA, reported that the accident occurred late Friday morning when a Toyota Corolla collided with a cargo truck in the Sheber district of the province.

Nazari: 'specific powers' prevent recognition of the Islamic Emirate

KABUL (TOLONews): Abdul Latif Nazari, the Deputy Minister of Economy, said on Thursday during a program in Kabul that specific powers are preventing the recognition of the Islamic Emirate.

Nazari added that the lack of recognition of the Islamic Emirate has led to the spread of misinformation about Afghanistan.

The Deputy Minister of Economy further said: "Although we have the authority and conditions to be recognized, we have not been recognized. Specific powers with political goals are obstructing this process. You know that when something is not established according to the UN charter, activities are limited."

Abdul Latif Nazari also mentioned the issue of water rights between Tehran and Kabul during this program, stating that the Islamic Emirate does not support increasing tensions with neighboring countries; however, the management of national



resources is a priority for the Islamic Emirate.

He added: "The Islamic Emirate has never intended to cause tension with any of its neighbors, but managing national resources is our right, defending national interests is our right, and no one should object to this."

Meanwhile, some political analysts said that the reason for the interim government's lack of recognition is its non-compliance with the demands of the international community. "They should compro-

mise with the world conditions and bring about reforms in the administration based on the demands of the Afghan people, such as creating a constitution, forming a joint cabinet of professional individuals, allowing women to work, and reopening schools," Aziz Maarej, a political analyst, told TOLONews.

This comes as nearly three years have passed since the Islamic Emirate regained power in the country; however, no country has yet recognized the Islamic Emirate.



IEA leader tells officials to be like 'soulless corpse' in the face of orders

KABUL (Ariana News): Addressing a seminar attended by senior officials in Kandahar, Mawlawi Hebatullah Akhundzada, the supreme leader of the Islamic Emirate (IEA), has stressed upon obedience to orders, unity and abandonment of "regional discrimination," warning that distrust would lead to failure.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Defense on Thursday, the three-day seminar, which was held at the headquarters of the army's 205th Al-Badr Corps, was attended by the economic and administrative deputies of the Prime Minister, acting ministers of interior, foreign affairs, defense, Haj, acting head of intelligence agency, and several other cabinet members.

The "corrective" seminar was held for more than 600 army officials.

Mawlawi Hebatullah Akhundzada, the supreme leader of the Islamic Emirate, praised the country's defense and security forces and said they had a huge responsibility to protect and strengthen the Islamic system.

"Be careful not to be arrogant with power and be like a soulless corpse in the face of obedience and do not interpret the orders of the seniors. Exercise perseverance. This is jihad for you," Akhundzada said.

He also stressed upon good governance and said: "Knowing every responsibility is obligatory on the responsible and you should learn whatever you are tasked to do, and put aside regional discrimination because differences and distrust will lead you to failure."

Cabinet members and some religious scholars also spoke at the seminar.

US and allies work to counter emerging terrorist threats in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON (Khaama Press): On Thursday, a spokesperson for the US Department of State stated that the country is working with global partners to prevent the resurgence of terrorist threats in Afghanistan.

Vedant Patel described ISIS as an "international terrorist network" with the "capacity to carry out attacks worldwide."

Patel responded to a question from a Pakistani journalist about a UN report on the emergence of terrorist groups in Afghanistan during a press briefing. He emphasized that the US is continuously working to ensure that Afghanistan does not become a platform for terrorist attacks against the United States and its allies.

He reiterated that the US efforts, in collaboration with international and regional partners, continue to focus on countering international terrorism.



Patel added that the US is cooperating with partners and allies in the region to prevent the re-emergence of external threats in Afghanistan.

Patel characterized ISIS as an "international terrorist network" with the "ability to carry out international terrorist attacks." This underscores the seriousness of the threat posed by ISIS and similar groups.

The UN Security Council has previously

highlighted the significant increase in terrorist attacks in Pakistan, attributing some of these threats to the situation in Afghanistan. This has raised further concerns among UN member countries.

The Council reported an increase in cooperation between Afghan Taliban and Pakistani Taliban in terms of sharing personnel and training camps. This development adds complexity to the regional secu-

rity situation and raises alarm about the growing coordination between terrorist groups.

In late July, the UN monitoring team on ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban labeled Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as "the largest terrorist group in Afghanistan." This designation reflects the increasing influence and activities of the TTP in the region.

The escalation of terrorist activities and the growing coordination between various militant groups present a significant challenge for regional stability. The increasing presence of these groups not only exacerbates the humanitarian crisis but also threatens the security of neighboring countries and international interests.

As the Afghanistan situation evolves, global and regional efforts are vital for mitigating militant threats and achieving lasting peace.

Iranian authorities close 378 shops operated by Afghan migrants

KABUL (Khaama Press): According to an Iranian official in Qeshm, Iran, about 378 shops operated by "unauthorized refugees" have been closed.

Omid Mahdavi-Majd, the Prosecutor of Qeshm, Iran, announced the closure of 378 shops that were operated by "unauthorized migrants."

He stated that these closures were executed in collaboration with the Islamic Republic's security forces.

According to Tasnim News Agency, Mahdavi-Majd indicated that renting commercial and residential properties to unauthorized Afghans constitutes a "crime" and that those involved will face legal

consequences.

Additionally, Mahdavi-Majd emphasized that employing undocumented Afghans in Qeshm is prohibited. The order to halt the employment of unauthorized Afghans has been communicated to all business units in Qeshm.

The prohibition on housing and employing Afghans extends to several provinces including East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan, Ardabil, Zanjan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Ilam, Lorestan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Gilan, Mazandaran, Sistan and Baluchestan, Hormozgan, and Hamadan.

The stringent measures against undocumented Afghan migrants in Iran have exacerbated their precarious situation, leading to further economic hardship. With many now left without livelihoods or legal protection, the humanitarian crisis for these migrants deepens. The international community must address the dire plight of Afghan refugees facing forced deportation.

As they are pushed back into a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, urgent and coordinated efforts are needed to provide them with support and protect their fundamental rights amidst the escalating crisis.

World Bank names new country director for Afghanistan

KABUL (Amu TV): The World Bank on Thursday announced the appointment of Faris Hadad-Zervos as its new Country Director for Afghanistan, effective immediately.

Hadad-Zervos succeeds Melinda Good, who has transitioned to a new role within the organization. Previously, Hadad-Zervos served as the Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. "Mr. Faris Hadad-Zervos has been appointed the World Bank's new Country Director for Afghanistan, effective today. He succeeds Ms. Melinda Good, who has taken on a new World Bank assignment. Mr. Hadad-Zervos' most recent assignment was serving as the Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka," the World Bank stated.

Hadad-Zervos, a U.S. national, has been with the World Bank since 1996. His career includes positions as Country Manager in Nepal, Malaysia, and Bolivia, and roles such as Manager of the Technical Cooperation Program with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Head of Mission for Iraq, and Operations Manager for the West Bank and Gaza. "A US national, he joined the World Bank in 1996 and held country manager posi-



tions in Nepal, Malaysia, and Bolivia. He also served as Manager of the Technical Cooperation Program with the Gulf Cooperation Countries, Head of Mission for Iraq, and Operations Manager for the West Bank and Gaza," according to the World Bank.

Expressing his enthusiasm for his new role, Hadad-Zervos stated, "I am excited to continue our support to the people of Afghanistan, together with our partners. My first priority is to ensure that the World Bank continues supporting basic services that are so essential to the welfare and future prospects of the Afghan people such as healthcare, education, food security, and livelihoods support, with a focus on ensuring that women and girls benefit."

He also emphasized the importance of supporting the private

sector and micro, small, and medium enterprises, particularly those operated by women, to foster job creation and inclusive growth. "I am also keen to ensure that we increase our support to the private sector and micro, small and medium enterprises – including those run by women – so the private sector can create much-needed jobs and realize its potential as an engine of inclusive growth," said Hadad-Zervos.

The World Bank, in collaboration with the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF), delivers nationwide support through UN agencies and international NGOs. Their efforts are concentrated on key areas including health, education, livelihoods, food security, and water. A significant focus is placed on women's entrepreneurship and enhancing NGO

capacity for service delivery. "The World Bank, along with the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF), supports the people of Afghanistan through programs in the priority areas of health, education, livelihoods, food security, and water. This support is delivered nationwide through UN agencies and international NGOs. The World Bank also works with the private sector, supporting increasing financing for micro and small enterprises with a focus on women's entrepreneurship, and building NGO capacity to deliver services," the World Bank elaborated.

Adhering to a "principled approach," these programs emphasize delivering services by women, for women, with robust internal fiduciary controls and independent monitoring to ensure the appropriate use of funds. The World Bank Group collaborates with multilateral and bilateral partners to coordinate aid for Afghanistan. "These programs adhere to the 'principled approach,' which focuses on delivering services by women, for women. All projects have internal fiduciary control and independent monitoring arrangements to ensure that funds are used for their intended purposes.

IOM: 8 million Afghans migrated since 2020

KABUL (TOLONews): According to an IOM report, 85 percent of 8 million migrating Afghans have migrated to neighboring countries, particularly Iran, with around one million of them having gone to Europe.

'Since 2020, nearly 8 million Afghans have migrated, with 85 per cent moving to neighboring countries, predominantly Iran, and almost one million heading to Europe,' the report reads.

According to IOM statistics, the rate of returns from Iran has also been high in recent years.

Based on this report, in 2023, the International Organization for Migration recorded nearly one million

returns of asylum seekers, stating that 70 percent of them were undocumented and 60 percent were forcibly returned.

"The number of returnees from Iran remains consistently high. In 2023, IOM registered nearly 1 million returns, with 70 per cent being undocumented and 60 per cent forcibly returned," the report added.

Close to 70 percent of migrants cited the lack of job opportunities as the main reason for their migration to neighboring countries, and they have stories of the challenges faced through illegal migration routes.

The International Organization for Migration

has quoted some migrants as saying:

"They [smugglers] held us captive, beat us mercilessly with iron pipes, and pressured us to call our friends and families for more money," said Jawed, a migrant from Nangarhar province.

Mirwais, an Afghan migrant who wanted to travel to Europe through smuggling, spoke about his challenges: "I urge the Afghan youth to not place their trust in smugglers promising safe passage. There are no shortcuts to a better life, and the dangers we face are often far greater than we can imagine."

Children and women are among these migrants.

Kandahar textile factory reactivated after 18 years of dormancy

K A N D A H A R (TOLONews): A textile production factory in Kandahar has been rebuilt and reactivated after 18 years. Officials said they have repaired the factory's machines over six months at a cost of 60 million afghani. With the reactivation of this factory, around 14,000 people will be provided with job opportunities.

Mohammad, 69, worked in the Kandahar textile production factory for 47 years. He is pleased with the restart of operations of this factory and considers it a significant step for the country's economic growth.

Mohammad, a former employee of the Kandahar textile factory, said: "I am a worker at the textile factory, and I have worked here for 47 years. This factory was closed for 18 years, and now that it has reopened, it is good news."

Mohammad Aslam, another employee, added: "I work here and take pride in producing Afghan products, whereas previ-



ously everything was imported from abroad."

The Kandahar textile and wool production factory has 3,000 advanced machines, which have been repaired in six months at a cost of 60 million afghani with the collaboration of Afghan engineers after nearly two decades.

Abdul Shakoar, a technical employee of the Kandahar textile factory, told TOLONews: "The Kandahar textile produc-

tion factory is currently managed by Afghans, and we will strengthen various sections of this factory in the future."

Ismatullah, a technical employee of the Kandahar textile factory, said: "I activated this factory 18 years ago, but the then-government did not allow it to operate. Now we have reactivated it, providing job opportunities for many people."

The officials of this production factory said that

now, in addition to security agencies, they have contracts with the Ministry of Public Health for uniform-making, and annually have the capacity to produce 40 million meters of fabric and process one thousand tons of wool.

Mohammad Saleem Saber, the head of the Kandahar textile factory, said: "Our products are currently for Islamic Emirate institutions, meaning we have contracts with the Ministries of Interior and Defense, the General Directorate of Intelligence, and the Ministry of Public Health, and we fully guarantee the quality of our products."

The Kandahar textile and wool factory was built in 1356 (solar year) by two Russian and German companies. This factory, which has two sections, has been reactivated by the order of the leader of the Islamic Emirate. In addition to fabric production, it also produces carpet yarn, blankets and shawls.

Pakistan enforces permit requirement for Afghan vehicles

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Commerce of Pakistan in a statement said that after August 1st, no Afghan vehicle will be allowed to enter Pakistan without a temporary permit.

According to the statement, vehicles carrying transit goods are exempt from this new order.

With the release of the statement, some export traders, concerned about the halt of their export goods at the country's border crossings, are requesting an extension from the authorities of both sides.

"Currently, our main problem is the issuance of temporary driving permits, which Afghan drivers receive within 20 to 30 days. It is currently the season for our fruits and vegetables, and we need more

vehicles. We export up to 200 vehicles per day, and the vehicles that have received permits are not more than one thousand," said Omid Haidari, a trader.

"Two hundred vehicles are loaded daily, and all of them do not have visas and passports. The Islamic Emirate must solve this problem for us; otherwise, we will face significant difficulties," said Mohibullah Naseri, another trader.

The Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, emphasizing the creation of more facilities for Afghan businesspeople in trade with Pakistan, said that since the start of the process of issuing temporary entry permits between Afghanistan and Pakistan, 1,400 Afghan drivers and 1,000 Pakistani

drivers have received these permits.

Khan Jan Alokozay, the head of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, said: "According to the figures that have reached the Joint Chamber, so far, about 1,400 Afghans have received the entry permit form, and around one thousand Pakistani vehicles have been given this document by the Islamic Emirate's consulate in Islamabad."

The Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation of Afghanistan, confirming this statement, said they are trying to extend this process for another fifteen days.

Imamuddin Ahmadi, spokesman for the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, said: "Today is the

first of August, and Pakistan will not allow Afghan vehicles without a temporary entry permit. Enough time was given to them, but at the request of some transport companies, we talked to Pakistani officials yesterday to extend this process for another 15 days so that the vehicles that have not received this document can get it."

Earlier, the government of Pakistan, in agreement with the officials of the Islamic Emirate, had ordered Afghan drivers to unload the goods transported to this country by July 15th of this year.

According to this document, Afghan drivers could not enter the country through Chaman after July 15th without a temporary entry permit.



Harris campaign raises \$310m in July as eyes turn to VP pick

WASHINGTON: Kamala Harris's presidential campaign says it raised \$310m last month amid a surge in small donations, as the United States vice president's push for the White House gains momentum. The July figure includes more than \$200m in donations in the week after President Joe Biden's decision to drop out of the race, the campaign said on Friday.

The Democratic Party has rallied around Harris since then, and she is set to officially clinch the nomination as its 2024 presidential candidate in the coming days. Harris's campaign also said two-thirds of its July donations came from first-time donors, signalling "tremendous support" for her candidacy. The sum is more than double the \$138.7m raised in July by Republican nominee and former President Donald Trump, who is set to face off against Harris in November's election.

"There has never been anything like the MAGA Movement," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform on Thursday evening, referring to supporters who rally under his Make America Great Again slogan. "We raised \$139 Million Dollars in July alone. We now have a whopping \$327 Million Cash On Hand. Spectacular support from Great

American Patriots who are donating to our Campaign for President of the United States, and helping out in many other ways," he said.

Trump launched ad hominem attacks against Harris this week, including questions about her racial identity that critics slammed as "repulsive". The heated rhetoric comes as recent opinion polls suggested a tight race between Trump and Harris as the November 5 election nears, with several swing states expected to be key to who wins the White House. Harris is also expected to soon announce her vice-presidential running mate, a decision that could provide a boost in those critical battleground states.

Several names have been floated as being on the vice president's list, including Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz and Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro. Meanwhile, the Democratic National Committee's (DNC's) newest advertising campaign, launched on Friday, taunted Trump for not committing to a debate with Harris.

The DNC has purchased large ads that dominate the digital homepages of major local newspapers in states where Trump plans to campaign in the coming weeks. The ads say "the convicted felon is afraid to debate"

and question whether that is due to his stance on abortion.

Trump in May became the first former president in US history to be convicted of a crime when he was found guilty in a New York hush-money case. He also previously boasted that he "was able to kill Roe v Wade", the legal precedent that had guaranteed abortion access nationwide but was overturned by the Supreme Court in 2022. Trump appointed three justices to the top US court during his presidency, giving it a conservative majority.

The DNC said its first ads are running on The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's homepage before Trump's visit to the Georgia state capital on Saturday and the ad campaign will follow him through local news outlets at each rally stop. Biden dropped out of the race after a disastrous July debate performance against Trump that raised questions about his age and ability to serve another term in office. Trump has suggested a planned September 10 debate on ABC News should be moved to Fox News. In a phone call with reporters last week, Trump was asked if he would commit to debating Harris at least once. "Oh, yes, absolutely, I'd want to," he responded. — Aljazeera

Pakistan witnessed 561 terror, NA told

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan reported 1514 terror attacks in 2023, in which as many as 2922 people were martyred and injured, Interior Ministry said in its report.

In a report presented before National Assembly house, the interior ministry said Pakistan witnessed 1514 terror incidents in year 2023, in which 572 armed forces personnel were martyred and 1292 sustained injuries.

Furthermore, 358 civilians were also martyred while 700 sustained wounds in the terror attacks, the written statement of the Interior Ministry said. The report also highlighted the details of terror incidents from January to April 2024. In current year, Pakistan reported 561 terror attacks which claimed lives of 167 security personnel and 118 civilians.

Last year, the Anti-Terrorism Department (CTD) released a report on the terror incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2023 where as many as 563 terror incidents occurred in 2023 and out of 563 incidents, police were targeted 243 times. According to the report, the highest 132 incidents of terrorism were reported in Dera Ismail Khan, 103 incidents in Khyber and 89 terror incidents were reported in Peshawar? The report further revealed that 86 times terrorists attacked North Waziristan and 50 times South Waziristan? The report further said that as many as 837 terrorists were taken into custody.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly unanimously passed a resolution calling upon the international community to take effective action to halt Israel's oppression and brutalities in Palestine and deliver justice to the Palestinian people.

The resolution, moved by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, called on the United Nations Security Council to take effective measures to impose its call for a cease-fire in Gaza in order to stop the genocidal war being waged against Palestinian people. The resolution also called for holding Israel accountable for its war crimes and crimes against humanity inflicted upon the Palestinian people. At the outset, the House offered fateha for Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, who was assassinated in Tehran.

Traffic policeman martyred

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: A traffic policeman was martyred in gun attack by unidentified culprits here on Friday.

According to details, traffic policeman Anwar Shah riding a motorcycle was on way to perform duty when unknown gunmen opened fire at him at Mandra Khel road of Lakki Marwat. As a result of fire, the cop was martyred and assailants fled the scene of crime.

The body of martyred traffic policeman was shifted to City Hospital Lakki Marwat. The police cordoned off the area after the incident and conducted search operation for the attackers.

2 coalminers buried in landsliding

F.P. Report

DARA ADAM KHEL: Two miners were buried in a coalmine due to land sliding in the Dara Adam Khel area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Friday.

According to the details of the incident, Rescue 1122 workers promptly arrived at the scene upon receiving the report and commenced rescue operations. The Rescue 1122 team, along with mine rescue personnel and local labourers, managed to retrieve the dead bodies of both miners from the rubble at the Khel Akhorwal National Mine.

Last month, three colliers died and four others were injured in an explosion that rocked a coal mine in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's District Kohat. KP police informed media men that the rescue and other law-enforcement agencies teams were rushed to the accident site.



ISLAMABAD: Acting Chairman Senate, Syedaal Khan, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Bangladesh bans Jamaat-e-Islami following deadly job protests

DHAKA (Reuters): Bangladesh banned right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami party, its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir and other associate organisations under anti-terrorism law, Anadolu Agency reported citing an official order. The ban will come into effect immediately, according to a gazette notification issued by the home ministry.

The government move came as the South Asian nation has been witnessing massive student protests since last month, which have led to the death of at least 150 people. The move, decried as "unconstitutional and illegal" by the Jamaat-e-Islami, comes after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina blamed it and the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) for violence that forced her to impose curfew.

In a statement issued earlier, the Jamaat had condemned the Awami League-led ruling alliance's decision as "illegal, extrajudicial and unconstitutional". "Using state machinery, they are playing a blame game against Jamaat and other opposition parties," said Shafiqur Rahman, chief of the party, which, along with the opposition, had denied the government's statement that they stoked violence.

Jamaat was effectively banned from contesting elections by a 2013 court decision that its registration as a political party conflicted with the South Asian nation's secular constitution. Bangladesh shut down the internet and sent the army to enforce a nationwide curfew as the demonstrations spread after they began in universities and colleges in June.

Thousands were injured as security forces fired rubber bullets, tear gas and lobbed sound grenades to disperse tens of thousands of protesters who flooded into the streets. The violence was the biggest test Hasina, 76, has faced since winning a fourth straight term in elections in January that were boycotted by BNP and also marred by deadly protests.

She first led her party to victory in elections in 1996, serving one five-year term before regaining power in 2009, never to lose again. Rights groups and critics say Hasina has become increasingly autocratic during her last 15 years in power, marked by arrests of political opponents and activists, forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, charges she denies.

The United Nations, global rights

groups, the United States and Britain criticised Dhaka's use of force against the demonstrators, asking it to uphold the right to peaceful protest. Members of the Students Against Discrimination group, who had agreed to call off their agitation after the Supreme Court scrapped most quotas on July 21, said they would march on Wednesday to protest recent deaths, arrests, and intimidation.

Rights groups have condemned authorities for arrests of close to 10,000 people over the past two weeks on charges of involvement in clashes and destroying state property. "We will also demand a United Nations investigation into the violence," Mohammad Mahin Sarkar, a co-ordinator of the movement for quota reform, said in a statement.

In response, Anisul Huq, the minister for law, justice and parliamentary affairs, said Dhaka had set up a judicial inquiry to investigate thoroughly. Experts have blamed the unrest on stagnant job growth in the private sector and high rates of youth unemployment that have made government jobs more attractive at a time when inflation is running around 10%.

Hezbollah resumes steady rocket, artillery fire against Israel

BEIRUT (Reuters): Hezbollah forces on Friday resumed rocket and artillery attacks against Israel, ending the lull along the border following Israel's killing of the Lebanese group's military commander in Beirut.

Hezbollah said it had fired a surface-to-air missile at an Israeli warplane flying in Lebanese airspace overnight and forced it to turn back. Its forces also carried out two artillery attacks and two rocket strikes at military positions in northern Israel, it said. The Israeli military said in a statement it had successfully intercepted an aerial target coming from Lebanon into the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

Israeli airstrikes and artillery fire hit several villages in southern Lebanon on Friday, according to Lebanese state media, a day after an Israeli strike killed at least five Syrian migrant workers in southern Lebanon, according to medics. The Israeli military also said it had hit two Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said in an address on Thursday that he had ordered calm along the border following the Israeli airstrike in Beirut on Tuesday that killed military commander Fuad Shukur out of respect for the victims and to consider what the next steps

Israel summons Turkish envoy over half-mast salute for Hamas leader

JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israel's foreign ministry summoned the deputy Turkish ambassador for a reprimand on Friday after Turkiye's embassy in Tel Aviv lowered its flag to half mast in response to the killing of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh.

"The State of Israel will not tolerate expressions of mourning for a murderer like Ismail Haniyeh," Foreign Minister Israel Katz said in a statement. Haniyeh was killed in Tehran while there to attend the inauguration of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. Israel has not made any official claim of responsibility for his death but Iran and allies including Hamas and Hezbollah have accused Israel of the assassination and vowed revenge. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan declared Friday, Aug 2, a day of national mourning for Haniyeh. Katz's statement said Haniyeh had been Hamas leader during the Oct. 7 attack on Israel that killed some 1,200 Israelis and foreigners and saw more than 250 taken hostage into Gaza, triggering Israel's assault on the coastal enclave. Tensions between Israel and Turkiye have risen sharply since the start of the war in Gaza, in which more than 39,000 Palestinians have been killed.

should be. The strike on the Hezbollah stronghold of Dahiyeh in Beirut's southern suburbs also killed an Iranian military adviser and five civilians.

Nasrallah said Hezbollah would retaliate but it would need to study what their response would be, and would otherwise resume its usual military operations against Israel. Hezbollah and the Israeli military have been trading fire for nearly 10 months in parallel with the Gaza war, with exchanges mostly limited to the

border area. But strikes since last week have threatened to tip the conflict into a full-scale regional war.

Israel and the United States have accused Hezbollah of killing 12 youths in a July 27 rocket attack on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, a claim Hezbollah has denied. The United Nations peacekeeping force in Lebanon, known as UNIFIL, told Reuters on Friday it had not investigated the incident as the Israeli-occupied Golan is outside its mandated area of operations.

Torrential rains may generate flash flooding

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said on Friday that torrential rains might generate flash flooding in local nullahs and streams of Murree, Galliyat, Mansehra, Kohistan, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Shangla, Buner, Bannu, Kurram, Waziristan, Dera Ismail Khan, Orakzai, Khyber, Mohmand, Nowshera, Swabi, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Northeast Punjab, Hill torrents of D.G Khan and Kashmir.

According to PMD statement, the stormy rains are also likely to cause flash flooding in Kalat, Khuzdar, Barkhan, Lasbella, Zhob, Loralai, Sibbi, Hamai, Awaran, Kohlu, Dera Bugti, Jhal Magsi, Naseerabad, Musa Khel and Jaffarabad. Heavy Downpour may cause urban flooding in low lying areas of Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Lahore, Sheikhupura, Kasur, Sialkot, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Multan, Sahiwal, Nowshera and Peshawar from 02nd and 03rd August and low lying areas of Sindh. Landslides may cause roads closure at the vulnerable hilly areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Murree, Galliyat, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan during the wet period.

Strong monsoon currents are continuously penetrating from Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal in most central/southern parts of the country and likely to enter in upper parts from today (evening/night). A westerly wave is also likely to affect northern parts of the country from tonight.

Friday weather: More rain-windstorm and thundershower is expected in Sindh, South Punjab and northeast/southeast Balochistan. Rain-windstorm/thundershower is also expected in Kashmir, Pothohar region, northeast and eastern Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan during

evening/night. Scattered heavy with isolated very heavyfalls are expected in Sindh, eastern Balochistan, Pothohar region, northeast Punjab, upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmir during the period.

Saturday weather: More rain-windstorm/thundershower (scattered heavy with isolated very heavyfalls) are expected in Sindh, northeast and southeast Balochistan, Kashmir, Punjab, Pothohar region, Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. Past 24 Hours Weather: Rain-wind and thundershower (with isolated heavy to very heavyfalls) occurred in Punjab, upper Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, northeast Balochistan, lower Sindh and Kashmir.

Rainfall (mm): Punjab: Murree 85, Kasur 35, Attock 34, Hafizabad 25, Lahore (AP 23, City 12), Multan (Ap 22, City 18), Narowal, Layyah 21, Sheikhupura, Khanpur 16, Islamabad (Golra 20, Bokra 05, AP 03, Zeropoint, Saidpur 02), Bahawalpur (AP 12, City 02), D.G.Khan 10, Gujranwala 06, Bahawalnagar 04, Chakwal, Bhakkar 03, Mangla, Gujrat, Kot Addu 02, Jhelum, Joharabad, Mandi Bahauddin, Sialkot 01, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa: Dir (Upper 51, lower 01), Mardan 29, Parachinar 28, Kakul 23, Balakot 20, Malam Jabba 10, Cherat 05, Pattan, Saidu Sharif 01, Kashmir: Rawalakot 16, Garhidupatta 02, Muzaffarabad 01, Sindh: (DHA 15, MOS 14, Quaidabad 11, Jinnah Terminal 08, University Road 07, Faisal Base, Kemari, Surjani 06, Gadap, Gulshan-e-Hadeed 05, Korangi, Hassan Square 03, Orangi 02, Gulshan-e-Maymar, Nizamabad, Masroor Base, Saddar 01), Jacobabad 03, Thatta 01, Balochistan: Barkhan 05, Khuzdar 02 and Sibbi 01. Yesterday's Highest Maximum Temperatures (°C): Nokkundi 46, Dalbandin 45 and Dadu 44.

JI sit-in enters 8th day

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Jamaat-e-Islami's sit-in against inflated electricity bills and rising inflation has entered its eighth day at Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi.

The protest includes 10 demands from the government, including significant reduction in electricity prices, elimination of unnecessary taxes, renegotiation of contracts with Independent Power Producers (IPPs), and cuts in government expenditures.

Two rounds of negotiations between the government and the Jamaat-e-Islami leadership have ended fruitless. JI leader Hafiz Naemur Rehman has left to attend the funeral prayer of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh but will rejoin the sit-in at night.

Earlier, the JI emir criticised the former governments for approving IPP agreements, calling them criminal. He urged the government to make the IPP contracts public, warning that the public might stop paying electricity bills if the agreements' realities are not revealed. He also stated that the country is held hostage by a small elite class that hinders Pakistan's progress for its vested interests.

Pakistan Navy, Turkish Navy conduct drills

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Upon completion of goodwill visit to Pakistan by Turkish Navy Ship TCG KINALIADA, Pakistan Navy and Turkish Navy ships conducted coordinated patrol and naval drills in North Arabian Sea.

The drills comprised of various naval operations including defence against Asymmetric Threats, Visit Board Search & Seizure (VBSS) and Air Defence Exercises aimed to further hone professional skills and enhance interoperability between the two navies.

Earlier, during the port call, delegation of Turkish Navy led by Turkish Navy Chief of Staff, Vice



Admiral Ibrahim Ozdem KOCER called on Pakistan Navy Field Commanders and other dignitaries to discuss matters of mutual interest and further avenues for collaboration. Turkish Navy delegation also laid floral wreath at Mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam to pay homage to the Founder of Pakistan.

Pakistan and Turkiye

enjoy historically very warm and brotherly relations, and the visit of Turkish Navy ship to Pakistan is a manifestation of strong bilateral ties between both countries. The recent visit will further enhance the existing ties between the two nations in general and collaboration between the two navies in particular.

Mourning Day observed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The nation is observing mourning day across Pakistan on Friday in solidarity with the Palestinian brothers and sisters and to condemn the ongoing Israeli brutalities.

The decision was taken in a consultative meeting of the government allied parties held in Islamabad under the chair of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to discuss the deteriorating situation in Palestine. In an joint declaration, it was also announced that the

funeral prayer in absentia for chief of Political Bureau of Hamas Ismail Haniyeh, who was martyred in Tehran on Wednesday, will be offered after Friday prayers across the country.

The meeting also decided to present a resolution in the Parliament to express full solidarity with the people of Palestine. The participants of the meeting strongly condemned the ongoing Israeli brutalities in Palestine for last nine months, and expressed full solidarity with the Palestinian brothers and

sisters.

The declaration, also urged the international community, including the United Nations to break their silence and immediately get stopped the ongoing genocide of the oppressed Palestinians by the Zionist forces and bring Israel to justice for war crimes. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said silence of the international community over the ongoing Israeli barbarism in Palestine is a matter of grave concern.