

Aliya Hamza released
F.P. Report

GUJRANWALA: In the May 9 riots case, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Aliya Hamza was released from Gujranwala Central Jail following the court's order. Her release orders were submitted earlier in the day and she left the jail with her family. The Lahore High Court had barred law enforcement agencies from arresting Hamza in any case till August 29.



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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing the launching ceremony of monsoon tree plantation campaign.

Rashid appointed new FBR Chairman

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday appointed Rashid Mahmood Langrial, from the Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), as the new chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

According to a notification issued by the Establishment Division, the BPS-21 officer "is transferred and posted as Chairman, Federal Board of Revenue, under Section 10 of the Civil Servants Act, 1973, with immediate effect." Earlier, sources said that the name of Rashid Langrial, a BPS-21 officer of Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), had been proposed to the prime minister for the top slot of tax collecting body. Rashid Langrial was previously serving as the Secretary of the Power Division. The federal cabinet gave the final approval for the appointment of the new FBR chairman.

Reserved seats: ECP to file review plea

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has decided to file a review plea against the Supreme Court's (SC) verdict on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) reserved seats, sources said on Wednesday.

According to the sources, the ECP has instructed its legal team to prepare an appeal against the verdict and will file the appeal within the next two days. The commission is an independent constitutional body and will defend its authority in the apex court, sources said. The ECP will also challenge the top court's decision to give independent candidates 15 days to submit their papers, sources said. According to the constitution, independent candidates have only three days to submit their papers, sources added. The ECP has also raised objections to the Supreme Court's decision to allow candidates who were not awarded party tickets to contest elections, sources said. Simply writing "Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf" on the nomination papers does not make someone a party candidate, ECP sources added.

The ECP has already approached the top court to clarify ambiguities in the verdict, sources said. However, the Supreme Court has not responded to the ECP's queries yet, sources added. A 13-member bench of the top court, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, ruled that the PTI is eligible for the allocation of reserved seats, dealing a major setback to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's ruling coalition.

Justice Mansoor Ali Shah announced the 8-5 majority verdict, setting aside the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) order wherein it had upheld the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision denying the reserved seats to the SIC.

PM kicks off monsoon tree plantation drive

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday launched the countrywide monsoon tree plantation drive by planting a sapling here.

Speaking on the occasion, the prime minister said he had directed the concerned departments and institutions to plant at least 100 million saplings across the country including Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) to save the country from the impacts of climate change that badly hit the country in 2022. He said the tree plantation would also help reducing air pollution. The prime minister directed the relevant authorities in the federal and provincial governments to play their role in spreading the plantation drive to every corner to make Pakistan a green and pollution-free country.

He also asked all Pakistani citizens to help the government by fully participating in the plantation drive to save the country from climate change disasters and provide a healthy environment. On the occasion, the prime minister was also briefed about the area-wise plantation targets across the country.

Govt allocates historic budget for growth of IT, Telecom sectors: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said that the federal government had allocated a historic development budget in the current fiscal year, for the promotion of Information Technology and Telecom sectors. He said the incumbent government was prioritizing steps for increasing country's IT export. The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with a four-member delegation of GSM Association, led by its Asia Pacific head Julian Gorman, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for IT and Telecom Shaza

Khawaja Fatima, Chairman Pakistan Telecommunication Authority Major General (retired) Hafeezur Rehman and other relevant senior officials. The prime minister observed that GSMA had significant and vital role in the digitization processes and welcomed holding of

Digital National Summit in Islamabad for the promotion of telecommunication and IT. He said the mechanism processes for IT sector reforms and digitization was being implemented and the focus was made on common man's better access to Internet, digital infrastructure, E-Governance, professional training of youth in the digital skills and innovations, besides promotion of business in this sector.

"Our vision envisaged access to smart phone by every individual, broadband Internet facility to every household and facility of QR Code for all businesses," the press release quoted the prime minister as saying. The delegation apprised the prime minister of GSMA role throughout the world, including Pakistan, over promotion of telecom services and expressed its keen interest in enhancing cooperation with the government in IT and telecom sectors.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated that the development and prosperity of the people of Balochistan was a key priority for the incumbent government.

In a meeting with former Senate Chairman and Balochistan Assembly Member Sadiq Sanjrani, the prime minister discussed various issues related to the Balochistan province. The prime minister announced that the Chagai Mineral Corridor was being developed to maximize the use of Balochistan's mineral reserves, and several additional projects were under consideration for the corridor, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Bangladesh interim govt may swear in today

DHAKA (AFP): Bangladesh army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman said Wednesday that a new interim government was likely to be sworn in on Thursday evening after Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus returned to the country.

"We are trying our best to hold the oath-taking ceremony tomorrow," the general said in a televised briefing. "We might do it at around 8:00pm (1400GMT). Around 400 hundred people will likely be present." Yunus will lead Bangladesh through a "democratic process" when he arrives in the country to helm an interim government, army chief Waker-Uz-Zaman said Wednesday.

"He is very eager to do this," the general said in a

televised address to the nation. "I am certain that he will be able to take us through a beautiful democratic process and that we will benefit from this." Yunus, who is set to lead a caretaker government after mass protests ousted the premier, called on compatriots Wednesday to be "ready to build the country", ahead of his hugely anticipated return.

The Nobel-winning microfinance pioneer will head the interim government after longtime and autocratic prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India, the presidency has said. "Be calm and get ready to build the country," Yunus said Wednesday in a statement, a day ahead of his expected arrival home from France,

urging calm after weeks of violence in which at least 455 people were killed. "If we take the path of violence everything will be destroyed," he added.

The appointment came quickly after student leaders called on the 84-year-old Yunus — credited with lifting millions out of poverty in the South Asian country — to lead. The decision was made in a meeting with President Mohammed Shahabuddin, the heads of the army, navy and air force, and student leaders, the president's office said in a statement. Yunus will have the title of chief adviser, according to Nahid Islam, one of the leaders of Students Against Discrimination who participated in the meeting.

President for discouraging fake news, disinformation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has underlined the need for discouraging the spread of fake news and disinformation by promoting a culture of fact-checking and verifying information. He said that the media should uphold the highest standards of journalism and play its role in promoting tolerance, unity and ethical values in the society.

The President expressed these views while talking to

Chairman Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), Mr. Muhammad Saleem, who called on him and presented PEMRA Report 2021-23, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, on Wednesday.

Talking to Chairman PEMRA, the President said that modern communication technologies had opened up new challenges and the media needed to play a responsible and constructive role in shaping public opinion. He said that

a code of conduct regarding the spread of misinformation and propaganda should be observed.

The President stressed the need to improve the capacity of PEMRA by adopting modern tools and technologies and building a pool of talented human resources. He remarked that the media should also raise awareness about socio-economic issues, besides promoting a soft image of the country.

Imran offers conditional apology for May 9 riots

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and former prime minister Imran Khan has announced a conditional apology over May 9 riots. Speaking to journalists in Adiala Jail on Wednesday, Imran Khan said the CCTV footage of May 9 should be made public to ascertain the real culprits behind the May 9 mayhem.

"If the PTI members are found involved in the May 9 events, he will apologise and expel the workers from the party and ensure they are punished," he added. The PTI founder said that they were subjected to injustice, with 10,000 of their people imprisoned, not allowed to contest elections, and their party banned.

"They are victims of the May 9 incident and are seeking justice," said the former PM. Imran Khan mentioned that they also approached the chief justice, highlighting human rights violations, and noted that their petition was not heard. "If even one PTI worker is seen in the CCTV footage, he will apologise," he held.

PTI will not negotiate with the government that emerged from Form 47, emphasising that apologies should come from those who made mistakes. The PTI founder also demanded putting his name along with those of Nawaz Sharif, Asif Zardari, and Shehbaz Sharif on the Exit Control List (ECL).

Pak calls for normalcy in Bangladesh

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has expressed "sincere" solidarity with the people of Bangladesh as the country coped with the aftershocks of Sheikh Hasina's ouster as prime minister and her fleeing to India.

In a statement issued in Islamabad on Wednesday morning, Pakistan Foreign Ministry said "The Government and people of Pakistan stand in solidarity with the people of Bangladesh, sincerely hoping for a peaceful and swift return to normalcy."

The two-line statement further said "We are confident that the resilient spirit and unity of the Bangladeshi people will lead them towards a harmonious future."

PTI challenges Election Amend Act in SC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has challenged the Election Amendment Act in the Supreme Court on Wednesday. PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan filed a constitutional petition in the Supreme Court and prayed to the apex court to annul the Election Amendment Act.

An Article 184-3 application was filed through the mediation of Salman Akram Raja. The Federation and the Election Commission have been made parties in the petition. On Tuesday, the National Assembly passed the Elections Act (Amendment Bill) 2024 by a majority vote. According to details, under the decision of the Supreme Court regarding reserved seats, the government has been able to carry out important legislation. The bill for further amendment to the Elections Act 2017 has been approved by the National Assembly by a majority vote.

The bill was presented jointly by the PML-N's Bilal Azhar Kayani and Zaib Jaffar. According to the amendment bill, a candidate who does not submit his party affiliation certificate before obtaining the election symbol will be considered independent. If the list of candidates for reserved seats is not submitted within the prescribed period, no political party shall be entitled to the reserved seats.

Parliament has prerogative of legislation: Tarar

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Wednesday the Parliament was a supreme institution and through the Election (Amendment) Act it had converted a rule into a law to stop floor crossing as envisaged in the Constitution.

Addressing a press conference here, he said that Bilal Azhar Kayani of Muslim League (Nawaz) had presented the Election Act Amendment Bill in the National Assembly whereas Senator Tala Chaudhry moved it in the Senate. The minister said that the bill was passed by the National Assembly and the Senate by majority votes and became an act.

He maintained that the Constitution and law were clear regarding floor crossing scourge and the new piece of legislation and further elaborate the matter. According to the rules, he said an independent candidate had to join any party within three days after the announcement of official results of the elections.

The minister posed a question if a member's party could be changed after submitting an affidavit for joining a party. He said that two Supreme Court judges had raised important points and questioned that even after 15 days, the detailed decision was not issued by the majority judges in the bench.

Tarar said that the PTI-backed independents joined a party that did not exist in Parliament, how could that party get any seat as those seats were given on the principle of proportion. Moreover, he said under proportional representation rules, it was binding on each political party to display its candidates lists for both women and minority seats. He said one fails to fathom the logic and stance of the PTI leadership that they should not hold intra-party elections without any legal action or punishment on that account.

About the situation in Bangladesh, he said that the government and people of Pakistan stood with the people of that country. He appreciated the determination and resilience of the Bangladeshi people for standing up against the regime marred by corruption. Tarar said in Pakistan, the PTI founder chairman had compared himself with Sheikh Mujeeb eulogizing his stance in 1971 which Pakistanis considered as against national interests, PTI leaders during television talk shows claimed that their leader was like Sheikh Mujeeb, he added.

Taking a jibe at the PTI founder chairman, he said if he did not take a U-turn, he cannot be called Imran Khan. He asked the PTI leaders if they had any faith, any sense of shame as now they were trying to build another narrative when Sheikh Mujeeb's daughter was thrown out of power by the people. He said now when the statues of Sheikh Mujeeb were pulled down in Bangladesh, the PTI took a U-turn.

Pakistani national held in plot to assassinate Trump

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: A Pakistani national, Asif Merchant, was arrested last month for plotting to assassinate former President Donald Trump and other public officials, according to a criminal complaint unsealed in Brooklyn federal court. Merchant, with purported ties to Iran, flew to the US from Pakistan to recruit hitmen for the alleged plot. He contacted an individual who was a confidential FBI informant, detailing his plan to carry out the assassination. Merchant, 46, is charged with murder for hire.

Merchant was apprehended on July 12, a day before Trump's rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, where Trump was shot in the ear. The arrest is part of the Justice Department's ongoing efforts to counter Iran's retaliation attempts for the killing of Iranian

General Qasem Soleimani. Attorney General Merrick Garland emphasized the department's commitment to preventing such threats against American citizens, while Breon Peace, US Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, highlighted Merchant's plan to murder US government officials on American soil.

After arriving in the US from Iran in April, Merchant contacted someone he believed could assist with his plot, only to find out it was a confidential source working with law enforcement. In June, Merchant met with undercover FBI agents posing as hitmen, paying them \$5,000 as an advance for the assassinations. He planned to leave the country after the killings, but was arrested on July 12.

This case underscores the FBI's dedication to protecting the nation from both



domestic and international threats. Despite no final target being selected by the time of his planned departure, the arrest may explain heightened security at Trump's rally, where a separate assassination attempt occurred. The investigation found no link between Merchant and Thomas Crooks, the individual who shot at Trump during the rally. Foreign office of Pakistan stated that they are in touch with the US authorities and are waiting for further details.

DPM Dar, OIC chief stress urgency of Gaza ceasefire

JEDDAH (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday met with Secretary General of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Houssein Ibrahim Taha on the sidelines of the Open-Ended Extraordinary Meeting of OIC Executive Committee held here.

In the meeting, they discussed the situation in Gaza and Indian Illegally

Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK), according to a press release. The deputy prime minister discussed with the secretary general the ongoing genocide of the Palestinians and dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank.

They stressed the urgency of a ceasefire and unhindered supply of humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people. Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar praised the OIC for

its efforts for peace in the Middle East and expressed full support of Pakistan for its initiatives.

He appreciated the historic role of the OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir and the Special Envoy for Jammu and Kashmir for supporting the legitimate right of self-determination of the Kashmiris as reflected in various OIC resolutions and statements.

Monal restaurant closes down

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad's iconic restaurant Monal has announced its closure after the Supreme Court's orders. Taking to their Facebook, Monal wrote that: "It's time to say Goodbye. As per honorable SCP directions, we are closing on 11/09/2024." The restaurant expressed their gratitude towards their customers for 'their recognition, appreciation and a place in their hearts.'



Murad, WB team discuss projects of \$3.4bn, set timeline to expedite work

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and the World Bank high power team led by the Country Director Najy Benhassine reviewed the overall progress of World Bank-assisted 14 projects of \$3.4 billion and agreed to remove the bottleneck that exists and speed up the slow pace projects for their timely completion.

The review meeting was held at the CM House on Wednesday morning and was attended by Provincial Ministers Sharjeel Memon, Dr Azra Fazal, Nasir Shah, Saeed Ghani, Sardar Shah, Jam Khan Shoro, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, provincial secretaries and project director of the world bank-assisted projects. The World Bank team comprised Kamran Akbar, Murtaza Noorani, Omar Riaz, Waleed Anwar, Uzma Sadaf, and others.

The Karachi Mobility Project (KMP) aims to enhance mobility, accessibility, and safety along selected corridors in the city. It comprises the construction of two bridges (Jam Sadiq Bridges) for

Yellow Line BRT corridors, the development and operation of the BRT Yellow Line System, and capacity building and technical assistance for the project.

Progress regarding the Jam Sadiq bridges, it was reported in the meeting that the concept design was finalized on August 6, mobilization has been completed, the test pile was cast on July 7, and load tests are scheduled to be conducted on August 12.

As far as the development and operationalisation of a BRT system for Yellow Line, the meeting was told that Financial bids opened in April 2024. The WB issued the required consent and now Contract Signing is expected to be held next week. The Competitive and Livable City of Karachi (CLICK) project has been launched to improve urban management, service delivery and the business environment in the city and provide an immediate and effective response to an eligible crisis or emergency. The meeting was told that the Geographic Information System (GIS) based

Management Information System (MIS) MIS is being developed for property tax survey. It was pointed out that the Technical Evaluation has been shared with the WB. The firm is planned to be on board by August 30, 2024.

Karachi Water and Sewerage Services Improvement Project (KWSSIP) is aimed at improving access to safe water services in Karachi and increasing KWSB's financial and operational performance. The World Bank team was informed that most major procurements for the project have been tendered. Currently, all activities are on track to be delivered by project closing. Promising bids were received for Meters procurement and were under Evaluation. In case of successful bids, the contract would be signed in September, 2024.

The chief minister said that the World Bank has released Rs 238 million for K-IV Augmentation works and the provincial government was in the process of releasing its share. He added that the work on K-IV augmentation

would be started shortly.

The SSEP project is designed to increase solar power generation and access to electricity in the province. Under the project, solar parks would be established apart from the solarisation of public buildings, and the Solar Home System (SHS) to be distributed. The meeting was told that the contract has been awarded for solar park but NTDC has yet to finalise the approval for the grid interconnection study required for NEPRA's approval. Demarcation for solar park land at Manjhad, district Jamsoro is in process for which the CM directed BoR to expedite the work and report him.

It was disclosed that all 34 government buildings have been solarised. The World Bank team gave the go-ahead to the Sindh government to start the SHS system among 200,000 families so that they could enjoy the facility.

Sindh Early Learning Enhancement through Classroom Transformation (SELECT) project is aimed at improving the reading skills of early-grade pri-

mary students and increasing student retention in primary schools in the selected districts.

As far as the transforming teaching practices in early grades, the meeting was told that in-house material has been developed for grade-I & II. The material would be ready by the end of September 2024. The purpose of Sindh water and Agriculture Transformation Project (SWAT) is to ensure water resource management, improve water service delivery, targeted agricultural Incentives and Investments, and agriculture flood emergency rehabilitation.

The meeting was told that the water law consultants have made on board. The Sindh water policy Implementation committee has been notified and would meet in the first week of September with a primary focus on initiating the formulation of a new water Resource law. The meeting discussed the rehabilitation of Akram Wah and agreed on the lining option [Akram Wah] from RD 0-193. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) unanimously approved this decision.

Naqvi approves grant project of 200-acres for Zoo, Safari park

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday approved a grand project of 200-acres of international standard zoo and a safari park in Islamabad, set to house 5,000 animals and birds from around the world.

He said that it would be a grand project to establish Pakistan's first international standard zoo and safari park in Islamabad where 200-acre facility will be home to 5,000 animals and birds, with 2,000 to be introduced in the first phase. The minister directed the registration of the zoo and safari park with the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums and instructed officials to finalize all matters related to the project swiftly.

The foundation stone of the project is expected to be laid down in October. The project, reviewed in a meeting chaired by Minister Naqvi at the CDA headquarters, aims to increase tourism in Islamabad and provide world-class recreational facilities to citizens. Chairman CDA Mohammad Ali Randhawa briefed the meeting on the project's details. This development marks a significant step towards enhancing Islamabad's recreational infrastructure and promoting tourism in the capital city.

CM free Wi-Fi service starts in Nankana Sahib

LAHORE (APP): On special direction of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, "CM Maryam Nawaz Free Wi-Fi" service has been started in Nankana Sahib after Lahore and Kasur. The Free Wi-Fi service is operational at five locations in Nankana Sahib in Phase-I. These locations include Masjid Chowk, Tehsil Mor Chowk, Kachhari Phatak, Railway Station.

The chief minister said that more than 25,000 citizens will benefit from the service in Nankana Sahib, adding that in four weeks, citizens of Nankana Sahib have used 250 GB of data from CM Maryam Nawaz Free Wi-Fi service. CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif said the use of free internet service by more than 5 million citizens in Lahore is a proof of its success. She directed the authorities concerned to start free Wi-Fi service at 250 more places in Lahore.

Punjab calls army, rangers for Chehlum security

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Home Department has requested the deployment of Pakistan Army and Rangers troops to ensure fool-proof security for Chehlum of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA).

According to spokesperson for the Home department, the services of the Army and Rangers are called to assist the police during Chehlum.

According to the letter written to the Federal Ministry of Interior, the law enforcement agencies will render services for the peaceful conduct of Chehlum of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA).

The spokesman said that the services of 37 companies of army and rangers have been requested for 15 districts of Punjab. A letter has been written to deploy 14 companies of Pakistan Army and 23 companies of Pakistan Rangers Punjab in these districts. According to the requirement of different districts, services were sought during 17th to 27th Safar-ul-Muzaffar.

Army and Rangers troops will be deployed in Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Gujrat, Attock, Jhelum, Chakwal, Sargodha, Khushab, Bhakkar, Multan, Jhang, DG Khan, Muzaffargarh, Layyah and Bahawalpur. The decision to deploy the army and rangers was made as per the request of the Punjab Police to assist in security arrangements, he added.

Pak-China share history of unwavering friendship

LAHORE (APP): Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan has said that Pakistan and China share a long history of unwavering friendship and are tied in a strong bond of love and trust.

During a visit to the Chinese Consulate in Lahore on Wednesday, he expressed the resolve to play a positive role in strengthening China-Pakistan friendship.

Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan was warmly welcomed by the Chinese Consul General to Lahore Zhao Shirin during his visit of the Chinese Consulate. During the meeting, both sides expressed determination to further strengthen cooperation and friendship between Pakistan and China.

Sardar Saleem Haider further said that Chinese investors will be provided all possible support by the Governor House to invest in Punjab.

Consul General Zhao Shirin said that Pakistan and China are iron brothers.

The Chinese Consul General gave a check of 04 million rupees (40 lakh) to the Governor of Punjab for development work in Attock district.

The amount was announced by the Chinese Consul General during a recent meeting with the Governor of Punjab at Governor House Lahore.

The Governor thanked the Chinese Consul General for the goodwill gesture.

The Governor said that a dispensary will be established in Attock with the support of the community. He said that this dispensary would cater to the health care needs of the privileged class of the area.

Honey-trap case: ATC extends physical remand of 9 accused

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Wednesday extended the physical remand of 9 accused involved in the playwright Khalilur Rehman Qamar honey trap case for another ten days.

Earlier, the police had produced the accused - Tanveer Ahmad, Qaisar Abbas, Rasheed Ahmad, Falk Sher, Mian Khan, Yasir Ali, Javed Iqbal, Zeeshan Qayyum, and Mamon Haider - before ATC Judge Khalid Arshad at the expiry of their 7-day physical remand.

The police requested the court to extend the physical remand of the accused for another 30 days for the recovery of the ransom amount and weapons.

At this, Khalilur Rehman's counsel supported the stance of the police and asked the court to extend the physical remand for another 15 days to complete the investigations.

The court remarked that the police should complete the investigations, release those who were innocent, and provide evidence against those who were guilty.

Khalilur Rehman's counsel submitted that all the accused were guilty and co-accused of the main accused, Amna Urooj, adding that innocent persons had already been cleared.

Subsequently, the court extended the physical remand for another ten days and ordered that the accused be produced at the expiry of the remand term.

The Sundar Police had registered a case of robbery and abduction against several accused based on a complaint by Khalilur Rehman Qamar.



KARACHI: A vendor displays national flags, badges, and other items as the nation prepares to celebrate Independence Day in a befitting manner. —APP Photo

MoU signed between Istanbul, Lahore medical universities

LAHORE (APP): A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed for cooperation between the medical universities of Istanbul and Lahore on Wednesday.

Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique signed the MoU on behalf of the University of Health Sciences (UHS) Lahore during a meeting with faculty members from both UHS Lahore and Istanbul University of Health Sciences, Türkiye, according to a handout issued here on Wednesday.

The meeting was chaired by Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique, who attended directly from Istanbul University of Health Sciences. Kemalitan Aydin, a well-known Turkish politician, also attended the meeting. During the event, the Vice-Chancellors of UHS Lahore and Istanbul University of Health Sciences briefed attendees on the educational facilities available at their respective

institutions. In his remarks, the health minister highlighted the close and fraternal relations between Pakistan and Türkiye, emphasizing the exemplary health system of Türkiye and the shared goals between the two countries.

He mentioned the recent advancements in Punjab's healthcare system, including the launch of an air ambulance service and the establishment of the Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer and Research Center in Lahore and the Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cardiology in Sargodha. He noted the transparency in Punjab's health department and praised UHS Lahore for leading among the province's seven medical universities. He also mentioned Turkish interest in postgraduate programs at UHS.

Dr. Onor Guner, Secretary General of Istanbul University of Health Sciences, welcomed

Khawaja Salman Rafique to Istanbul and praised the historical significance and research initiatives of the university. Vice-Chancellor of UHS Lahore, Professor Ahsan Waheed Rathor, spoke about the government's efforts to enhance the educational environment in medical schools and expressed respect for Turkish students. He also humorously noted the appreciation of Pakistani mangoes by Dr. Onor Guner, who requested more to be sent from Lahore. The event concluded with the presentation of a commemorative shield to Khawaja Salman Rafique by the faculty members of Istanbul University of Health Sciences. Attendees included Professor Ahsan Waheed Rathor, Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Nadia Naseem, and other faculty members from UHS Lahore, as well as Secretary General Dr. Onor Guner and other faculty members from Istanbul University of Health Sciences.

Huge quantity of illegal weapons recovered

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Police teams, in a special campaign, launched in January 2024, recovered huge quantities of illegal weapons.

The recovered weapons include: 1,022 Kalashnikovs, 27,634 pistols, 2,124 guns, 1,952 rifles, 441 revolvers and more than 179,000 bullets and cartridges were recovered from the possession of the accused throughout the province. In the provincial capital, 100 Kalashnikovs, 5813 pistols, 422 rifles, 224 guns, 41 revolvers and more than 34,000 bullets were recovered from the accused.

IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar directed that strict legal action against the accused involved in firing into the air and display of weapons on social media.

LDA seals 47 properties

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) teams continue their operation against illegal constructions, illegal commercial use and commercial fee defaulters.

On Wednesday, LDA teams sealed 25 properties due to non-payment of commercial fees in Blocks A, B, C, G, E, F, M, and the Civic Center of Gulshan Ravi. In another operation, Town Planning Zone II sealed 22 properties in various blocks of Mustafa Town and Allama Iqbal Town. The sealed properties include private schools, marriage halls, offices, pharmacies, academies, shops, offices, clinics, and others. These sealed properties were defaulters of millions of rupees against commercialization fees. The operation was conducted under the supervision of Chief Town Planner One Asad Zaman, Director Town Planning Zone One Ayesha Matahir, and Director Town Planning Zone Two. Multiple notices had been issued to these properties before the operation. On the instructions of DG LDA Tahir Farooq, actions against illegal constructions and commercial fee defaulters are continue across the city.

Pak-Malaysia brotherhood poses historical impact

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Counselor of Malaysian High Commission Syafik, received a courtesy call by Sardar Waqar Shahzad advocate while First secretary Muhammad Zulassri Bin Rosdi, was also present in the meeting.

During the meeting, Sardar Waqar extended invitation to the High Commission to visit Swat. He mentioned about historical relations between the two countries.

He emphasized on increasing trade volume and diversifying trade between the two countries, especially focusing Swat, as a good number of Malaysian community is based in that area.

In response, Syafik appreciated his initiative and expressed his desire to



visit Swat in near future. Syafik also invited Sardar Waqar to visit Malaysia and

to look for investment opportunities in tourism sector of Malaysia.

Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
The Khyber Institute of Child Health & Bashir Bilour Memorial Children Hospital
Hayatabad Peshawar

Corrigendum / Addendum

Reference Advertisement No. **INF (P) 974/24** dated: **16.05.2024, 1402/24** and **1735/24**, appearing in different newspapers.

The submission date of the same tender is hereby extended to **28/08/2024 for all Bids at 11-00 am and Bids will be open at 11:30 AM on the same day** in the presence of Tender Opening Committee & bidders.

Note: The remaining Terms & Condition of the previous advertisement shall be same.

Project Director
KICH & Children Hospital, Hayatabad Peshawar Phase-V, Near Passport Office, Hayatabad Peshawar

INF(P)1951/24

PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)
TENDER NOTICE

1. Applications are invited for tenders in sealed cover by Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority duly supported with documentary evidence from contractors having valid registration with Pakistan Engineering Council in Category C-6 or above for the work mentioned below:

Name of Work	Tender Fee	Earnest Money	Tender Opening Date & Time
PROVISION OF CANOPY SHED, IRON GRILL AND CONCRETE POST AT ENTRY GATE AND STAINLESS STEEL BARRIERS IN CONCOURSE HALL AT BKIP PESHAWAR	Rs. 3000/-	Rs. 75,000/-	23-08-2024 at 11:30 hours in under mentioned office

2. Bidding document, for above mentioned work will be issued to those contractors / firms having valid PEC certificate in category C-6 or above with specialization code CE-10.

3. The bidding process shall be based as per PPRA Single Stage-Single Envelop bidding procedure.

4. The firm shall have valid registration with FBR having active NTN certificate. The firm shall also submit declaration as sole proprietor / partnership deed and copy of CNIC of owner (s) / proprietor.

5. Submit Professional Tax Clearance Certificate or undertaking on non-judicial stamp paper.

6. Tender documents shall only be issued to authorized representative of the contractor / firm / company having valid and genuine proof of authorization of the firm / company which he represents against a written application on letterhead of firm.

7. Tender documents will not be issued to those firms / contractors whose past performance with PCAA at any airport / location is found unsatisfactory or currently under litigation / debarring / blacklisting process with PCAA.

8. Tenders will be received in the office of the **DIVISIONAL ENGINEER ES (CIVIL) BKIP PESHAWAR ON 23-08-2024 AT 11.00 A.M AND WILL BE OPENED ON THE SAME DAY AT 11.30 A.M.**

9. Earnest money amounting to **Rs. 75,000/- (Seventy Five Thousand)** shall be deposited in the shape of Cash Deposit / Bank Draft prepared in favour of Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority.

10. Tenders can be purchased from the office of the undersigned on payment of prescribed tender Fee (Non-refundable) as mentioned against above work.

11. No tender document shall be issued by post or on the opening date of tenders.

12. The authority may reject all the tenders as per PPRA rule in vogue.

13. Tenders are also available at PPRA Website www.ppra.org.pk and CAA Website www.caapakistan.com.pk.

14. **"WARNING"** Pay orders / Bank Drafts or any other financial instruments to be submitted by Bidders and Contractors as Tender Cost, Earnest money / Bid Security and Bank Guarantees, if found fake or dishonoured by issuing bank / financial institution at any pre / post contract stage of the case, would call for blacklisting and legal action as per law of the land."

DIVISIONAL ENGINEER ES (CIVIL)
BKIP PESHAWAR
www.caapakistan.com.pk **PID K.336/24**

Stakeholders review progress on gem processing and export centre

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting held here in Industries Department with Special Assistant to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Tordher in the chair, here on Wednesday, and reviewed progress made on the establishment of Namak Mandi Gems Processing & Export Centre and targets assigned to concerned departments so far.

Besides, Special Secretary Industries Mohammad Anwar Khan, Additional Secretaries Industries Shama Niamat & Shahana, Senior Planning Officer Basit Khalil and Deputy Post Master General (DPMG)



Zarghaam Abbas, the representatives of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC), Board of Investment & Trade (KP-BoIT), Sartaj Ahmad Khan, a representative of All Pakistan Commercial Exporters Association (APCEA) also attended the meeting.

The participants of the

meeting were briefed on efforts and progress made in the implementation of this important project so far. It was told that the stakeholders of the project have been agreed to the proposal of the establishment of the centre in a building of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project at Chamkani and a formal application has also been submitted with the concerned department in this regard.

Furthermore, the consultant was also assigned the task of the provision of all world class facilities in the building while the participants were also informed about progress made by the concerned departments in achievement of assigned targets regarding the speedy completion of the project.

Addressing the participants of the meeting, the Special Assistant directed the Industries Department and its subsidiary organizations to accelerate the pace of working on their responsibilities to accomplish the project as soon as possible. He further directed the completion of all required phases in the shortest time period.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister on Finance, Mr. Muzammil Aslam chairing a meeting regarding irrigation projects.

Pakistani psychiatrist wins UK's prestigious award



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Prof Saeed Farooq, a Pakistani psychiatrist, has been selected by National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) for UK's Global Health Professorship Award.

Prof Saeed, who has to his credit 250 publications in high impact journals, worked for more than a decade at LRH during which the psychiatry unit was recognised by College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPSP) for post-graduate training. He also established Journal of Pakistan Psychiatric Society (JPPS) and worked as its chief editor for almost a decade.

The NIHR selected seven leading health researchers working in Africa, South America and Asia.

The selection process involved a competitive peer review of research plan submitted by applicants from UK and globally, followed by interview by a panel of world leading researchers.

He completed PhD in mental health in 2012 in UK and joined School of Medicine Keele University, UK, in 2016. A psychological therapy for people in humanitarian context, widely known as PM+ (problem management plus) in Peshawar. The PM+ is now recognised by World Health Organisation (WHO) as standard treatment for people in conflict zone and being used worldwide in similar situations.

Prof Saeed, a graduate of Khyber Medical College, is the only Pakistani to win the award.

A total of seven researchers earned the NIHR global research professorship, the most prestigious and highly competitive award. The awardees also include UK institutions such as King College London, which is among the top 10 universities in the world.

Saeed Farooq is professor of psychiatry and public mental health at School of Medicine, Keele University, and honorary consultant psychiatrist Midlands Partnership National Health at Service Foundation Trust. He has achieved multi-million pound research funding, which is now support on reducing the treatment gap for mental illness. It helps in providing services to people with psychosis.

Saeed Farooq will conduct research on "Translating evidence for early intervention in psychosis (Translate) in low and lower-middle countries (LMIC): implementation and evaluation". As part of this project, he will lead establishing and evaluating a service for young people with psychosis at five sites in Pakistan and one in Sri Lanka.

Prof Saeed is leading one of the largest capacity building programmes in research in mental health in countries. A native of Swabi and now settled in Haripur, he received higher training in Birmingham, UK, and returned in 1995 to Lady Reading Hospital (LRH), where he established a state-of-the-art psychiatry department.

PHC orders DPO Nowshera to produce minors by 15th

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Syed Arshad and Justice Ijaz Khan Sabi ordered district police officer Nowshera to recover two children who were forcibly taken from their mother and produced before PHC by 15th August, on Wednesday.

The counsel Akhonzada Ahmad Saeed advocate informed the court that the petitioner is a PhD scholar

who was married to Mustafa Kamal six years ago in Nowshera. The couple has two children, Zaviyar three year of age and Zaroon Mustafa of four years who were living with their mother in Peshawar.

However, on July 23, Mustafa Kamal, along with his accomplices, arrived at the petitioner father's house and forcibly took the children away. They also beat up the petitioner's brother.

The petitioner filed a habeas corpus plea in the Nowshera Session Court,

but the police failed to recover the children despite two raids. The Session Court subsequently dismissed the petition.

The counsel argued that the children are young and should be with their mother, especially since Mustafa has remarried. He argued that both Pakistani and Islamic laws allowing young children to stay with their mothers. PHC ordered DPO Nowshera to recover the children and present them before the Peshawar High Court by 15th August.

YEAP not to support any single panel in PEC polls

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Engineer Abdul Haseeb Mansuri (Founder of YEAP) informed that YEAP will not blindly support anyone or any panel. YEAP will decide on the final candidates after mutual consensus among the Young Engineers of Pakistan. While talking to the media, Abdul Haseeb Mansuri mentioned that YEAP will support different

candidates from different panels based on their profile (credibility, performance, and past track record).

Abdul Haseeb Mansuri also informed the media that YEAP will focus on the development of young engineers, offering free training and various initiatives. He expressed concern over the low turnout in previous PEC elections and stated that efforts will be made to achieve a better voter

turnout in the upcoming PEC Election 2024-27.

Engr. Syed M. Hassan Naqvi (Co-founder) stated that although they come from different groups and panels, their common agenda is to strengthen and uplift young engineers. He encouraged people to share the profiles of those they support with YEAP, which will then mutually decide and announce its stance for the PEC Elections 2024-27.

RTI Empowerment

Citizens uncover misconduct, drive accountability: Farah

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Citizens armed with information obtained through RTI requests have been instrumental in uncovering instances of misconduct, leading to investigations and corrective actions.

This new found transparency has empowered communities to engage with the government institutions actively, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and equitably.

This was stated by Chief Information Commissioner, Mrs. Farah Hamid Khan while expressing her views in a



one day training on RTI law to the Public Information Officers of district Peshawar here at a local hotel in Peshawar.

The training was organized by KP Information Commission in collaboration with Individual Land and CPDI. Chief Commissioner emphasized the PIO to put in their

efforts to streamline the process of provision of information through implementation of section 4 and 5 of the KP RTI Act i.e. indexation of record and pro-active disclosure of information. She added that implementation of RTI Law has fostered a culture of openness and accountability across the nation.

Zalmi Foundation launches Zalmi Force website portal



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Zalmi Foundation today proudly launched the 'Zalmi Force' website portal during a grand event held in Peshawar. The innovative digital platform of Zalmi Force aims to mobilize volunteers across Pakistan to work on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects and Peshawar Zalmi (PZ) activities, furthering the foundation's mission to uplift communities and foster youth development.

The annual Zalmi Force event also featured a special ceremony for the distribution of certificates to the Zalmi Force volunteers, recognizing their commitment and dedication to making a positive impact in their communities. All volunteers from around the country gathered for the event to celebrate the successful execution of activities in past year and plan for future projects.

The Zalmi Force initiative is a passion project of Mr. Javed Afridi whose vision is to engage youth from diverse backgrounds, providing them with opportunities to contribute to various social projects, including education, healthcare, environmental sustainability, and sports development. Through these efforts, the foundation aims to create a network of proactive individuals dedicated to improving the socio-economic landscape of Pakistan.

The Zalmi Force volunteers will participate in a range of activities, including organizing community events, leading educational workshops, supporting health

initiatives, and utilizing sports as a tool for development and peace. These efforts will be instrumental in driving positive change and fostering a culture of volunteerism and social responsibility among the youth.

The Zalmi Foundation invites individuals across Pakistan to join the Zalmi Force and be part of a transformative journey making a significant impact and build a better future for our communities.

Mr. Javed Afridi, Chairman Peshawar Zalmi & Zalmi Foundation applauded the efforts of the young team and said "It is our mission to empower the youth of our country and equip them with the skills and experience to help them transform into future leaders. We believe Zalmi Force can emerge as an exemplary volunteer body becoming a role model for youngsters around the world working on CSR projects and fan engagement activations, promoting values of unity, resilience, and empowerment."

The Zalmi Foundation has a long-standing commitment to CSR and youth empowerment. By launching the Zalmi Force website portal, the foundation continues to expand its reach and deepen its impact. The initiative aligns with the foundation's broader objectives of promoting education, health, and social welfare in Pakistan.

For more information on how to join the Zalmi Force and participate in upcoming projects, please visit the newly launched Zalmi Force website at www.zalmiforce.org

The Zalmi Foundation is a leading non-profit organization dedicated to social development and youth empowerment in Pakistan. Affiliated with the Peshawar Zalmi cricket team, the foundation works on a variety of initiatives, including education, health, sports, and community development projects. Through its efforts, the foundation aims to create a positive and lasting impact on society.

US-sponsored Sports Gala informs youth about land registration

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The U.S. government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Land Registration in Merged Areas (LRMA) activity held the third Sports Gala at a local hotel in Peshawar to provide a healthy platform for the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) Merged Areas in general and Hassan Khel subdivision in particular, to showcase their sports skills while at the same time informing the players and the spectators about their land ownership and transfer rights.

"The event has provided us with an opportunity to reach out to the Merged Areas Youth collectively to educate them about the importance of land registration and transparency of land titles in these areas," said Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif (Advisor to Chief Minister KP on Information).

Mr. Amjad Miraj,



Secretary-I, KP Board of Revenue highlighted the importance of youth engagement in land registration efforts by exclaiming, "The absence of verifiable land registration often leads to land disputes and incidents involving loss of lives due to unclear land ownership."

The 5-day event will feature the youth of Hassan Khel competing in football, cricket, volleyball, badminton, and table tennis matches, with many government representatives and more than 200 youth, university students, academics, and media watching.

"Building trust, raising awareness, and promoting collaboration between the state and its citizens are crucial for sustainable land governance and community development," said Mr. Irfan Younas, Lead

Communications and Public Outreach USAID LRMA Activity. "We are proud to support the KP government in educating its people."

These sports events will be followed by more than 20 awareness-raising sessions to educate the youth and the broader community in the merged areas about the benefits and processes of land registration.

KMU implements revolutionary changes in examination department

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar has decided to take important steps in the examination department to deal with the new challenges.

These steps were decided in a high-level meeting chaired by Vice Chancellor KMU Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq. It was unanimously decided in the meeting that six new examination centers of KMU will be established across the province where facilities will be provided to ensure easy access and reduction of travel time and expenses to students in various divisions of the province.

In the meeting, the examination procedure of MBBS, BDS, Nursing, Allied Health Sciences and Pharmacy programs will be made better, easier and student friendly. Under the



new system, all the examinations of various degree programs will be conducted computer based.

A monitoring desk will be set up to manage the posting of duty staff and inspectors as per the details, which will ensure that all work is carried out in a transparent and efficient manner.

KMU's dedicated staff will monitor all stages of the examination process while the faculty will review the entire process to

ensure successful completion of the examination stages. It is worth mentioning that modern equipment and technology will be used during the examination process to maintain transparency and efficiency.

Addressing the meeting, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq said that the aim of these reforms is to make the examination process clean and transparent and to provide a more easy-to-understand and efficient system for students and staff. He

said that separate committees have been established for annual and semester examinations to meet the separate requirements of these two fields.

Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq appreciated the efforts of all the staff of KMU who are working tirelessly to make the administration of examinations efficient. He emphasized that more instructions and guidance should be provided to his subordinates for improvement and to ensure the immediate implementation of these measures.

He assured that additional positive changes will be made in the examination system to bring better results.

He added that KMU is committed to a fair, transparent and efficient examination process that will benefit students, faculty and the wider academic community



In brief

Woman killed over karo-kari

GAMBAT (INP): A married woman was killed over charges of 'kako-kari' here on Wednesday, police said. The incident took place in village Jara Khoh Kalhoro of Gambat district Khairpur where mother of two children identified as Suriya 30, was killed for honour. Heavy contingent of police reached the scene getting the information. As per initial investigations, the woman was killed for her alleged involvement in immoral activities. The body was shifted to local hospital for postmortem and police after registering a case into the incident started investigations.

Two killed, many injured

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): At least two people were killed and many others injured as truck hit several vehicles here on Wednesday. According to details, a truck got out of control due to failure of brakes and rammed into several vehicles in Kohala Neelum Point area of Muzaffarabad in AJK. As a result of accident, two people including a girl was killed on the spot while several others sustained injuries. The bodies and injured were shifted to different hospitals of the area. The police impounded the truck and after registering a case into the incident started investigations.

Trailer driver dies in mishap

LODHRAN (INP): Driver of trailer died after the vehicle hit a divider near toll plaza at Qutubpur Khanewal road in Lodhran on Wednesday. According to details, two drivers of a Lahore bound trailer coming from Karachi carrying luggage tried to driver seats in the moving vehicle. The vehicle got out of control and it collided with a divider at Qutubpur Khanewal road. The collision resulted in death of a 35 years old driver Javed Ahmad s/o Zahoor Ahmad hailing from Chak No 65/10-R. The body was shifted to hospital where it was handed over to heirs after legal formalities.

Two passengers killed

BAHAWALPUR (INP): At least two innocent lives were lost and several others were left battered and bruised as the two vehicles crashed into each other with immense force at Jhangra Sharqi Interchange Bahawalpur on early Wednesday morning. The rescue sources said that the accident occurred in Bahawalpur where a truck collided with a bus and took the lives of two people on the spot. The rescue sources said that the truck caught fire right after the accident however the rescue team arrived on the spot of the incident. After the accident, rescue teams reached the spot where efforts have been underway to control the fire, rescue officials added. It was also reported that the high-speed passenger bus hit the truck while in an attempt to avoid the collision after taking sharp turn.

Police arrest drug peddler

HYDERABAD (INP): Police in its continued drive against narcotics and criminals on Wednesday arrested an accused and recovered prohibited raw material. Hyderabad Police along with excise police conducted an intelligence-based raid on Pak International Goods Transport and recovered 185 bags of raw material used in the manufacturing of gutka and mainpuri and held an accused Ejaz. In another drive, Hatri Police acting on a tip-off raided a warehouse and recovered a huge quantity of the bags of raw material from a container.



HYDERABAD: A view of accumulated rainwater at Latifabad after heavy downpour.

KKKUK signs MoU with Geological Survey

F.P. Report

KARAK: Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak has taken a significant step towards advancing research and developing industry collaboration by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Geological Survey of Pakistan. The MoU was signed by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naseer Ud Din, Vice Chancellor of KKKUK, and Dr. Sajjad Ahmad, the Director General of Geological Survey of Pakistan during a formal ceremony held on in Islamabad Wednesday.

The signing ceremony was attended by notable officials including Dr. Ghani Ur Rehman, Registrar of Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Dr. Muhammad Zubair, Director Office of Research Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC); Dr. Nazir Ur Rehman, Head of the Department of Geology; and Afrasiab, Manager of ORIC.

According to the MoU, both institutions will engage



in collaborative efforts across various domains such as joint research projects, developing relationships and cooperation with industry and other academic institutions, student internships, staff training, exchange visits for faculty members, students, and staff. Additionally, the partnership will focus on the initiation and arrangement of joint seminars and conferences.

Speaking at the ceremony, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naseer Ud Din expressed his gratitude to Dr. Sajjad Ahmad and his institution for their generous support to Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, a university located in a remote

area. He acknowledged the efforts of the ORIC Directorate and the Head of Geology Department in making the MoU ceremony a success. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naseer Ud Din reiterated his commitment to promoting research and the commercialization of research products.

Dr. Sajjad Ahmad, Director General Geological Survey of Pakistan Islamabad, extended a warm welcome to the Vice Chancellor and the Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak team. He assured that GARL would provide maximum support to the university under the terms of the MoU.

Monsoon plantation campaign accelerated

F.P. Report

BUNER: Tehsil municipal administration Daggar accelerated plantation drive in the last week of Monsoon plantation campaign. Tehsil chairman, municipal officer, Assistant Commissioner held an awareness walk.

The aim behind the walk was that the message of the Provincial Government and Deputy Commissioner Buner about "every one plant two saplings" should be made public to achieve the target of planting 1000 saplings during monsoon season to be continued till 14th August this year.

The Nazim, TMO, AC, teachers, students and local elders planted pine and poplar saplings on the vast barren land near the famous Landai Anghapur Cricket ground and at the lawn of TMA office in Daggar.

Speaking on the occasion they shared the message that due to the decrease in the area of forests in Pakistan, the area of forests is under the influence of environmental pollution and heat. They added, there will be a good effect on the environment of a forestation. They claimed this will help reduce the environmental pollution and heat and the pleasant environment will provide a healthy clean climate and tourism will be promoted and the country will develop and the people will be prosperous.

Admn commits to control dengue larva

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Emergency Response Committee held meeting regarding prevention from Dengue under the chairmanship of Assistant Commissioner Kamalia Iqra Nasir, on Wednesday.

In which the implementation of anti-dengue measures across the Tehsil was reviewed. Assistant Commissioner Iqra Nasir while reviewing the preventive measures said that there should be a strong focus on hotspots and no suspicious place should be left without checking.

The possible growth of dengue can be prevented while directing all the concerned departments in the fight against dengue to realize their responsibilities for complete prevention of dengue and the source of breeding of dengue should be eliminated 100%.

Land demarcation discussed

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Commissioner Malakand Division, Saqib Raza Aslam on Wednesday chaired a jirga and discussed the land demarcation and associated disputes in Oaskai.

The Jirga was held in Chakdarra and among others were attended by Deputy Commissioner Lower Dir, Assistant Commissioner, elected representatives and tehsil Nazim. Chairing the meeting, commissioner assured Jirga members implementation of court orders and steps according to aspirations of stakeholders.

Tribesmen blames DHO for bribery to setup BHU

F.P. Report

WANA: The residents of Mardar Algaad village area of tehsil Ladha, South Waziristan blamed the District Health Officer (DHO) Dr. Shams-ur-Rehman Dawar for demanding bribes and creating obstacles in the restoration of the Basic Health Unit (BHU) in their village.

According to details, the villagers told media representatives that their village's BHU has been completed for a long time, but DHO Dr. Shams-ur-Rehman Dawar is creating hurdles in its activation and demanding bribes. The villagers said that they have requested the DHO several

times to activate the BHU, but he has clearly stated that he will only do so if the contractor who built it is brought to him, as he has a commission on handling and taking over.

The villagers said that they told the DHO that the BHU was built by the Pakistan Army's resources and the contractor was also appointed by the army, but the DHO refused to listen. The villagers said that there are no health facilities in their area, and due to the lack of health facilities, they have to take patients to far-off areas for treatment. They said that the BHU has been completed for many years, but the Health Department is not taking it over and not

providing staff, due to which it is lying vacant and will soon turn into ruins.

The villagers appealed to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, IGFC South, Health Minister, Chief Secretary KP, Secretary Health, DG Health, Commissioner DI Khan, Deputy Commissioner South Waziristan, and MPA Asif Khan Mehsud to suspend Dr. Shams-ur-Rehman Dawar and conduct a high-level inquiry into his corruption and award him a punishment according to the law. They also demanded the immediate activation of the BHU in Mardar Algaad so that the public can benefit from it.

JI raises voices over delay in development projects

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Lower Dir chapter of Jamaat-i-Islami has demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to take notice of delay in launching classes at the Timergara Medical College and probe into the alleged embezzlement of its funds. The demand was made during a meeting of the JI's political committee held at Ahya ul Uloom Balambat on Wednesday with former MPA Izazul Mulk Afkari in the chair.

Former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, district general secretary engineer Hafiz Yaqoob ur Rahman, former district nazim Ehsanul Haq, former MPA Saeed Gul, JI Youth wing district president Ateequr Rehman, former tehsil nazim Imranuddin Advocate, Fazl Wadood, Syed Musharraf Shah, Ziaullah and Saiful Islam attended the meeting.

The meeting discussed incomplete development projects in the district and expressed grave concerns on various issues faced by residents and silence of local lawmakers. The meeting was informed that despite the recruitment of employees from grade 3 to 18 in the Timergara medical college and payment of their salaries over Rs 180 million per year, the classes were yet to start there.

The participants said that it was a mega corruption scandal which still required proper investigation but the government did nothing to probe into it. "It is a serious failure of the present government to get classes start at the college", Mr Afkari said.

The political committee expressed its anger over the government failure to start work on the 80-kilometer long Gopalm Irrigation scheme and said the project cost had increased to Rs 11 billion instead of Rs 4 billion due to the years' long

delay. The participant pointed out that PC-I and survey of the project was completed in 2007 but the successive governments failed to start work on it. They said that 15000 acres of land would be irrigated through the channel in hundreds of the villages in Timergara, Talash and Adenzai.

The committee also raised voice on the delay in repairing the Balambat irrigation channel and said that thousands of acres of land had become barren due to closure of the channel. The JI political committee also condemned the unnecessary delay in completing the much-awaited Koto Hydro power station which is supposed to generate 41 mega watt of cheap electricity. The committee also demanded proper audit of the Timergara beautification project.

Condemning the Pesco, the committee said that heavy fines, illegal taxes and unannounced load shedding had made lives of the consumers miserable while the lawmakers had kept silence on the issue.

Grand jirga: The commissioner Malakand division Saqib Raza Aslam chaired a grand jirga of officials and area elders at the Chakdarra Fishing hut here on Wednesday. The Lower Dir deputy commissioner Muhammad Arif Khan, assistant commissioner Adenzai Suhail Khan, PTI MPA Humayun Khan, Adenzai tehsil chairman Fairoz Shah, members of the Adenzai grand Jirga Altaf Hussain, Naseebullah, Khurshid Ali Khan, Ishaq Khan, Gul Zada, Muhammad Iqbal, Ameer Naushad, Ali Khan and others were in attendance. The jirga members briefed the commissioner about the land dispute of Osakai and court proceedings.

The commissioner said the administration would implement the courts' decision regarding the Osakai land dispute. He directed the deputy commissioner to consolidate the parties' claims. He said the demarcation would be carried out once the measurement was completed. It was decided that the jirga would again meet soon. The commissioner lauded the efforts of the jirgas in resolving disputes and said the administration would try to resolve such land dispute with mutual cooperation.

Action against timber mafia: The Lower Dir deputy commissioner Muhammad Arif Khan has said that actions were being taken against the timber mafia in the district to maintain natural environment and beauty of the land. Talking to a group of local journalists at his office here on Wednesday, the DC said that due to lack of funds work on various development projects had been stopped. He said that provincial government would be asked to release funds for the Chakdarra Public Park, Kalpani Talash bypass road, Timergara beautification and repair of the Balambat irrigation channel.

He said the anti-encroachment drive would never be compromised. He said that a series of open kutcheries had been planned for quick resolution of problems faced by local residents. The official said that about 500,000 saplings would be planted in different areas of the district under the KP government's Billion Tree plus plantation drive in the next five years. He said that 1000 saplings would be planted this year on the 105 kanal of the state land in Khall during the ongoing monsoon plantation drive.



BANNU: Student of University o Science and Technology, Engineer Haroon Durrani addressing a press conference. — F.P. photo

Two brothers stabbed, injured over electricity bill in Daska

DASKA (INP): In what could be termed the most harrowing incident, two brothers in Daska were wounded when their two younger brothers attacked them with knives for not paying their share in electricity bill amounting to Rs6,000 on Wednesday.

The accused, however, managed to escape from the scene. According to the

police, when Gulzar, a labourer, came to his home, he was shocked to see his children crying with sweat because of the power outage.

When he asked his wife about the reason for that, she told him that his two brothers had removed the wires from the electricity meter, the police said, adding this infuriated Gulzar who then asked his brothers why they did

that. This led to a fight, the police said, adding Gulzar's brothers repeatedly attacked him with knives, consequently wounding him seriously. Another brother was also injured with bruises.

The labourer was initially rushed to the Civil Hospital, Daska where the doctors referred him to a hospital in Sialkot due to his critical condition.

DC appeals public for joining plantation drive

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat has appealed the people to actively participate in the plantation drive keeping in view the climate change, flood risks and other factors and plant maximum trees to provide their future generations pollution-free and green and healthy environment.

This appeal he made while presiding over a meeting on "Green Growth Strategy. Billion Tree Plus Plantation Campaign" in his office today. The meeting beside others was also attended by the Chairman Tehsil Gumbat Sajid Iqbal, Additional

Secretary Local Government Zahid Masood planted saplings. On the occasion, Chairman Engineer Adil Nawaz stated afforestation is very important for the survival of human life.

Clean and Green Mardan is our mission and all resources will be used to achieve this mission. He said that the promotion of forests is very important for

human life because plantation is the only way to control environmental pollution. He has appealed to the citizens to cooperate with the company in the plantation campaign to make Mardan a beautiful and clean city. Plantation is an ongoing charity and every member of the society should actively participate in the Monsoon plantation campaign.

Deputy Commissioner Kohat and authorities concerned of the Forest Department, TMAs, OGD-CL and MOL Company. The meeting discussed in detail various matters relating to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa "Green Growth Strategy. Billion Tree Plus Plantation Campaign" and several decisions were taken in this regard. DC said that the plantation campaign is must to effectively deal with the effects of climate change. The district administration, forest department and all other relevant institutions should play their key role for success of the said plantation

drive. He directed that all available resources should be utilized for plantation and play a role in making the campaign a success.

DC issued special directions regarding plantations at tourist spots of the district, all educational institutions including universities, colleges, schools, housing societies and other suitable places.

Meanwhile, DC Abdul Akram also paid a visit to District Offices Complex KDA where he beside checking the attendance of officers and officials and reviewing other matters, also met the visitors and inquired about their problems.



Young people replace police in Bangladesh capital

DHAKA (AFP): A day after Sheikh Hasina's 15-year autocratic rule ended, Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, took on a sombre and unusual appearance. The city's streets, which had been filled with jubilant crowds following Prime Minister Hasina's fall, were now notably less busy, with fewer vehicles and pedestrians.

Most striking was the complete absence of police - no constables, officers or traffic sergeants were visible in the city of about 20 million residents. In many locations, traffic was being managed by people in their early 20s. At the Bijoy Sarani intersection, a major crossroads leading to the airport and parliament, about five or six young men were directing traffic with bamboo sticks, even a cricket bat.

One man with a pointed gotee controlled the flow of cars heading towards the Tejgaon Industrial Area by waving a bamboo stick, first directing traffic towards the airport and then allowing vehicles bound for Tejgaon to proceed in an orderly manner. The scene where there once stood an iconic bronze statue of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the nation's father and Hasina's father, had also dramatically changed. A throng of people used ropes to topple the statue and dismantled its base using hammers and chisels. Enthusiastic crowds then moved in to collect pieces of the over-turned statue.

"It reminded me of the video of Saddam Hussein's statue being pulled down," said Asraf U1 Jubair when he shared a video of the scene on Facebook. It was a similar scene at the Mohakhali intersection, another typically busy area of the city, where young people were directing traffic. One of them, Rabbi, who did not provide his surname or age, smiled when asked about his role. "There are no police... 'shob bhage' - which means they [the police] have all vanished out of fear," he explained. After the massive crowds celebrating Hasina's fall had dispersed, a wave of violence erupted. Groups armed with sticks and sharp weapons moved through various parts of Dhaka, attacking individuals affiliated with Hasina's Awami League party.

Mahbubul Haque, a resident of Dhanmondi, an Awami League stronghold, told Al Jazeera that around midnight, a group of people arrived in a car and began vandalising the gate of an apartment building across from his home. The building was occupied by a prominent intellectual known for his strong support of Hasina's controversial actions, such as



the suppression of students during the quota protest. "At one point, they started firing guns, and we were terrified," Haque recounted. "Then some armed forces arrived, and they fled in the car. It's frightening." The violence continued throughout the night, with hundreds of videos of various attacks across the country circulating on social media and going viral. This led to widespread speculation, including claims that Hindu homes in Muslim-majority Bangladesh were being burned, and that police were firing bullets from police stations in different places as angry mobs tried to enter and burn those down.

Jumanah Parisa, a third-year student at Brac University, told Al Jazeera that she stayed up all night reading and watching videos about events. She felt panicked. "We didn't protest to make this land lawless," she said. Clashes across the country resulted in at least 119 deaths - the deadliest day in the week-long protest. Because the police are seen as corrupted by the Hasina administration, many police stations were targeted by protesters. Moreover, Hasina's close ties with the Indian government had led to rumours Indian agencies were helping her government suppress the protests. While some protest videos depicted atrocities like arson and violence, the speculation surrounding them was often exaggerated, according to Qadruddin Shishir, a fact-checking editor for AFP, who spent Sunday night debunking claims and posting clarifications on social media.

"The images of burning temples are outdated," Shishir explained to Al Jazeera. "Yes, there were attacks on police stations due to grievances over police brutality, but the police involved were Bangladeshi, not Indian." Meanwhile, images of people

including madrassa students, standing guard in front of temples and Hindu homes circulated widely on social media. Gobinda Chandra Pramanik, a leader of the Hindu community in Bangladesh, told Al Jazeera that Hindu temples were protected and no Hindus were killed. However, he noted that many Hindu homes and businesses were attacked by mobs in over 20 districts. "But those Hindus were associated with the Awami League party and they were not attacked because of their religious identity, rather because of their connection with Awami League," said Pramanik. "I haven't heard any news that a regular Hindu family without any political connection was attacked anywhere."

"Anyway, law enforcement must be immediately reinforced," he said. "Otherwise, the situation will spiral out of control." The talk of the town was who would head the interim government. In most households and places, people were discussing that Muhammad Yunus, the country's Nobel laureate, is going to head the government as its chief adviser. Most of the city meanwhile was calm, with no signs of violence or confrontation.

However, in the upscale Dhanmondi area, crowds continued to gather at the remains of the Awami League chairperson's office, the Bangabandhu Museum and Hasina's former residence, Sudha Sadan. These sites had been set ablaze by an angry mob the previous afternoon. At noon, another building beside the Bangabandhu Museum, which was previously used for Awami League gatherings, was burning. "We will leave no trace of the Awami League in the country," a young man, who declined to give his name, told Al Jazeera while he struck the building with a hammer.

Moscow says it's fighting a cross-border attack by Kyiv forces

KYIV (AP): Russian authorities claimed that a Ukrainian force launched an incursion into Russia's Kursk region but was being beaten back by troops and local border guards. The Russian Defense Ministry said as many as 300 Ukrainian troops, supported by 11 tanks and more than 20 armored combat vehicles, attacked Russian border positions in the area of Nikolayev-Daryino and Oleshnya in the Kursk region.

It claimed that six Ukrainian tanks, four armored personnel carriers and six other armored vehicles were destroyed in the fighting. The Russian report could not be independently verified. Disinformation and propaganda have played a central role in the war, now in its third year. Responsibility for previous incursions, into Russia's Belgorod and Bryansk regions, have been claimed by two murky groups: the Russian Volunteer Corps and the Freedom of Russia Legion. The Russian statement claimed the Ukrainian forces belonged to the army's 22nd Mechanized Brigade, but also referred to them as "fighters" rather than "soldiers." Contacted by The Associated Press, the brigade said it had no comment. The Freedom of Russia Legion also said it was not commenting. The Ukrainian General Staff and Ministry of Defense did not immediately reply to questions. The acting governor of the Kursk region, Alexei Smirnov, said a total of 26 Ukrainian drones were shot down in the area during the night.

Joy and relief as SA manages to keep its lights on

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): It is a crisp winter's day in Johannesburg, a clear blue sky shimmering over the bustling township of Alexandra, or Alex, as it is more commonly known here in South Africa.

Sizeka Rashamosa is standing in her restaurant, a stream of people swirling around her, some delivering crates of beer, another grilling meat on a hotplate. A group of young men are sitting at a sun-drenched table. "I can't talk," she says, "I'm busy." It is a far cry from when we first met in March last year, at the height of South Africa's power crisis and frequent load-shedding, the official term for scheduled power cuts.

Back then Ms Rashamosa had very little electricity, and just one customer. A reflection of the wider impact on the economy. "The power is everything," she said at the time. "I'm very stressed. We don't have money because of the electricity, you can see it's dark. I don't think I'll survive in my business. We'll have to close down after 25 years. It's terrible." But now, when she finally finds a few minutes to talk, things are more positive. "The load-shedding is much better now," she says. "You can see, there's electricity. And now I'm busy. I'm going to stay open, no plans to close, not anymore." It is a remarkable turnaround. Load-shedding began in 2007, reaching a low last year with power cuts often lasting more than half a day. This year it was expected to get worse. But now there has been no load-shedding for more than four months - since 05:00 on 26 March to be precise - the longest break in more than four years.

How has the turnaround happened, and will power cuts return? It is largely because of a set of programmes from the state-owned power provider Eskom and the government over the last two years. In July 2022 President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the Energy Action Plan, and the following February he declared a national state of disaster over the electricity crisis. Soon after he created the role of electricity minister, appointing Kgosietho Ramokgopa. And then Eskom launched the two-year Generation Operational Recovery Plan, the key aim of which was to increase the amount of power - known as the "Energy Availability Factor" (EAF) - to 70% of the network's potential.

Iran's response to Israel looms. What are the possible scenarios?

TEHRAN: The assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, along with the killing of leading Hezbollah figure Fuad Shukr in Beirut, has sent shockwaves throughout the Middle East, and the feeling that the Iranians are likely to respond with an attack on Israel that could start an all-out regional war.

Israel is widely believed to have carried out Haniyeh's killing, and claimed the assassination of Shukr. Following on from months of devastating attacks on Gaza, where almost 40,000 Palestinians have been killed, and previous escalations against both Iran and its ally Hezbollah in Lebanon, there is apprehension over what comes next, with the fear that Lebanon in particular could be at risk of attack in the case of any extended conflict. It has now been almost a week since both Haniyeh and Shukr were killed, but no major attack on Israel has yet been conducted, with diplomats scurrying around the region in an effort to stave off any escalation.

The Iranians have insisted they will respond, with Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Nasser Kanaani saying that regional stability could only come from "punishing the aggressor and creating deterrence against the adventurism of the Zionist regime [Israel]". The question now is - what shape will this response take? Will it be a measured effort calculated to avoid a regional war - much like the last time Iran felt like it had to respond to an Israeli attack in April? Or will Iran's leaders believe that the latest attacks require a more forceful response, even if it risks a wider conflict? The assassination of Haniyeh has brought tensions to their highest point since last October, when a Hamas-led attack led to an estimated

1,139 people killed in Israel, and more than 200 people were taken captive. Israel responded by launching a devastating war on Gaza that has destroyed the enclave, displaced millions and killed almost 40,000 Palestinians.

Less than 24 hours before Haniyeh's assassination, Israel killed Fuad Shukr, a founding member of Hezbollah's armed wing, and at least five civilians in Beirut's southern suburbs. Israel blamed Shukr for an attack in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights which killed 12 Druze children and young people. Hezbollah has denied responsibility for the attack. Israel has killed at least 39 commanders or senior members of the "axis-of-resistance" - the pro-Iranian network opposed to US and Israeli hegemony in the region - since October 7, according to monitoring group ACLED. "It is unlikely that the elimination of commanders and senior leaders of the axis of resistance will be a decisive factor in ending the current conflicts along Israel's southern and northern borders or pose an existential threat to Israel's adversaries," ACLED's Middle East Regional Specialist Ameneh Mehvar wrote in a report. "With a ceasefire agreement that could secure the release of Israeli hostages now even more distant, the current assassinations have brought the region even closer to the brink of a war that could have devastating consequences for the Middle East and beyond."

Although Israel has not officially commented on Haniyeh's assassination, the day after the killing, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave a speech acknowledging the likelihood of an Iranian response. "We are prepared for any scenario, and will stand united and determined against any threat," Netanyahu said in a televised speech on

Wednesday evening. "Israel will exact a very heavy price for aggression against us from any arena." Addressing the attack on Beirut's suburbs, Netanyahu said, "We settled the bill with Mohsen [Shukr's alias] and we will settle the bill with anyone who hurts us. Anyone who kills our children, anyone who murders our citizens, anyone who harms our country - will pay the price."

Iran's forthcoming response is imminent, analysts said, but would likely be measured. While Haniyeh's assassination on Iranian soil, and in the country's capital no less, was a major insult to the Iranian government, experts said it doesn't change Iran's desire to avoid a wider regional war with Israel and its main supporter, the United States. "I don't believe escalation is on the mind of Iranian decision-makers," Reza Akbari, Middle East and North Africa programme manager at the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, told Al Jazeera. "Having said that, of course, Iranian policymakers are not unified." Iranian politics has long been split between hardliners and reformists. The country's new president Masoud Pezeshkian, widely described as a centrist or a reformist, has only been in the job a couple of weeks.

When Iran attacked Israel back in April, Pezeshkian's predecessor Ibrahim Raisi, a hardliner, had not yet perished in a helicopter crash. Pezeshkian has appointed ministers and intermediaries who have experience negotiating on the international stage, including some involved in the signing of the JCPOA, the deal that put curbs on Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for lifting sanctions - and which the US unilaterally withdrew from in 2018. — Aljazeera

Nigerian protesters arrested for waving Russian flag

ABUJA (BBC): About 40 people have been arrested in northern Nigeria for waving Russia's national flag during protests against the high cost of living and what they feel is "bad governance". Amid this crackdown, army chief Christopher Musa warned that it is a "treasonable offence" to fly the flags of foreign countries.

Nigeria has seen six days of nationwide protests, in which at least seven people have died and more than 700 have been arrested. Demonstrators have been chanting slogans such as "we are hungry", while a minority have been pictured waving Russia's flag and voicing support for Russian President Vladimir Putin. According to local media, some of these protesters have called on Moscow to "rescue" them. The subsequent arrests are seen as an attempt to stifle any fledgling support for Russia in Nigeria, a leading oil producer and a key ally of Western powers.

Several countries in the wider region of West Africa - including Nigeria's neighbour, Niger - have pivoted away from the West and towards Russia after recent military coups. Civilian governments backed by the likes of France and the US had rapidly lost popularity -

critics accused them of failing to tackle insecurity, corruption and economic problems. Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu came to power in May 2023 after winning fiercely contested elections. Satisfaction with his leadership has plummeted, with many blaming his policies for the sharp increase in the cost of living. He scrapped a long-standing state subsidy on fuel in his inaugural speech, causing pump prices to rise. The move also had a knock-on effect on the cost of food and other basic commodities. Mr Tinubu has urged frustrated Nigerians to be patient, insisting his policies would bear fruit. He has appealed for an end to the protests and held a meeting with security chiefs to assess their scale.

Afterwards, army chief Christopher Musa said: "We are warning in clear terms that we will not accept anybody, any individual flying any foreign flag in Nigeria. That is a treasonable offence, and it will be viewed and treated as such." The Russian embassy in Nigeria has distanced itself from the demonstrations, saying that the flags were the "personal choices" of protesters. "As always, we emphasise that Russia does not interfere in the domestic

affairs of foreign states, including Nigeria," it added. The north-western states of Kaduna and Zamfara saw a massive turnout of demonstrators. Kaduna police spokesman Mansir Hassan said 39 people were arrested there, including a tailor who was "sewing the foreign flags for the group". Close to 40 Russian flags were confiscated, as well as a Chinese one, he added. A curfew has now been imposed in Kaduna - the sixth state to take such action since last week, forcing millions of people to stay at home. In a statement, Nigeria's secret service said tailors have also been arrested in Kano state for "making Russian flags".

"Some of their sponsors have also been picked. Investigation is ongoing," it said. Rights group Amnesty International says 13 people have been killed since protests began last week and accused security forces of using excessive force against demonstrators. Mr Tinubu addressed the nation and said his government was committed to addressing the concerns of protesters. He added that the protests had been hijacked by looters in some areas, and ending the unrest would create room for dialogue.

Official tells UNSC that aid to starving Sudanese being blocked

UNITED NATIONS (AP): A UN humanitarian official told the Security Council that life-saving supplies are "ready to be loaded and dispatched" to a famine-stricken displacement camp in Sudan but the civil war's combatants won't let them through.

Edem Wosornu, operations director for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, told the council it is "still possible to stop this freight train of suffering" but that requires "the urgency that this moment demands." A report released found that the Zamzam camp in southern Sudan likely faces famine and the crisis will continue "as long as the conflict and limited humanitarian access continue."

At least 500,000 people are sheltering in the camp, according to the report. Sudan plunged into conflict in April 2023 when fighting broke out between the military and a powerful paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces, in the capital, Khartoum. The UN says over 14,000 people

have been killed and 33,000 wounded, and more than 10 million are displaced. Twenty-six million people in Sudan face acute hunger, Wosornu said. She said that since May the UN and partners have delivered food assistance to 2.5 million people facing the worst levels of hunger. The relief supplies now waiting to be shipped to Zamzam include essential medicines, nutritional supplies, water purification tablets and soap. Wosornu said, "Humanitarian workers can't access additional supplies in neighboring eastern Chad after heavy rains flooded the last cross-border route that Sudanese authorities had permitted for aid transport. "We simply cannot move the large volume of supplies required to save lives and fight back famine," Wosornu said. World Food Program Assistant Executive Director Stephen Omollo told the council that the agency will target people in Sudan facing "emergency, catastrophic levels of hunger" for aid delivery. "We are significantly scal-

ing up operations across the country to curb the spread of famine - boosting our capacity, presence and resources," Omollo said. The WFP official added that the organization will continue providing food and cash assistance to refugees in Chad as well as neighboring South Sudan and Libya. Wosornu said the UN plans to distribute more than \$100 million in cash and voucher assistance before the end of the year.

But both officials urged Security Council members to increase humanitarian funding. The humanitarian appeal for Sudan has received only \$883 million of the \$2.7 billion required, or 33%, according to OCHA. Omollo also said the new report on famine must serve as a "wake-up call" for the council to persuade Sudan's warring parties to halt fighting and secure cross-border aid routes. Wosornu said aid workers in Sudan are "harassed, attacked, and even killed," while supply convoys carrying food, medicine and fuel "have been subjected

to looting and extortion." Sudanese UN ambassador Mohamed Ibrahim Elbahi accused the UN of downplaying the paramilitary's practices of looting aid convoys - including the theft of more than 4,000 liters of fuel (1,057 gallons) from a UN convoy this week - and deliberately starving civilians. "The fact that these violations are not condemned emboldens (the RSF) to commit more atrocities. It also contributes to a wrong narrative on the source of real suffering in Sudan," Elbahi said. Elbahi also contested the humanitarian officials' claims related to border crossings, saying Sudanese authorities opened nine air, sea and land crossings this year, in addition to approving visas for thousands of aid workers. The ambassador also vehemently denied that the Zamzam camp faces famine, accusing the experts behind it of "declaring famine on a political basis" as "punishment" for Sudanese authorities despite their cooperation with the UN.

Thailand's Move Forward Party faces potential dissolution as ruling looms

BANGKOK (AP): Thailand's Constitutional Court is set to rule on Wednesday whether the progressive Move Forward Party (MFP) violated the constitution when it pledged to amend the country's lese-majeste law outlawing criticism of the royal family.

Should the court rule against the MFP, the party could be dissolved and its leaders banned for 10 years, marking a sharp turnaround in its fortunes since its stunning election victory a little more than a year ago. Back then, millions of young Thais banded behind the MFP's charismatic leader Pita Limjaroenrat, galvanised by the party's promise of change. Its flagship policy was to reform Section 112 of Thailand's Criminal Code, which restricts all criticism of the monarchy.

The party's victory and

reform agenda placed it firmly in the sights of Thailand's long-ruling conservative elite. Pita was blocked from becoming prime minister and forming a government. With tomorrow's ruling set to define Thai democracy for years to come, here's everything you need to know about the case: MFP is the de facto successor to the Future Forward Party (FFP), which stormed to third in Thailand's 2019 general election on an anti-junta platform, rocking the country's ruling class. After initially surviving a Constitutional Court case accusing it of attempting to overthrow the monarchy, the FFP was disbanded in February 2020 after it was ruled to have violated election finance laws by accepting a loan from its leader Thana Sangsri. Following the ruling, 55 of

the FFP's 65 members of parliament joined the MFP, promising to continue their progressive agenda. One such policy ahead of last May's election saw the MFP pledge to amend Section 112, reducing the maximum prison term for defaming the king from 15 years to one year and/or a fine of 300,000 Thai Baht (about \$8,400). It was on this platform that the MFP secured a shock election victory in 2023, winning 151 seats in Thailand's 500-seat House of Representatives, 10 more than Paetongtarn Shinawatra's second-placed Pheu Thai party.

The MFP, however, fell short of the 251 seats required for an outright majority, with attempts to form a coalition with other pro-democracy parties, including Pheu Thai, blocked by Thailand's military-installed Senate using

power handed to it by a 2017 military-drafted constitution. In July, the Constitutional Court suspended Pita as an MP over shares he allegedly held in a defunct broadcaster - charges he was later acquitted of. Pheu Thai successfully formed its own coalition, incorporating military-aligned parties and excluding the MFP. In January this year, the Constitutional Court ruled that the MFP's proposed lese-majeste amendments amounted to a violation of Section 49 of the constitution, which prohibits attempts to "overthrow the democratic regime of government with the King as Head of State". It ordered the party to "stop any act, opinion expression via speech, writing, publishing or advertisement or conveying any message in other forms" that sought to amend Section 112.

Chinese academic convicted of acting as foreign agent in US

NEW YORK (Reuters): A Chinese academic was convicted of illegally acting as a foreign agent in the United States by collecting information about New York-based activists supporting democracy in China and sharing his findings with Beijing. A jury found Wang Shujun guilty on four counts including acting as a foreign agent without notifying the US attorney general and lying to US authorities, following a week-long trial in Brooklyn federal court.

Wang could face up to 25 years in prison when he is sentenced on Jan. 9, 2025. Federal prosecutors said Wang, a naturalized US citizen, portrayed himself as a fierce opponent of

the ruling Chinese Communist Party to gain the trust of Hong Kong pro-democracy activists, advocates for Taiwanese independence and campaigners for Uyghur and Tibetan rights.

Prosecutors said Wang was actually spying on the activists and sharing his findings with four officials in China's Ministry of State Security (MSS), an intelligence service. "The indictment could have been the plot of a spy novel, but the evidence is shockingly real," Breon Peace, the top federal prosecutor in the New York City borough of Brooklyn, said in a statement. "Wang was willing to betray those who respected and trusted him." Wang,

who emigrated to the United States in 1994, was arrested in March 2022.

Defense lawyer Zachary Margulis-Ohnuma said Wang spoke to the intelligence officials about the pro-democracy movement to win their support and promote social change, and was not acting as their agent. Margulis-Ohnuma said he respected the jury's verdict and would request a sentence that spares Wang the "agony" of prison. "We look forward to sentencing," Margulis-Ohnuma told reporters after the verdict. "He's a 76-year-old man. He certainly didn't mean to hurt anyone. He's spent his life fighting the communist regime."

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Kamala chooses grassroots Democrat Walz

EVERY Kamala Harris sceptic – and there are many across the United States – were waiting to commit a blunder in choosing her vice-presidential candidate even as she stepped late into the presidential campaign after Joe Biden moved away. It seems that Harris, by choosing Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, has done more than the right thing.

She has hit the bull's-eye as it were. She strengthened the progressive, even left, image of the Democrats. Harris always appeared to be the centrist, much like Biden while being sensitive to key issues like abortion, climate change et al. By choosing Walz she showed that she is fully on the left side of the Democrats' liberal front.

The best endorsement for Walz came from the United Auto Workers (UAW) when it said, "Tim Walz just doesn't talk the talk, he walks the walk. From delivering for working-class Americans to standing with the UAW on the picket line last year, we know which side he's on. That's why we're going to send @KamalaHarris and @Tim_Walz to the White House this December."

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has been appealing to the white working class constituency. But Walz is connected to this class in a genuine way. It trusts him as being on its side. That is more than half the battle won. Walz, a National Guard, served as a Congressman for six terms from 2006 onward which he won from a Republican-dominated constituency, and moved back to contest the election of Minnesota governor. He won it in 2018 and he has been in office ever since.

His progressive credentials are burnished in his policy decision over mid-day meals in schools, his stance on abortion, climate change, tax cuts for middle class and expanded paid leave for Minnesota workers. Announcing her choice of Walz, Harris said, "Tim is a battle-tested leader who has an incredible track record of getting things done for Minnesota families. I know he will bring the same principled leadership to our campaign, and to the office of the vice president."

Biden appeared to be a weak leader in contrast to the aggressive, assertive Trump, and his choice of Senator J.D.Vance for the vice-presidential candidate seemed to be a winning combination of bringing in young blood. But the Harris-Walz team looks not just a viable Democratic team, and all this was done in a few weeks' time, but it looks a winning team.

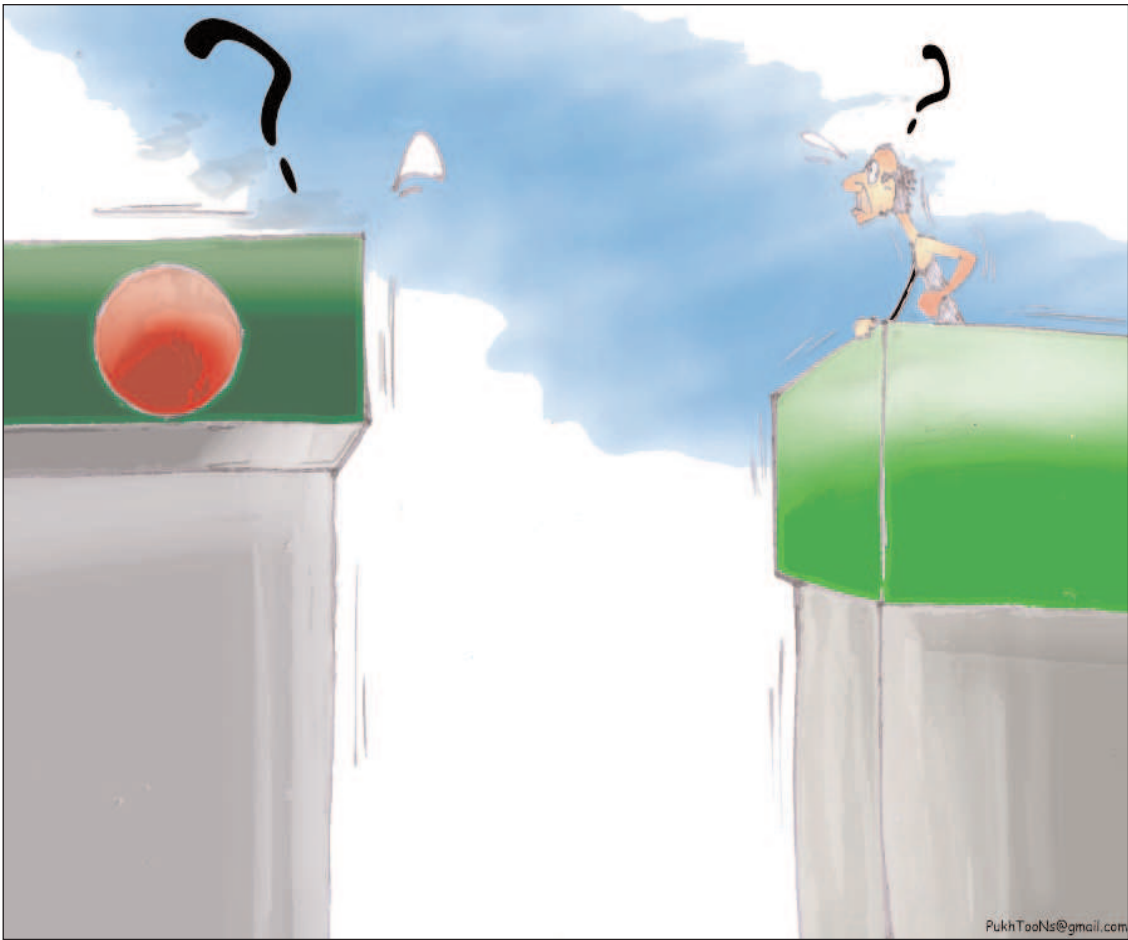
The team embodies the Democratic values in contrast to the conservative, even reactionary policy stances of the Trump-dominated Republicans. Harris-Walz are offering a credible alternative to Trump-Vance, both in terms of personality and of policy.

While Harris gathers the African-American, Asian and women voters, Walz with his grassroots political credentials will pick up the white working class and white rural vote. Walz cannot be lampooned by the Republicans as a New York or a California liberal, cosmopolitan politician who does not understand middle America. Walz comes from the heart of middle America.

What appeared as a one-sided election in a Biden-Trump contest has now turned into a real ideological battle between Trump-Vance and Harris-Walz, a contest of truly opposed views and personalities. Americans have to make a clear choice. When Biden was in the arena, many people would have voted for Trump even though they did not approve him or like him. But now they have a winning team to support, and a team that offers hope and an alternative to the expansive and unrealistic "Make America Great Again (MAGA)" rhetoric. Americans have to choose this November from true liberals and distorted conservatives. There is no ambiguity between the two. The differences are clear as daylight.

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Exiled by the people: Global leaders forced out from Power

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

IN the annals of political history, the phenomenon of leaders being forced to leave their countries due to public pressure and protest is not uncommon. This often occurs in response to widespread dissatisfaction with governance, economic turmoil, corruption scandals, or human rights abuses. Notable among these leaders is Sheikh Hasina Wajid of Bangladesh, who faced significant opposition at various points in her political career. However, she is not alone in this regard. A closer examination of global history reveals a number of Prime Ministers and Heads of State who have had to flee their countries due to the ire of their populace.

The cases of leaders fleeing their homelands are diverse and span across Continents. In Asia, for instance, Mohammad Najibullah of Afghanistan, who served as President during the Soviet occupation, was ousted in 1992. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the rise of the Mujahideen, Najibullah took refuge in a United Nations compound in Kabul, where he remained until 1996 when the Taliban captured the city and executed him. His downfall was precipitated by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing power vacuum, which his government could not withstand.

A prominent figure from the Middle East is the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. He left Iran in January 16, 1979 amidst the Islamic Revolution spearheaded by Ayatollah Khomeini. His tenure was characterized by swift modernization and secularization, which estranged many in Iranian society, notably religious factions and conservatives. The economic inequality and oppressive tactics employed by his administration incited

widespread demonstrations, leading to his departure. The Shah sought refuge in various countries, such as Egypt, Morocco, and the United States, but he never made it back to Iran, passing away in Egypt in 27 July 1980.

In Latin America, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the Nicaraguan dictator, was forced to flee his country in 1979 following the Sandinista revolution. His family's rule had been characterized by severe repression, corruption, and economic inequality. The Sandinista National Liberation Front, a leftist revolutionary group, garnered substantial support from the disillusioned populace and successfully overthrew Somoza. After his departure, he lived in exile in Miami, then The Bahamas, and finally Paraguay, where he was assassinated in exile in September 1980.

South America also witnessed the ousting of leaders like Juan Domingo Perón of Argentina. Although Perón initially fled the country in September 1955 after a coup d'état, he returned to power in 1973 only to die in office a year later. His initial exile was a result of increasing opposition from the military and various sectors of society disenchanted with his policies. Perón's departure marked a significant period of instability and military rule in Argentina.

In Africa, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was another leader who fled his country due to public pressure. Mobutu's regime was notorious for corruption, human rights abuses, and economic mismanagement. His rule, which began in 1965, was supported by Western powers during the Cold War due to his staunch anti-communism stance. However, by

the 1990s, the Cold War had ended, and internal dissent grew. Laurent-Désiré Kabila led a rebellion that eventually toppled Mobutu's government in 1997, forcing him into exile in Morocco, where he died in 1997.

Closer to the 21st century, we have the example of Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who fled Tunisia in 2011 amid the Jasmine Revolution, which sparked the wider Arab Spring. Ben Ali had ruled Tunisia for over two decades, during which his regime was marked by economic prosperity for some, but also by significant corruption, censorship, and human rights abuses. The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor protesting police corruption and ill treatment, ignited widespread protests that led to Ben Ali's departure. He fled to Saudi Arabia, where he lived until his death in 2019.

In Europe, we can consider the case of King Constantine II of Greece, who was forced into exile in 1967 following a military coup. Although he initially attempted to negotiate with the junta, his efforts failed, and he left the country. Constantine's exile lasted for decades, and it wasn't until 2013 that he was allowed to return to Greece, albeit without regaining any political power.

Another European example is Viktor Yanukovich of Ukraine, who fled to Russia in 2014 following the Euromaidan protests. Yanukovich's decision to abandon an association agreement with the European Union in favor of closer ties with Russia sparked massive protests. The government's violent crackdown on protesters only intensified the public outcry, leading to his eventual ousting and flight from the country.

Yanukovich remains in Russia, and his presidency is often cited as a critical moment in Ukraine's modern history, contributing to the ongoing conflict in the region.

The pattern of leaders fleeing their countries continues to this day, reflecting a global reality where public discontent can force significant political changes. These instances underscore the crucial role that public opinion and protest play in shaping political landscapes. They also highlight the vulnerability of even the most entrenched regimes to the collective power of their citizenry. In many cases, the departure of these leaders paved the way for significant political and social transformations, though not always for the better.

Sheikh Hasina Wajid's experience adds another layer to this narrative. As the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding leader of Bangladesh, her political journey has been fraught with challenges. She has faced multiple assassination attempts, military coups, and widespread political opposition. While she has managed to remain in power through various crises, her tenure is emblematic of the turbulent nature of leadership in countries grappling with complex socio-political landscapes.

The stories of these leaders, from Asia to Africa, Europe to Latin America, serve as powerful reminders of the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of political power. They reflect the ongoing struggle for democratic governance, human rights, and social justice worldwide. While the exile of a leader often marks the end of an era, it also signals the potential for new beginnings and the resilience of the human spirit in the quest for a better future.

Let's celebrate Olympic spirit, not gold medals

Zhang Xi

AFTER being obsessed with winning gold medals for decades, Chinese sports fans have begun to appreciate healthy competition among athletes, celebrate their speed, stamina and endurance, and marvel at their skills, acknowledge their hard work, and admire their desire to succeed. This change, especially evident at the ongoing Paris 2024 Summer Olympics, signifies a step toward separating sports from utilitarianism and accord priority to sportsmanship. This is a welcome development, for it indicates an attempt to restore the respect and glory of sports and athletes, which they so rightly deserve.

Instead of nasty criticism of athletes who do not win gold medals, netizens are now more likely to pass sympathetic comments on, and encourage, athletes or teams who fail to win a medal. Nowadays, seldom does one come across netizens lashing out at athletes for not meeting the fans' expectations.

Those who engage in fair competition at the Olympics deserve people's

At times, the worship of gold medals could lead to irrational behavior. Athletes may try to find dishonest ways to win games, and spectators may indulge in acts that could hurt athletes, spoiling the international image of their country.

China has tasted the bitter fruit of gold medal worship. That's why it's now changing its attitude toward sports, by adopting a more healthy approach toward athletes and sports.

But this is not to say that people should abandon their desire to see their country's athletes winning gold medals at the Olympics or other big sports championships. Giving up gold medal worship is not giving up the desire and will to win. Take the Olympics motto "faster, higher, stronger and together". It encourages all participants to give their best performance and keep improving on that performance. If athletes stop pursuing gold medals, what's the use of holding sports competitions?

Athletes spend years training, suffer injuries and endure the stress to realize their dream of winning gold medals. But they should not

Those who engage in fair competition at the Olympics deserve people's respect irrespective of whether they win or lose. A country that does not consider the number of gold medals won at the Olympics or world championships the only way to raise its global status is a confident country. As China marches toward realizing socialist modernization, it is focusing more on improving people's livelihoods and promoting the physical fitness campaign to make people healthier.

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There are also other reasons for abandoning the worship of gold medals. Many factors can impact an athlete's performance, and every competition comes with inherent uncertainties, especially at a mega sports event like the Olympics. Athletes cannot be expected to always be in the right physical and mental state to win gold. Even if they try their best, they might end up being medalless. This is the simple truth people need to realize, and learn to accept failure, because no athlete competing in an event wants to lose or be on the losing side.

Besides, it is impossible for one country to excel in all sports disciplines. Countries that dominate in certain disciplines have invested years cultivating and training talents, and turning them into champions. That's why participation is more important than winning.

be hauled over the coals for failing to do so. The athletes and their coaches deserve applause for winning medals, but their failures should not be used to hound them, because "they can do better next time".

But every athlete should have the fighting spirit, instead of believing that "no matter how badly I perform, spectators and fans will forgive me". Those who compete in a game with such an attitude look for excuses to hide their weaknesses.

Moreover, sports fans should not believe in the "only efforts matter" theory, because by doing so, they would be unfair to those athletes who strive to excel and emerge as winners.

Without the freedom to criticize, there cannot be true praise. Without worshipping gold medals, sports fans have the right to criticize athletes who do not give their 100 percent in a game and exhibit a negative attitude toward competition. The only thing that they should pay attention to is that the criticisms do not become verbal attacks or emotional catharsis against the athletes. The purpose of criticism should be to motivate athletes to perform better the next time even under pressure.

Refrain from both "gold medal worship" and the "only efforts matter" theory.

Five minutes to midnight as all-out war looms in ME

Osama Al-Sharif

This is an October 1973 moment for the Middle East, when the region was on the cusp of an all-out regional war, with Israel at its center. Inconclusive in its outcome, the conflict began a long and arduous endeavor to end all wars. It almost did. October 1973 was a classical war in the sense that the clashes were between Israel and regular Arab armies, with one side being backed by the US and the other by the now-defunct Soviet Union.

But this time the situation is different. It was Israel that lit the fuse by launching two lethal strikes only a few hours apart, first targeting Fouad Shukur, a senior Hezbollah military commander, in the heart of Beirut's southern suburbs, and then Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran — the heart of what Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calls Iran's axis of evil.

One has to view those two dramatic incidents against the backdrop of Israel's 10-month war in Gaza. This is a war that Israel has no choice but to wage for different reasons. Before Oct. 7, the Israeli public was profoundly polarized, and on the verge of civil strife in protest against the far-right coalition's attempt to curtail the powers of the judiciary, giving the executive branch unlimited authority with virtually no oversight.

Netanyahu was in deep water, facing a widespread backlash, while staving off legal prosecution over alleged corruption and abuse of power.

Then Hamas launched its attack, sending shockwaves across Israel. Netanyahu saw a way out. He declared war on Hamas and the hapless people of Gaza. He delivered a typical Zionist lachrymose lament of Jews being the victims of yet another massacre, bemoaning the historical victimization of the Jews.

Israeli tanks breached the fences, fighter jets dropped 1,000-pound bombs, and a killing spree ensued — as it continues until today, with the Palestinian death toll approaching 40,000.

There was no day-after scenario. Israel wanted to decapitate Hamas, even if that meant killing as many Palestinians as possible. Initial sympathy for Israel soon dissipated. The killing fields of Gaza horrified the world. Hezbollah stepped in as soon as Israel launched its war, launching missiles and drones, and displacing thousands of Israelis in the north of the country. Its purpose was to support Gaza and the Palestinian resistance. Hezbollah called it the "unity of the battlefields." Israel retaliated, but avoided all-out confrontation. Then, the Houthis of Yemen stepped in. This

was soon becoming an international crisis. Israel found itself targeted by Iranian proxies in Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon. All were non-state actors. No regular Arab armies were involved. This was to become the new geopolitical reality of the region. The common denominator in the anti-Israel coalition was Iran. Arab governments took a backseat. This was a new twist in the age-old Israel-Palestine conflict.

But after 10 months in Gaza, Israel was running out of military objectives. It was facing a dangerous war of attrition, one that was crippling its economy and running down its troops. It found itself bogged down in Gaza, while unable to neutralize Hezbollah. Netanyahu's war was all but lost. But he was adamant.

When Israel struck the Iranian consulate in Damascus last April, it did not expect the Iranian response: hundreds of missiles and drones fired directly from Iran against the heart of Israel. The US stepped in to defend Israel, reinforcing the view that without US support, Israel was vulnerable.

So, what prompted Netanyahu to sanction the two high-stakes assassinations at this point in time? Such a painful and humiliating blow to Iran and its proxies would

never pass without a bold response. Netanyahu knew precisely what he was doing when he ordered the strikes. He knew that Hezbollah and Iran would retaliate, joined by other pro-Iran groups, such as the Houthis in Yemen and the Popular Mobilization Units in Iraq. For months, he was seeking to expand the war, and lure in the US and other Western allies to strike Iran and its proxies. Having failed to deliver the promised decisive victory in Gaza or neutralize Hezbollah's threat in the north, Netanyahu's survival instincts took over. He decided to break the rules of engagement, and put the US-Israeli alliance to its most severe test. As is the case with Gaza, the Israeli leader has no plan for the day after when Iran and its proxies deliver their promised response. Israel has vowed to retaliate if attacked. The US sent a carrier strike group, a fighter squadron, and additional warships to the region. Its regional allies are apprehensive. No one wants a protracted and unpredictable war in the Middle East — except for Netanyahu and his radical coalition partners.

The double assassinations have derailed US President Joe Biden's ceasefire and hostage exchange deal. Netanyahu never really committed to ending the war in that

manner. In his speech to Congress, he sought to incite lawmakers against Iran, just as he did in 2015 and before. He did the same against Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Muammar Qaddafi in Libya, and, before them, the Soviet Union.

What Netanyahu wants is an endless war against anyone in the region who poses a threat to Israel, while denying Palestinians any right to end the occupation and establish a state. He is willing to endanger Israel's security and existence by forcing the US to go to war in defense of Israel, even when Israel is the belligerent party. He has manipulated the US for decades and believes that he can do so again. Only a decisive US response can rein in an unhinged Netanyahu. Biden, still president, can prevent a regional war that could quickly spiral into a global conflict. The only reason that Iran and its proxies are using the Palestinian cause to threaten Israel is Netanyahu's rejection of Palestinian rights and his execution of a plan to erase the Palestinian people. The US and the rest of the world must contain Netanyahu and force a deal that delivers a Palestinian state. We are five minutes to midnight, and unless a bold US intervention takes place, the region will quickly slip into the unknown.

Is a sub-Saharan ‘African Spring’ in the offing?

KENYAN President William Ruto, who won the August 2022 presidential election on a promise to lower the cost of living within 100 days, has failed to address economic hardships in Kenya – and triggered a wave of unrest that could have important consequences well beyond his country.

On June 18, thousands of Kenyan youths took to the streets to protest a controversial tax bill that threatened to raise the prices of basic commodities. While Ruto tried to make immediate, albeit small concessions, the protesters refused to give up on their objectives. Every day, more and more people joined the revolt and even the parliament was stormed. As police moved to break up the rallies with force, dozens were killed and scores more were injured.

Eventually, on June 26, Ruto gave up and changed course.

“I concede and therefore I will not sign the 2024 finance bill and it shall subsequently be withdrawn,” he said in a televised address. “The people have spoken.”

However, even the withdrawal of the contentious bill proved insufficient to calm the public’s anger. So in an effort to put an end to the protests, on June 11, Ruto made another major concession, dismissed his cabinet, and promised to form a new, “broad-based” one in its place.

Nonetheless, the cabinet reshuffle (in which many of the dismissed secretaries uncereemoniously returned to the cabinet, joined by a few token opposition figures) also failed to mollify Kenya’s unwavering protesters. People are still on the streets, and demanding Ruto’s immediate resignation. As the demonstrations continue to gain momentum, it is looking increasingly unlikely that protesters will return home before securing an early election.

The continuation of Kenya’s demonstrations after the withdrawal of the bill that triggered them shows clearly that these protests are much more than an over-the-top reaction to a single, ill-thought-out policy proposal. The proposed finance bill, it seems, was simply the last straw that broke the camel’s back. People have had enough of endemic corruption, chronic failures in governance, and a lack of socioeconomic support and opportunities for upward mobility. They have had enough of struggling to put food on their tables. They have had enough of inequality and poverty. They want systemic change, and they want it now.

The current situation in Kenya reminds me of the early days of the Tunisian uprising. In December 2010, a young Tunisian who sold vegetables from a barrow set himself on fire

to protest against police harassment. He died a few days later, but not before his protest went viral, sparking demonstrations against the cost of living and the country’s authoritarian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Triggered by this single act of defiance, Tunisians took to the streets in scores and remained there until Ben Ali had to flee the country and a transition was made towards democracy.

The demand for democracy and overall better governance emanating from

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Tunisia spread across the Middle East like wildfire, and led to the regional democratic awakening that we now call the Arab Spring.

More than 10 years later, I suspect the same may now be happening in sub-Saharan Africa.

With bad leadership rife across the continent, the determination of anti-government protests in Kenya could trigger a tide of protests and consequent political changes well beyond the country’s borders. The successful demonstrations in Kenya already inspired similar actions in neighbouring countries.

Since August 1, thousands across Nigeria have been protesting under the banner

“#EndBadGovernanceInNigeria.” Just like their counterparts in Kenya, the protesters want an end to bad governance, corruption and the increasing cost of living that has left millions reeling. The government of President Bola Tinubu initially responded to their demands, like that of Ruto, with violence. Rights group Amnesty International has accused Nigerian security forces of killing at least 13 protesters and injuring

Tafi Mkaka

many more. Hundreds were also arrested. The force denies the accusation.

When even the iron fist of the police did not put an end to the uprising, Tinubu began claiming that he “heard” the people’s demands and that he was “open to dialogue”.

As expected, Tinubu’s offer to talk did not convince the protesters to go home. With protesters still on the streets, and Tinubu running out of options to calm them down, there is every chance that Nigeria’s

“This is our 1986”, alluding to Zimbabwe’s president to feel uncomfortable as he looks at the successes of Kenya’s young protest movement. In power since August 2018, Mnangagwa has made little headway in putting the country on a course to rapid economic development, with ever-increasing living costs and steady unemployment rates keeping many in deep poverty. So far, like Museveni, Mnangagwa has also not refrained from using the full power of the state against anyone protesting his regime. In January 2019, Zimbabwean security forces killed at least eight people in their attempts to disperse widespread protests over a 150 percent hike in fuel prices. Yet, given the worsening circumstances of Zimbabwean youths, and the wave of unrest that engulfed the region in the past few weeks, it is not an outside chance that we will see widespread, persistent protests in Zimbabwe in the near future.

Angola, Eswatini, Namibia, Mozambique, and South Africa have also witnessed protests in the recent past, and their own struggles with corruption, inequality and economic stagnation mean these countries too can soon be rocked by widespread protests demanding better governance, equality and stronger democracy.

The Kenyan demonstrations have clearly encouraged youths in the region to take bold actions towards securing socioeconomic and political change.

Across sub-Saharan Africa, young people disillusioned with their corrupt, inefficient and oppressive governments are taking to the streets to make their voices heard. Just like their forbearers did in the 1950s, they are being encouraged by each others’ successes and learning from their mistakes.

Young Africans from Kenya to Nigeria and from Uganda to Zimbabwe are taking a stance against corruption and inequality, demanding better accountability from their leaders as well as inclusive, responsive, and clean governance. They desire the advancement and protection of human rights and civil rights in their countries, along with equitable access to decent jobs, housing, and financial wellness.

Once it was fully under way, no amount of oppression, violence or concessions from leaders could convince Arab Spring protesters to give up on their dreams and return home.

The burgeoning protest movement in sub-Saharan Africa has also this point of no return. No amount of threats or policy adjustments can halt the overwhelming thirst for urgent sociopolitical transformation in Africa.

An African Spring appears to be on the horizon.

There are, of course, ample reasons for Zimbabwe’s president to feel uncomfortable as he looks at the successes of Kenya’s young protest movement. In power since August 2018, Mnangagwa has made little headway in putting the country on a course to rapid economic development, with ever-increasing living costs and steady unemployment rates keeping many in deep poverty. So far, like Museveni, Mnangagwa has also not refrained from using the full power of the state against anyone protesting his regime. In January 2019, Zimbabwean security forces killed at least eight people in their attempts to disperse widespread protests over a 150 percent hike in fuel prices. Yet, given the worsening circumstances of Zimbabwean youths, and the wave of unrest that engulfed the region in the past few weeks, it is not an outside chance that we will see widespread, persistent protests in Zimbabwe in the near future.

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In picking Tim Walz as her running mate, Kamala Harris is signalling confidence

IN selecting Minnesota governor Tim Walz as her running mate, US Vice President Kamala Harris is strongly signaling confidence and a broad, rather than region-specific, campaign strategy aimed at the whole country. It reportedly came down to Mr Walz or Pennsylvania governor Joshua Shapiro. Apparently she went with personal chemistry and midwestern homespun rhetorical power over the mathematics of a potentially narrow victory.

If Ms Harris were primarily focused on clawing her way to a winning 270 votes in the electoral college, she surely would have selected Mr Shapiro. He’s the extremely popular governor of Pennsylvania, a state she cannot afford to lose. Polls show Pennsylvania currently running as a dead heat between Ms Harris and her Republican opponent, former president Donald Trump. Picking Mr Shapiro would have been a sounder choice if Ms Harris were nervous about the outcome.

Her decision suggests she’s not.

Arguments against Mr Shapiro included his outspoken condemnation of anti-Gaza war protesters and unwavering support of Israel (although not Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu). Alarm about this on the left was overblown, because, as vice president, he would have no policy role on Israel and the Palestinians, and would perforce support Ms Harris’s policies.

But foregoing the potential advantage he might supply in Pennsylvania also avoids reopening now largely healed wounds over US President Joe Biden’s strong support for Israel’s brutal Gaza war, especially in its first few months. Within their administration, Ms Harris took the lead in calling for ceasefires and expressing concern about the desperate plight of Palestinian civilians facing Israel’s terrible vengeance. Selecting Mr Shapiro might have unduly reopened an internal Democratic controversy best postponed until after November at the earliest.

She could come to regret the choice. Mr Shapiro is known for his polished public speaking, strikingly reminiscent in tone and style to former president Barack Obama.

Nonetheless, Mr Walz was also almost certainly selected for his own, very different, messaging ability. After a long career in the military and education, the House of Representatives, and two terms as Minnesota governor, he has perfected a traditional but now rare brand of distinctly liberal “prairie populism”.

He often looks like he just climbed down from a tractor, and employs a

Hussein Ibish

plainspoken, unadorned yet powerful verbiage honed in farmhouses, diners and truck stops across the American Midwest. If he can’t get through to winnable heartland independents and Republicans, maybe no one can.

This was the interview that arguably launched Gov. Tim Walz’s VP candidacy, where he debuted the “weird” attack on JD Vance/Republicans that ended up sticking/pics.twitter.com/tZoAD56PWO

bryan metzger (@metzgov) August 6, 2024

Although long-favoured by Democratic centre-leftists and progressives, Mr Walz shot to national prominence in recent weeks by pioneering a novel yet effective Democratic attack on Mr Trump and his followers. He recently began branding Ms Harris as a “middle America” where Democrats once held sway by appealing to middle class economic interests and appearing to champion “the little guy”. This may prove impossible, but it’s a commendably bold and gutsy strategy.

The first major decision a party nominee makes is their choice for Vice President. And Kamala Harris has made a great decision in choosing Governor Tim Walz to be her running mate.

I’ve known Tim Walz for nearly two decades, first during his time in Congress and as Governor. A...

— Joe Biden (@JoeBiden) August 6, 2024

Ms Harris is, like Mr Trump, appealing to her base with her vice presidential selection, deciding to try to maintain her striking momentum – in some national polls she suddenly holds a slight lead over Mr Trump – by presenting an apparently all-progressive ticket. Yet both Ms Harris and Mr Walz will surely continue to tack to the political centre despite their strong liberal credentials.

At the black journalists convention, Mr Trump was asked if Mr Vance would be “ready on day one”. Rather than affirming this, as any normal presidential candidate would about his running mate, Mr Trump simply averred that vice presidential candidates don’t matter. Apparently he couldn’t bear admitting that anyone else, even his running mate, is a plausible president.

Apart from the appalling slight to Mr Vance, no doubt a small foretaste of the callous disrespect he can expect to come, Mr Trump wasn’t entirely wrong: most Americans vote for the top of the ticket.

The past six weeks have, at a dizzying pace, reshaped American politics as Ms Harris displayed unexpected poise, charisma and mass appeal. She’s gambling Mr Walz can hold the party together and speak in their own language to a large segment of the American people that the Bay Area prosecutor, Ms Harris, can’t.

That’s arguably a long shot given his staunchly liberal record, but it could be a winning formula.

Still, Ms Harris has all the momentum, with just three months to go. Mr Trump appears justified in his evident panic.

Ben-Gvir is igniting Jerusalem — and the entire region could catch fire

IN the midst of Israel’s multifront war, at a time when it is walking a tightrope while carrying out, sometimes openly and sometimes covertly, targeted assassinations of Hamas and Hezbollah leaders, thereby running the risk of escalating an already inflammatory situation, Itamar Ben-Gvir, the ultranationalist security minister, is doing his utmost to open a new (old) front in Jerusalem’s holy places.

Even a halfwit politician could understand that starting a religious war in Jerusalem is literally playing with fire, but Ben-Gvir is a well-known political pyromaniac who thrives on leaving scorched earth behind him. This is what paved his way to becoming a government minister in one of the most crucial and sensitive ministries, ironically the one responsible for law and order. Since he took over, his ministry has sown disruption, havoc, and confrontation among domestic political rivals, and between Israelis and Palestinians.

Ben-Gvir’s pet subject is that of allowing Jews to pray at the site known as

Al-Haram Al-Sharif to Muslims and the Temple Mount to Jews, not because it is a great mitzvah, a religious duty, but because it is provocative, and nothing could be more provocative than to act in a manner that changes the long-standing status quo of this holy place. It further raises the suspicions of a Muslim world that is already witnessing Israel’s discrimination against Palestinians in Jerusalem as it encircles Palestinian neighborhoods with Jewish settlements, while the next step is to take over Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount completely.

With increasing frequency, whenever this publicity-hungry minister craves additional public attention, or seeks to consolidate his support base of violent settler allies or distinguish himself within his camp of far-right religious messianic extremists, he will visit Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount and pray there, surrounded by police and journalists. For Ben-Gvir the closer his antics are to the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, the better the provocation. Last month he made his latest trip to this flashpoint, on

Jerusalem Day, and took the opportunity to call on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “not to fold” on a hostage deal with Hamas. Not that Netanyahu appears to be in any rush to reach a desperately needed ceasefire agreement in Gaza, but for Ben-Gvir, having a photo-op surrounded by police at Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, and spitting his mindless hatred, while letting everyone know who is calling the shots in the current Israeli administration, is what it is all about.

The insistence that Jews pray at Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount is a nationalistic demand that is not anchored in any shape or form in Halachic (Jewish jurisprudence) ruling. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel and many other rabbinic authorities prohibit Jews from visiting Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount for religious reasons pertaining to concerns about purity and desecration of the site’s sanctity. Ben-Gvir has built his political career not on being a scholar of any description, let alone Judaism, but on defiant thuggish behavior that he sells as restoring Jewish pride.

Yossi Mekelberg

The current status quo regarding Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount was

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established in 1967, only weeks after Israeli forces took the compound in the aftermath of the Six-Day War. Moshe Dayan, the defense minister, decreed that Israeli soldiers would vacate the area and hand over its supervision to the Jordan-appointed Waqf, a Muslim religious trust, rec-

ognizing the role of Jordan and, by extension, of the Arab world in charge of the

informally allows for Muslims to pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, and for Jews to pray at the Western Wall, which according to Jewish tradition is the only remaining part of the Second Temple. What Dayan, then IDF chief of staff, understood about the delicate situation on Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, Ben-Gvir — who due to the army’s deep concern at his extremist tendencies was not even drafted for military service — is incapable and most probably unwilling to comprehend. Following his inflammatory visit to Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, Ben-Gvir told the Israeli parliament: “They always tell me the ‘political leadership’ is against it. I am the political leadership. And the political leadership allows Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount.” Evidently the arrogance of power has gone to his head, and on this occasion it immediately prompted Netanyahu’s office to release a statement declaring that “Israel’s policy of maintaining the status quo on Temple Mount has not changed and will not change.”

For Netanyahu it was particularly embarrassing, as this latest Ben-Gvir outburst took place while the prime minister was visiting the US in an attempt to reduce the friction with his country’s closest ally, and to be seen as in control of the situation and of his government.

The far right and Ben-Gvir, with his infantile yet extremely dangerous behavior, are enjoying Netanyahu’s embarrassment as they flex their muscles, knowing the power they hold over a prime minister desperately hanging on to power.

But feel no pity for Netanyahu: He deserves none. He took Ben-Gvir and his incendiary accomplices from the fringes of Israeli society and politics and put them in charge of several of the country’s most influential ministries. In the case of Ben-Gvir, handing the Ministry of National Security, which controls the police, to someone with several criminal convictions, not to mention a record of almost 80 traffic violations, was itself a criminal act by Netanyahu, purely for the purpose of his own survival in office and avoiding jail

time.

Ben-Gvir was also given the power to distribute 10,000 assault rifles to what might become his own militia. Just imagine the combination of his ideology, all based on confrontation with the Palestinians, with the region and with Muslims, with the arming of thousands of those who support this disturbing and dangerous demagogue. Like Dr. Frankenstein, Netanyahu has constructed this monster, and is equally incapable and reluctant to contain it.

For Ben-Gvir, Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount is both a tool and a final destination. In his twisted thinking, igniting wars is the path by which Israel will achieve its “final victory,” some sort of Armageddon that will end with the Jewish state in full control of the Promised Land and the building of the Third Temple — under his premiership. A scary thought, but considering what is currently taking place in this conflicted region and elsewhere in the world, one we should be active in resisting, and not dismissing out of hand.

— Arab News



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce & Industry Fuad Ishaq presiding over a meeting commercial exporters and importers at Chamber's House.

Stock Exchange loses 76 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) shed 76.85 percent on Wednesday, losing 76.85 points, a negative change of 0.10 percent, closing at 77,114.49 points against 77,191.34 points on the last working day.

A total of 447,531,644 shares were traded during the day as compared to 600,896,301 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 18.388 billion against Rs 17.127 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 440 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 231 of them recorded gains and 160 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 49 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Kohinoor Spinning with 70,040,159 shares at Rs 5.84 per share, Power Cement with 28,783,073 shares at Rs 4.98 per share and Pak Int. Bulk with 20,895,214 shares at Rs 5.36 per share. Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 114.06 per share price, closing at Rs 17,799.06, whereas the runner-up was Excide Pakistan Limited with a Rs 89.65 rise in its per share price to Rs 986.17.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 85.22 per share closing at Rs 6,911.99 followed by Reliance Cotton Spinning Mills Limited with a Rs 60.38 decline to close at Rs 590.45.

Gold rates dip by Rs500 per tola to Rs255,500

The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased further by Rs.500 and was sold at Rs.255,500 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs. 256,000 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.429 to Rs.219,050 from Rs. 219,479 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.200,795 from Rs. 201,189, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained stagnant at Rs.2,850 and Rs.2,443.41 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$17 to \$2,393 from \$ 2,410, the Association reported.

8,722 gas connections disconnected

F.P. Report

Lahore: In a robust effort to combat gas theft, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has executed extensive raids across Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad over the past four months. This operation has resulted in the disconnection of 8,722 illegal gas connections and the imposition of fines totaling Rs 176.13 million.

During this period, SNGPL disconnected 19 commercial and special domestic meters for meter tampering, and an additional 10 connections were terminated for illegal gas usage via bypass or fake meters.

Furthermore, 3,450 domestic meters were disconnected for tampering, while another 4,979 connections were severed due to violations related to meter tampering and bypass or fake meters. Additionally, 264 connections were disconnected for the use of compressors.

SNGPL has booked a total of 53,203 HMP of volume against gas theft cases and imposed fines amounting to Rs 176.13 million on the culprits. The company's regional teams have been proactive, lodging 384 FIRs (First Information Reports) against individuals involved in gas theft, resulting in the arrest of 15 offenders.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where three ships, Saehan Jasper, Ginga Liger and Maran Gas Asclepius carrying Palm oil, Chemicals and LNG, berthed at Liquid Terminals, Engro Vopak and Engro Elengy Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a petroleum product carrier 'Leader' left the port on today morning while another chemicals carrier 'Ginga Liger' is expected to sail on same day afternoon.

Cargo volume of 145,392 tonnes, comprising 113,380 tonnes imports cargo and 32,012 tonnes export cargo carried in 1,204 Containers (51 TEUs Imports& 1,153 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 05 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them two ships, Qi Lin Zuo and Jipiro Neptis & two more ships, Ji Rong and MSC Positano carrying Mogas, Chemicals, Coal and Containers are expected to take berths at FOTCO, EVTL, PIBT and QICT respectively on today 7th August.

Meanwhile another Containers ship 'Maersk Cabo Verde' is due to arrive at port on Thursday.

SCCI hold ceremony

SIALKOT (APP): A shield distribution ceremony for media persons of Sialkot was held at Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) auditorium, recognising the contribution of local journalists and media professionals.

The event was attended by group leader Sialkot business community Riazuddin Sheikh (SI), President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Abdul Ghafoor Malik, Vice President SCCI Amer Majeed Sheikh accompanying them were Chairman of the Departmental Committee SCCI on Media Awais Butt.

During the ceremony, President SCCI Abdul Ghafoor Malik highlighted the crucial role that media plays in society, particularly in promoting the activities and achievements of the business community in Sialkot.

SCCI' elections:

Commercial exporters, importers to support BF

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Commercial exporters and importers expressed full confidence in the leadership of former senator Ilyas Ahmed Bilour, the leader of the Businessman Forum and announced support for the BF in the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2024-26.

A delegation of commercial exporters and importers spearheaded by Dr. Khushhal Mohmand, a former executive member of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and a senior leader of the Businessman Forum visited the chamber Wednesday.

The meeting was held in the Chamber House under the chairmanship of SCCI' President Fuad Ishaq.

Senator Ilyas Ahmed Bilour, the leader of the Businessman Forum especially attended the meeting.

Sanaullah Khan, senior vice president, Ejaz Khan Afridi, vice president of the chamber, former president Faiz Muhammad Faizi, former SVPs Ziaul Haq Sahadi, Imran Khan Mohmand, former VPs of the chamber Javed Akhtar, Shuja Muhammad, executive members Qaraatul Ain were present in the meeting.

Besides Ghulam Hussain, Muhammad Ismail Safi, former president Faiz Muhammad Faizi and Muhammad Amin Mohmand, Imtiaz Ahmed Ali, com-

mercial exporters and importers were present in large numbers.

The delegation informed SCCI president Fuad Ishaq about the problems faced in export and import, on which assurance was given that the problems will be resolved in an effective manner by taking up with the relevant authorities.

Fuad Ishaq said that SCCI had always played a pivotal role in solving the problems of the business community in an effective manner. He said chamber doors always remained open for the community.

He asked the traders, exporters, importers to present their problems and suggestions to the chamber

and assured all the resources will be utilized to resolve the problems.

Ilyas Ahmad Bilour in his speech said that the Businessman Forum believes in the selfless service of the business community and today the expression of full confidence in the Businessman Forum shown by the commercial exporters and importers, is a testimony and prove that BF is the only representative platform of the business community which have the potential to solve their problems.

He said that the BF has served the business community for the past 24 years and vowed to continue the service in the future as well with this passion.

MCB Bank posts highest ever 1st half PBT of Rs62.7 billion (+16%)

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Board of Directors of MCB Bank Limited (MCB) in its meeting under the Chairmanship of Mian Mohammad Mansha, on August 07, 2024, reviewed performance of the Bank and approved the condensed interim financial statements for the half year ended June 30, 2024. The Board of Directors has declared 2nd interim cash dividend of Rs. 9.0 per share i.e. 90%, in addition to 90% already paid, bringing the total cash dividend for the half year ended June 30, 2024 to 180%.

Through focused efforts of the Bank's management in building no-cost deposits base and optimizing its earning assets mix, MCB's Profit Before Tax (PBT) for the 1st half of 2024 increased to Rs 62.7 billion with a growth of 16%. Profit After Tax (PAT) posted a growth of 20% to reach Rs. 31.9 billion; translating into Earning Per Share (EPS) of Rs. 26.95 compared to an EPS of Rs. 22.52 reported in the corresponding period last year.

On the back of strong volumetric growth in average current deposits and timely repositioning within the asset book, net interest income for 1H'24 increased by 12% over corresponding period last year.

Non-markup income increased to Rs. 18.3 billion (+30%) against Rs. 14.1 billion in the corresponding period last year with major contributions coming in from fee commission income of Rs. 11.3 billion

(+29%), foreign exchange income of Rs. 4.9 billion (+38%) and dividend income of Rs. 1.7 billion (+13%).

Improving customer and interbank flows, diversification of revenue streams through continuous enrichment of service suite, investments towards digital transformation and an unrelenting focus on upholding high standards of service delivery supplemented a broad-based growth in income from fee commission; with trade and guarantee related business income growing by 50%, cards related income by 43%, credit related fee by 41% and branch banking customer fees by 20%.

The Bank continues to manage an efficient operating expense base and monitor costs prudently. Amidst a persistently high inflationary environment and continued investments in human resources and technological upgradation, the operating expenses of the Bank were reported at Rs. 28.4 billion (+18%). Increase was primarily on account of staff cost (+15%), utility cost (+28%) and IT related expenses (22%). The cost to income ratio of the Bank stands at 30.50% as compared to 29.58% reported in the corresponding period last year.

Navigating a challenging operating and macroeconomic environment, the Bank has been addressing asset quality issues by maintaining discipline in management of its risk return decisions. Diversification of the loan

book across customer segments and a robust credit underwriting framework that encompasses structured assessment models, effective pre-disbursement evaluation tools and an array of post disbursement monitoring systems has enabled MCB to effectively manage its credit risk; the Non-performing loan (NPLs) base of the Bank was reported at Rs. 57.0 billion as at June 30, 2024. The coverage and infection ratios of the Bank were reported at 89.07% and 8.64% respectively.

On the financial position side, the total asset base of the Bank was reported at Rs. 2.67 trillion with increase of 10.1% over Dec 2023. Increase was contributed by 19% increase in investment base i.e. Rs. 232 billion over Dec 2023 and 6% increase in advances (gross) i.e. Rs. 37 billion over Dec 2023.

The Bank continued its focus on building no cost deposits, leading to a growth of Rs. 110 billion (+13%) in absolute current deposits during first half of 2024. The Bank's total deposit base stands at Rs. 1.99 trillion. The domestic cost of deposits was contained at 10.76% as compared to 7.93% in the corresponding period of last year despite the significant increase in average policy rate during the period.

Return on Assets and Return on Equity maintained at 2.50% and 30.08% respectively, whereas the book value per share was reported at Rs. 184.04.

During the period under

review, MCB attracted home remittance inflows of USD 1,973 million (+23%) to consolidate its position as an active participant in SBP's cause for improving flow of remittances into the country through banking channels.

While complying with the regulatory capital requirements, the Bank's total Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) is improved to 20.68% against the requirement of 11.5% (including capital conservation buffer of 1.50% as reduced under the BPRD Circular Letter No. 12 of 2020). Quality of the capital is evident from Bank's Common Equity Tier-1 (CET1) to total risk weighted assets ratio which comes to 17.09% against the requirement of 6.23%. Bank's capitalization also resulted in a Leverage Ratio of 6.2% which is well above the regulatory limit of 3.0%. The Bank reported Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) of 261.91% and Net Stable Funding Ratio (NSFR) of 164.85% against requirement of 100%.

Pakistan Credit Rating Agency re-affirmed credit ratings of MCB at "AAA / A1+" for long term and short term respectively, through its notification dated June 22, 2024.

The Bank on consolidated basis is operating the 2nd largest network of more than 1,650 branches in Pakistan. The Bank remains one of the prime stocks traded in the Pakistani equity market and ranks amongst the highest capitalized banks in the industry.

OICCI members inject \$22b in Pakistan in past ten years

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI), the representative body for the top 210 foreign investors in Pakistan, revealed substantial contributions by its members to Pakistan's economy in its 2023 annual economic contribution survey.

Over the past 10 years, from 2013 to 2023, Pakistan received a net Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) of \$19.8 billion.

During the same period, OICCI members contributed \$22.6 billion, showcasing a significant commitment to the country's economic development. This robust investment underscores the confidence foreign investors have in Pakistan's long-term potential.

In 2023, the 139 OICCI member companies reported assets amounting to Rs29.6 trillion, capital expenditure of Rs482 billion, government levies of Rs2.4 trillion, and gross revenue of Rs10.4 trillion.

Despite the challenges faced by the country, OICCI members have shown more confidence than other foreign investors over the last decade, as reflected in the investment figures and economic contributions.

Highlighting members' confidence in the Pakistan economy, OICCI President Rehan Shaikh said, "as Pakistan navigates its economic challenges, the sustained confidence and investment by OICCI members provide a solid foundation for future growth and development."

Among the OICCI members, 51 are listed compa-

nies that have demonstrated remarkable growth in their financial performance. From 2019 to 2023, the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of profit before tax surged to 30.2% compared to a CAGR of 18.9% between 2018 and 2022. In 2023, these companies reported a cumulative profit before tax of Rs1,130 billion and a turnover of Rs6,747 billion.

The sector-wise turnover for 2023 highlights the diverse contributions of various industries to Pakistan's economy with the Oil, Gas & Energy recording Rs4,857 billion and Banking, Insurance, Finance & Leasing Rs1,555 billion.

Commenting on the survey findings, OICCI CE/Secretary General M Abdul Aleem said, "The significant contributions of OICCI members under-

score the pivotal role of foreign investment in bolstering Pakistan's economy." He added, "The diverse sectoral contributions reflect a broad-based economic engagement, with key sectors such as oil and gas, banking, and consumer products leading the way."

Besides the monetary contribution, OICCI members also play a leading role in the transfer of technology, digital transformation, introducing latest inventions and sharing of best practices in the field of manufacturing operation, supply chain and marketing of internationally renowned brands.

By investing Rs13 billion in 2022-2023 in Pakistan's communities through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, the members have positively impacted 40 million individuals across the country.

OPPO Reno12 series unveiled with advanced AI, robust durability

F.P. Report

LAHORE: OPPO, the global leader in smart devices, proudly launches OPPO's First AI smartphone, the Reno12 series in an exclusive event in Lahore. The phone includes three variants Reno12 F 4G, Reno12 F 5G and Reno12 5G. Equipped with smart AI features and protected by the robust All-Round Armour, the AI-packed and

durable Reno12 F, is now available for pre-order from August 5, with a starting price of PKR 69,999 for Reno12 F 4G.

The launch event was an impressive showcase unveiling "OPPO's first AI smartphone," and brought together top tech KOLs, influencers, OPPO executives, OPPO Partners and media representatives. The event featured an in-depth briefing on the OPPO

Reno12 Series, live demonstrations of AI Eraser, AI Studio, and AI LinkBoost, as well as an exclusive demonstration of their All-Round Armour feature. The interactive experience zone provided attendees with a hands-on experience of the OPPO Reno12 F.

Talking about the Reno12 series, George Long, CEO of OPPO Pakistan said: "We are thrilled to introduce our

first AI smartphone in Pakistan at this exclusive event. At OPPO, we are constantly pushing the boundaries of innovation to provide our customers with leading technology that enhances their lives. The Reno12 series embodies our vision of making advanced AI accessible to everyone, combined with unmatched durability and elegant design."

Stocks extend recovery — yen slides as volatility grips markets

LONDON (AFP/APP): European and Asian stocks recovered further and the Japanese yen slid against the dollar on Wednesday with markets volatility taking centre stage.

After Monday's collapse that saw trillions of dollars wiped off equity valuations globally, traders have been picking up bargains, with Wall Street ending higher Tuesday.

In foreign exchange, the yen slumped nearly two percent against the dollar Wednesday after the Bank of Japan sought to ease fears that it would keep raising interest rates.

Oil prices jumped about 1.5 percent on Middle East tensions and supply constraints in Libya, having fallen at the start of the week. "The current (roller-coaster) situation may continue for some time," noted Asset Management One.

"The increased market volatility shouldn't be ignored," it added.

Investors were sent scurrying after data released on Friday showed that the US

economy created far fewer jobs than expected in July, fanning recession fears.

That came soon after the Federal Reserve hinted at a September interest-rate cut and following a hike to borrowing costs by the Bank of Japan for only the second time in 17 years -- sending shivers through financial markets as the yen jumped in value.

However, BoJ deputy governor Shinichi Uchida on Wednesday indicated that would be it for now given market volatility, sparking a big drop in the yen, while the Tokyo stock market closed up 1.2 percent.

Investors were jittery after Japan's Nikkei stocks index surged more than 10 percent on Tuesday, a day after tanking more than 12 percent.

One dollar bought 147 yen Wednesday, compared with 142 at the start of the week.

While relative calm has returned to trading floors, observers warned investors to remain wary.



In brief

PCB confirms revised schedule

ISLAMABAD (PPD): The Bangladesh 'A' men's cricket team will arrive in Islamabad on Saturday, 10 August, for two four-day and three 50-over matches against Pakistan Shaheens. The matches will be played at the Islamabad Club. Below is the revised series schedule (all activities at the Islamabad Club):

10 Aug – Arrival in Islamabad
11 & 12 Aug – Training and practice at 1000

13-16 Aug – 1st four-day match vs Pakistan Shaheens

18 & 19 Aug – Training and practice at 1000

20-23 Aug – 2nd four-day match vs Pakistan Shaheens

25 Aug – Training & practice at 1000

26 Aug – 1st 50-over match vs Pakistan Shaheens

27 Aug – Training and practice at 1000

28 Aug – 2nd 50-over match vs Pakistan Shaheens

29 Aug – Training and practice at 1000

30 Aug – 3rd 50-over match vs Pakistan Shaheens.

Hazara, Legacy move in semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Women's Football Club Championship 2024 final group stage concluded on Wednesday with two thrilling matches here at the Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan.

Sports Complex. Legacy FC and Hazara Quetta WFC emerged victorious, securing their places in the tournament's semifinals. Legacy FC showcased their dominance with a 3-0 victory over TWK.

Eman, Kayanat, and Alina each scored a goal, demonstrating their exceptional skills and teamwork. In the last group match of the final stage, Hazara FC faced off against Highlanders FC in a closely contested battle.

Hazara FC emerged victorious with a 2-1 win. Farishta and Sadiqa were the goal scorers for Hazara, while Sosan opened the scoring for the Highlanders.

Karachi United will face Legacy FC in the first semifinal of the National Women's Football Club Championship 2024 on August 8 followed by the second semi-final between Karachi City FC and Hazara Quetta WFC.

Serbia to build Djokovic museum

BELGRADE (AFP): Following Novak Djokovic's dramatic gold medal victory at the Paris Olympics, Serbia is set to build a museum dedicated to the tennis great, according to the country's president. "We had the first discussions about the construction of the Novak Djokovic museum, which is expected to become another attraction for the city," Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said Tuesday.

Djokovic has long enjoyed the status of a living legend in Serbia, where the Belgrade native and winner of 24 Grand Slam titles ran a tennis academy for years and frequently attends sporting events and meets with officials. "Palma de Mallorca has a museum dedicated to Rafael Nadal. We will strive to showcase what Djokovic has done for our country in accordance with his merits and at the same time attract tourists," Vucic added.

Vucic said he hoped the museum would be finished before Belgrade hosts the World Expo in 2027. The announcement comes just days after Djokovic won a gold medal at the Paris Games on Sunday after defeating Carlos Alcaraz 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/2) in what was likely to be his final shot at Olympic glory.

28th CNS Open Golf championship kicks off

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Opening Ceremony and Media Brief of 28th Chief of the Naval Staff Open Golf Championship, scheduled from 08 Aug 24 to 11 Aug 24, was held at the picturesque Karachi Golf Club (KGC).

Commander Karachi, Rear Admiral Muhammad Saleem graced the occasion as Chief Guest and inaugurated the championship.

During the media brief, Patron Pakistan Navy Golf (South), Cdre Rashid Mahmood Sheikh apprised the audience on salients of championship and its conduct in various categories.

The Golf Championship will be played in Professionals, Senior Professionals, Junior Professionals, Amateurs, Seniors, Veterans, Ladies Juniors and Pro Amateurs categories.

The media was also briefed on the awards and cash prizes in various categories of the championship. A special prize of 'Toyota Fortuner' will be awarded to the player scoring 'Hole in One'.

Pakistan Navy instituted Chief of the Naval Staff Open Golf Championship at Karachi Golf Club (KGC) in 1995 to add a national level golf event in the calendar of Pakistan Golf Federation.

Ever since, it has become a regular and major event of national golf circuit. Such events provide a unique opportunity to showcase Pakistan's positive image to world as a peace and sports loving nation and also promote healthy activities in society.

The regular conduct of this event is the manifestation of PN's commitment towards promotion of golf at national and international levels.

The Opening Ceremony was attended by sponsors, golf players and media representatives.

Irfan Mehsood breaks 2 Guinness World Records

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani martial artist Irfan Mehsood has broken two more Guinness World Records by lifting a 40-pound weight with his toe for 1 minute and 32 seconds.

Mehsood broke World Records of Italy's Marcello Ferri by lifting a 40-pound weight with his toe for 1 minute and 32 seconds.

Meanwhile, Mehsood broke the deadline by lifting 40 pounds for 3 minutes and 20 seconds. Mehsood lifted 70 kg weight with his toe and set a new world record, he told APP.



He said he was the first Pakistani to hold 100 Guinness World Records in less than 8 years. I have set 46 Guinness World Records for the most world-level pay in the push-ups category and 31 records with a weight of 100 pounds, he said.

Mehsood said he has so far held the world record of 100 lbs, 80 lbs, 60 lbs and 40 lbs. I have set records for pushups, squats, jumping jacks, step ups, knee strikes, elbow strikes, side jumps, high jumps, star champs etc.

I have broken world records of 16 countries so far including America, Great Britain, India, China, Norway, Germany, France, Finland, Philippines, Spain, Italy, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq and Syria.

Zahid Eleven Club clinches Intra-District title in dramatic final

F.P. Report

TANK: Sports Department Tank organized Intra Trhsil and Intra District Football event in Tank.

18 Team Participated in the Tournament intra District. Final played by Nigar Club kirri Lati and Zahid Eleven Club kirri Wam and won by Zahid Club. The

Chief Guest Left Cornol Haider Ali Distribute prize in the players.

Intra Trhsil tournament was also organized by Sports Department. In intra Trhsil Tournament 18 Club Participant in said event Final of the Tournament played by Summer Seat Football Club And Green Sabir Tank . Summer Seat Won

the final by plenty kicks . Cash prize and trophy distribute by chief guest Additional Assistant Commissioner Jameshad Alam among the players and team. The public appreciated the Sports activities organized by Sports Department and hope that the Sports Department would organize such event in the Future.



Pace-heavy 17-member squad announced for test series

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Men's selection committee Wednesday announced a 17-member squad including six pace bowlers including Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Khurram Shahzad, Aamer Jamal, Mir Hamzad and Muhammad Ali to face Bangladesh in the two-test rubber from August 21 to September 3.

With the inclusion of only one specialist spinner Abrar Ahmed in the squad, one could expect pace-friendly pitches during the series and the appointment of Australian Tony Hemming as chief curator by the PCB, the will feast on competitive cricket.

Replacing Shaheen Shah Afridi as the vice-captain of the test team, the selection committee named Saud Shakeel as the vice-captain of the Men's test side. Handing over the mantle of vice captaincy from Shaheen Shah Afridi to Saud takes is part of the selectors' strategic decision aimed at managing Pakistan's lead fast bowler's workload management during the period from 21 August 2024 to 5 April 2025 in which Pakistan is scheduled to play nine Tests, 14 T20Is and, at least, 17 ODIs.

Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Ali and Mohammad Huraiera have been called up to the squad for impressive domestic performances and excellent performance for the Shaheens in the recently concluded series against Bangladesh I Australia.

Fast bowler Naseem Shah has made a come back after almost a year in the wilderness due to injury while seven players including Imam-ul-Haq, Faheem Ashraf, Hasan Ali (injured), Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Wasim Jnr (injured), Noman Ali and Sajid Khan lost their places in the side due to poor performance or injury.

Bangladesh are due to arrive in Islamabad on 17 August for the ICC World Test Championships matches in Rawalpindi and Karachi from 21 August to 3 September. The first Test will be played at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium from 21-25 August, while the second Test will be held from 30 August-3 September in Karachi.

Pakistan Red-ball head coach Jason Gillespie and assistant coach Azhar Mahmood will supervise the training camp at Rawalpindi cricket stadium from August 11. The Bangladesh cricket team is scheduled to arrive in Islamabad in the wee

hours of 17 August and expected to train in the same afternoon.

Pakistan squad (ICC World Test Championship vs Bangladesh) Shan Masood (captain), Saud Shakeel (vice-captain), Aamir Jamal (subject to Fitness), Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Kamran Ghulam, Khurram Shahzad, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Huraiera, Mohammad Rizwan (wicket-keeper), Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Sarfaraz Ahmed (wicket-keeper) and Shaheen Shah Afridi

The 17-member Test squad will be led by Shan Masood, while left-handed middle-order batter Saud Shakeel has been appointed as vice-captain. Of the 17 players picked for the first Test series of the 2024-25 season, 13 players were involved in Pakistan's last series against Australia in December/January 2023-24. Mohammad Huraiera, Kamran Ghulam and Mohammad Ali have been rewarded for their consistent performances in the domestic circuit as well as for Pakistan Shaheens, while Naseem Shah is returning to the red-ball side after 13 months.



KARACHI: Commander Karachi Rear Admiral Muhammad Saleem addressing the opening ceremony of 28th CNS Open Golf Championship 2024.

Karate Association President Khurshid Khan Visit Paris for Olympics 2024

F.P. Report

PARIS: In a significant show of support for the Pakistani athletes competing in the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, Khurshid Khan, President of the Karate Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), along with members of the Executive Committee of the Pakistan Olympic Association

(POA), have arrived in Paris.

The delegation's visit underscores the commitment of Pakistan's sports officials to encourage and uplift the nation's athletes on the global stage. During their stay, Khurshid Khan and the POA members will attend various events, offering moral support to the Pakistani contingent.

"We are here to stand with our athletes, to cheer them on, and to show them that the entire nation is behind them," said Khurshid Khan. "Our presence is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our sportsmen and women who have trained tirelessly to compete at the highest level."

The delegation's visit is not only about support but also aims to strengthen ties with international sports bodies and explore opportunities for future collaborations. The officials will meet with representatives from various national and international sports organizations, sharing insights and best practices to enhance the sporting landscape in Pakistan.

"We believe that our athletes have the potential to achieve great things. Their participation in the Olympics is a proud moment for Pakistan, and we are here to celebrate their efforts and achievements," added a member

of the POA Executive Committee.

The Pakistani team has been preparing rigorously for the Games, with hopes of bringing home medals and making the country proud. The presence of prominent figures like Khurshid Khan and the POA committee members is expected to boost the morale of the athletes and inspire them to perform their best.

As the Olympics continue, the support from home and abroad will play a crucial role in motivating the Pakistani athletes. The nation watches with bated breath, hopeful for moments of triumph and glory in Paris.

Pakistani sports leaders rally behind National Team at Paris Olympics

F.P. Report

PARIS: Khurshid Khan, President of the Karate Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), and esteemed members of the Executive Committee of the Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) have arrived in Paris to support the Pakistani athletes competing in the 2024 Olympic Games.

The visit aims to provide moral support and encouragement to the Pakistani team, participating in various sports disciplines. Khurshid Khan emphasized the importance of this visit, stating, "Our athletes need to know that we are here for them, cheering them on every step of the way. Their hard work and dedication are truly inspirational."

In addition to attending the Olympic events, the delegation will engage with international sports officials to discuss future collaborations and development opportunities for Pakistani sports. This visit is seen as a step towards fostering international relationships and enhancing the standards of sports in Pakistan.

The Pakistani athletes, having trained extensively for this moment, look forward to making their nation proud. The presence of influential sports leaders like Khurshid Khan is expected to provide a significant morale boost, reinforcing the athletes' resolve to excel in their respective events. The Paris Olympics represent a beacon of hope and ambition for Pakistan, with its athletes aiming for excellence on the world stage. The unwavering support from the nation's sports leadership is crucial in driving the team towards achieving their Olympic dreams.

Wellalage stars as Sri Lanka hammer India to clinch ODI series

COLOMBO (AFP): Spinner Dunith Wellalage took 5-27 as Sri Lanka clinched a first ODI series victory over India in 27 years with a 110-run thrashing of the tourists in the third match on Wednesday.

Chasing 249 for victory, number one-ranked India suffered a third successive batting collapse in the three-match series to be bowled out for 138 in 26.1 overs at Colombo's R. Premadasa Stadium.

Sri Lanka, who last registered a bi-lateral series triumph over India in the 50-over format in 1997, won the series 2-0 after the opener ended in a tie.

Skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli had returned for the ODI matches after Suryakumar Yadav led the team to a 3-0 series sweep in the T20 matches at the start of India's white-ball tour of Sri Lanka.

Both Rohit and Kohli retired from T20 internationals after the team's World Cup triumph in Barbados in June.

Indian batsmen struggled to cope with Sri Lanka's spin in the ODI matches but Rohit played it down. "I don't think it's (playing spin) a concern," said Rohit. "But it's something we need to look at seriously, our individual game plans, and it's something we were definitely put under pressure with in this series."

The tour was the first for India coach Gautam Gambhir, who took over the job after Rahul Dravid's tenure ended following the World Cup win.

Sri Lanka, ranked seventh in the ODI world ranking, have managed a quick turnaround from the T20 matches under new skipper Charith Asalanka and interim coach Sanath Jayasuriya.

"We are in a really good mood right now, especially our coach," said Asalanka.





In brief

IRSA releases 499,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 499,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 550,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1538.00 feet and was 140.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 330,300 cusecs and 302,600 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1206.80 feet, which was 158.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 33,100 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 323,900, 410,100, 306,200 and 218,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 80,400 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera and 78,800 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Rescue 1122 put on high alert

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rescue 1122 has been put on high alert due to recent rains in Rawalpindi. Rescue personnel have joined their duties on assigned areas surrounding Nalla Lai and other low-lying areas for safety measures including Katari and Gawalmandi. Rescue personnel will remain on duty at these places during the rains. Media Coordinator Rescue 1122 Rawaalpindi Muhammad Usman informed that all the officers and personnel were present at the field round the clock to serve the public. He advised that people should be very careful during the rains. He advised parents not to allow children to go near drains and electric poles. Residents living near drains must be careful. Drive at low speed. Do not go under weak and dilapidated roofs during rain. He said that in case of any emergency, people must report immediately on the rescue helpline; 1122.

Six held for carrying illegal arms

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested six illegal arms holders and recovered arms and ammunition from their possession during a crackdown. According to police spokesman, Mandra, Gujar Khan and Civil Lines police rounded up six illegal arm holders namely Toqeer, Jabran, Kamran, Sajjad, Kashif, and Danish and recovered two 12 bore rifles, four 30 bore pistols and ammunition from their possession. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. SSP Operations commended police teams and instructed to take strict action against those carrying illegal weapons.

Jashan-i-Azadi stalls attract buyers

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the countdown has started for the celebration of Independence Day, falling on August 14, a large number of stalls displaying national flags, bunting, dresses and other accessories of the capital city are attracting buyers. A large number of patriotic youngsters especially children can be seen around these stalls daily for buying flags, bunting, badges and Jashan-i-Azadi dresses to finalize their preparations. While to keep the interest of kids intact in these celebrations, the flag-coloured toys are also on display for the attraction.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Ambassador of Iraq Hamid Abbas Lafta. —APP Photo

Resolving GB's issues federal govt's top priority: Amir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, Engr. Amir Muqam, on Wednesday said addressing the issues of Gilgit-Baltistan was a top priority for the federal government and assured to apply their resources to advance growth and well-being in the region.

Minister Muqam chairing a high-level meeting at the Gilgit-Baltistan Council highlighted the region's vast potential to emerge as a premier global tourist destination. Additionally, he pointed

out the area's rich mineral resources and hydropower capabilities, vowing to harness these assets for regional development.

Amir Muqam assured that issues faced by Gilgit-Baltistan's traders would be resolved amicably in accordance with existing rules and laws, and that all stakeholders would be kept informed and involved.

The Federal Minister also promised that the federal government would provide substantial relief to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. He announced that the issue of wheat provision had been addressed,

with a subsidy on wheat now in place.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary, Joint Secretary of the Gilgit-Baltistan Council, and representatives from the GB Importers and Exporters Association and GB Chambers.

Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Abrar Ahmad Mirza, Home Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan, Secretary Law GB, and a representative from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) also participated in the meeting virtually.

Two children drown in rain drains

RAWALPINDI (APP): Flooding in drains due to heavy rain on Wednesday morning claimed two more lives. The incidents occurred in two different areas where search and rescue operations have been initiated by the District Emergency Service-Rescue 1122.

According to the details, an 8 year old child was crossing a floody street and slipped in deep water which swept him away, in Boston Khan Road. The CCTV footage shows two children trapped in water, trying to escape the heavy water flow. Both the children tried to cross the water, during which one child drowned into the drain while the other survived.

In another tragic incident, a 5 years old girl drowned in an open drain near the Adyala Road area.

The spokesman Usman informed APP that search and rescue operations were initiated in both areas immediately. He further said that the names of both the kids remained unknown. The spokesman appealed the citizens to be careful during the rains.

"Parents shouldn't spare their kids in open areas during the rain, avoid unnecessary travel, drive carefully and stay away from the electric poles", he said.

SSP holds “Khuli Katchery”

RAWALPINDI (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Investigation in Rawalpindi, Zunaira Azfar, held Khuli Katchery to address public complaints at the Police Lines Headquarters on Wednesday. According to the Police spokesman, the SSP issued directives to the officers concerned to take action and submit detailed reports on the complaints submitted by the citizens. She said that negligence on the part of the officials concerned would not be tolerated.

She also directed the officials to be polite with the citizens well mannered visits to police stations. Khuli Katchery was held to provide the citizens immediate relief and address their complaints besides it helped to improve standards of policing, she said and issued orders to the officers to complete inquiries and send reports within the given time frame. All-out efforts should be made to ensure the dispensation of speedy justice purely on merit to the people and improve service delivery standards in the district, she added.

Pakistani pilgrims to get major facility at entering Iraq: visa fees waived, special flights announced

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Iraqi Ambassador Hamid Abbas Lafta announced a slew of measures aimed at easing travel restrictions and enhancing convenience to facilitate Pakistani pilgrims traveling to Iraq for Arbaceen.

The landmark decisions were reached during a high-level meeting on Wednesday between the two sides who promised to make the journey smoother and more accessible for thousands of devotees.

Both sides agreed that Pakistani pilgrims traveling to Iraq for Arbaceen would no longer need to surrender their passports upon arrival.

The meeting decided that the Pakistani pilgrims would be issued visas by the Iraqi Embassy, bypassing travel agents and the quota for Pakistan pilgrims would be increased.

It was also decided that special flights would be operating from Pakistan for Pakistani pilgrims while a new consulate will be opened in Karachi and both sides initiate a crackdown on agents charging excessive fees from pilgrims. The meeting also decided Visa waiver agreement on diplomatic and official passports while it was requested for the visa fee waiver for the ordinary pilgrims.

The decisions aim to provide equal facilities to Pakistani pilgrims, ensuring a hassle-free experience.

Mohsin Naqvi thanked the Iraqi counterparts for their cooperation, while Ambassador Lafta extended an invitation to visit Iraq.

In a swift follow-up, Naqvi secured approval from Federal Aviation Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif to allow Iraqi airlines to operate special flights, with Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) also set to announce its schedule soon. This development marks a significant improvement in travel arrangements for Pakistani pilgrims, promising a more convenient and accessible journey to Iraq.

BISP collaborates with Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis to provide skill training

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development have agreed to collaborate on initiating steps to provide quality skill training to BISP beneficiaries.

This initiative aims to empower beneficiaries and their families by equipping them with internationally recognized certifications and enhancing their employment prospects both locally and abroad.

In a meeting held today at the office of Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Chairperson of BISP, Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized the

need for high-quality training programs.

She highlighted the focus on fields such as home care, hospitality, and receptionist roles, with a strong emphasis on basic work ethics.

"Providing quality training to BISP beneficiaries and their family members is crucial. We are focusing on areas with high demand and potential for international employment. Obtaining international certifications will open doors for our trainees, enabling them to secure jobs abroad and contribute to the country's economy," stated Senator Rubina Khalid.

Chaudhry Salik Hussain expressed his support for the initiative, noting its potential to benefit entire families of beneficiaries.

He stressed the impor-

ance of creating job opportunities for the underprivileged and suggested collaborations with countries like Japan and Germany to ensure the highest standards of training.

"This initiative is not just about training individuals; it's about uplifting whole families by providing them with the skills needed to secure better jobs. Partnering with internationally recognized training institutes will help us achieve this goal," Chaudhry Salik Hussain said.

Both leaders agreed on the importance of their teams working closely together to develop a comprehensive program module. They will focus on demand-driven courses and technical support to ensure the quality of skilled manpower.

Efforts afoot to provide maximum relief to people: Mashhood

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Prime Minister Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan on Wednesday said that Pakistan's economy improved under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the PML-N-led coalition government was making all-out efforts to provide relief to the people.

Addressing a press conference, Rana said the government had reduced the inflation rate and will succeed in overwhelming the financial problems soon.

He said that the signing of multi-billion-dollar investment projects with China, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE and others will create numerous job opportunities for youth in Pakistan.

The Chairman reiterated his pledge that the government was committed to empowering youth through several revolutionary initiatives and was taking crucial steps for the betterment of the youth.

He added that technical training will be directly provided to two hundred

thousand and indirectly to six to eight hundred thousand youth this year under various skill development programmes as there was a great demand for a skilled workforce abroad.

Giving details of the successful maiden visit of the Commonwealth secretary-general RT Patricia Scotland to Pakistan, Mashhood said that several agreements and memorandums of understanding were signed.

He said that signing free training of Pakistani youth in the top eight streams of Artificial Intelligence in collaboration with Commonwealth Forum and Intel Corporation would create numerous jobs and earning opportunities for Pakistan which would be formally launched by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on International Day of Youth on August 12.

He said that setting up of Commonwealth Asia Youth Alliance Secretariat, Digital Learning Portal, National Volunteer Corps, and Commonwealth Youth Parliamentary Forum would yield multi-dimensional openings in education, sports and industry for Pakistani talented youth.

Rana further added that the Green Youth Movement (GYM) an initiative of the Prime Minister's Youth Program was creating awareness and sensitizing Youth about the effects of climate change.

He said that out of 268 universities in Pakistan, the PMYP had established GYM clubs in 137 public sector universities in Pakistan which would be spread to all universities, colleges and schools to prepare youth with dealing challenges of risk management including rains, earthquakes, floods and others.

The Chairman PMYP said that Pakistan has a talented youth and has a pivotal role in advancing the country towards fast-paced development. "We are dedicated to preparing our youth to excel in diverse fields, from technology-driven industries to traditional crafts. This holistic approach will enable them to contribute meaningfully to Pakistan's socio-economic development under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif," he added.

Dr Abbas warns severe penalties for plastic bag ban violators

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director of the Laboratory and National Quality Standards (NEQS) at the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak EPA), Ministry of Climate Change Dr. Zaigham Abbas emphasized public for reducing plastic use to promote a healthier ecosystem and issued a stern warning to those violating the ban on single-use plastic bags in Islamabad.

Dr. Zaigham Abbas talking in a Radio Pakistan's program sounded the alarm that plastic addiction is pushing us to the brink of ecological disaster where we must declare a war on plastic waste and need to take immediate action to reduce its use, and safeguard our environment.

"Our planet's future depends on it, he said, adding, 'Let us join forces to prevent a catastrophe and create a sustainable future for Pakistan. Dr. Zaigham Abbas said that we had launched a massive public awareness campaign to educate citizens about the devastating impact of polythene bags on our environment and public health.

The campaign aims to expose the harsh realities of plastic pollution, from

clogged drains and choking wildlife to toxic soil and water contamination, he added.

The ministry is working closely with law enforcement agencies to ensure the ban is enforced effectively he said, adding, we are determined to make Islamabad a plastic-free zone, and we will take all necessary measures to achieve this goal. The ministry's efforts are part of government strategy to reduce plastic waste nationwide, he added.

By raising awareness and enforcing regulations, Dr. Abbas believes Pakistan can mitigate the harmful effects of plastic pollution.

"It is a collective responsibility of government, citizens, and businesses must join forces to protect our environment and public health for sack of ourselves, our children, and future generations," he stressed.

Responding a query, he said it is crystal clear that if anyone found using or distributing plastic bags will face swift and severe consequences, adding, we will not tolerate any non-compliance, and violators will be dealt with strictly under the law.

"Our goal is to make Islamabad a plastic-free zone, and we will take all necessary measures to

achieve this goal. We urge citizens to cooperate and switch to eco-friendly alternatives to avoid facing the consequences," he appealed.

To another query, he said implementation of these steps are very pivotal as the rampant use of plastic bags and other non-biodegradable materials is a significant contributor to urban flooding. Dr. Zaigham Abbas, Director of Lab further pointed out that when plastic waste clogs our drains and sewage systems, it obstructs the free flow of water, leading to flash flooding and destruction.

"Moreover, plastic bags and other debris accumulate in storm-water drains, causing them to overflow and inundate our cities," he added. The Director emphasized that the consequences of plastic pollution are far-reaching, from damaging infrastructure and property to threatening human life and public health. "It is imperative that we address this critical issue by reducing plastic use, increasing recycling, and promoting sustainable practices," he urged. By working together, we can mitigate the risk of urban flooding and create a safer, more resilient environment for our communities," he mentioned.



RAWALPINDI: The 'Pink Bus Service' to facilitate female students, teachers and other women commuting from rural to urban areas, announced by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training in Islamabad.

Over 12,000 cases recorded

URUZGAN (TOLOnews): In the past seven months, over 12,000 children in Uruzgan have been diagnosed with malnutrition. UNICEF states that not breastfeeding, lack of family awareness and economic challenges are the primary causes of the rise in malnutrition in this province. Sadr Azam Alfati, Head of UNICEF malnutrition department, said: "The figures for the past seven months, which we have available, are 12,661. We are still in the red zone."

Ihsan banned for 5-year
KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan cricketer Ihsanullah Janat has been slapped with a five-year ban by Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) for breaching anti-corruption codes. Janat, who has played three Tests, 16 ODIs, and one T20I for Afghanistan, has been banned from all forms of cricket for five years after being found guilty of violating Article 2.1.1 of the ICC Anti-Corruption Code during the second edition of the Kabul Premier League (KPL).

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

COVID-19 cases decreased in past two months, says MoPH

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Public Health of Afghanistan reported a decrease in COVID-19 cases in the country over the past two months. The ministry's spokesperson said that in the past month, more than 700 people have been infected with the disease, and six people have died due to it. Sharafat Zaman Amarkhil, the spokesman for the Ministry of Public Health, said: "Compared to the last two months, our cases have decreased. Last month, we only had 700 positive cases. In all the hospitals across the country, the infectious disease units are active, and we have dedicated hospitals providing services for COVID-19."

Mohammad Aziz, a 64-year-old who has been hospitalized for twenty days, said that besides having diabetes, he has also contracted COVID-19. Mohammad Aziz, a patient, said, "My health condition was very bad; I was in a coma. I received IV fluids and oxygen and was hospitalized."

Another patient, Ghulam Rabani, said, "My condition was completely bad and I was in a coma, but now, thank God, I have improved by 50% or 60%."

At the same time, some doctors at the Afghan-Japan Hospital report an increase in COVID-19 cases in recent weeks. According to them, out of 70 daily tests, 15 to 20 are positive. Shirin Agha Naseri, a doctor, said, "Our daily referrals are about 70 to 60 patients, of which 15 to 20 cases are positive, and the number of patients admitted is between 2 to 5."

Another doctor, Fahim Yousufi, said: "Our recommendation is to avoid crowded places and maintain safety distance if any family member is infected with COVID-19."

Based on the statistics from the Ministry of Public Health, since the beginning of this year, 9,256 people across the country have been infected with COVID 19, and 46 people have died from the disease.

Iran seeks justice on anniversary of murders

MAZAR-E-SHARIF (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the occasion of the 26th anniversary of the killing of its diplomats in Mazar-e-Sharif, has called on the Taliban administration to punish the perpetrators.

In a statement released on Wednesday, August 7th, the Ministry described the murder of Iranian diplomats in Mazar-e-Sharif, which occurred 26 years ago, as a "terrorist act" and against "all diplomatic principles."

The statement urges the Taliban regime to identify and "punish" the perpetrators of this "crime."

The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also stated that it reserves the right to "pursue the various dimensions of this painful terrorist act."

So far, the Taliban administration has not reacted to this issue.

It should be noted that eight diplomats, including an Iranian journalist, were killed on August 8, 1998, when the forces of the Taliban took control of Mazar-e-Sharif. They were killed at the Iranian consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif.

This issue remains a significant point of tension between Iran and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Iran's request for justice and accountability reflects the ongoing impact of this tragic event on diplomatic relations and the broader geopolitical landscape.

The lack of response by the Taliban highlights the sensitivity and complexity of addressing past conflicts and ensuring justice for victims and their families.

As the anniversary of this incident is commemorated, it is a reminder of the challenges that remain in achieving reconciliation and justice in regions affected by prolonged conflict and violence.

328 uplift projects completed in Ghazni



GHAZNI (BNA): Officials from the Ghazni Rural Rehabilitation and Development Directorate have announced the completion and handover of 328 development projects in various areas of Nahor District.

According to a statement released by the ministry, these projects were funded by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), with an investment of over 153 million Afghanis. The initiatives, part of a social support and livelihood program, include the construction of rural roads, irrigation systems, and protective walls.

The projects not only addressed various local issues but also created job opportunities for hundreds of workers during their implementation. With the completion of these projects, many of the district's resident issues have been resolved.

Taxes reduced on hotels, restaurants & gas stations

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Finance says based on a decree of the Islamic Emirate's supreme leader, taxes on hotels, restaurants and gas stations have been reduced across the country.

Speaking at an event in Kabul, the Deputy Minister of Finance Mawlawi Abdul Qahir said that the owners of all hotels and restaurants are now required to pay only 2% income tax.

Abdul Qahir stated that fuel stations will pay a fixed tax of 0.3 afghanis per liter, while this amount was previously 0.6 afghanis per liter.

He added that the IEA always tries to provide the necessary facilities for taxpayers.

At the event, Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs Abdul Salam Hanafi also said that to facilitate the tax issue, tax penalties for the companies have been waived.

Meanwhile, fuel station union officials have welcomed the provision of facilities, especially in the tax reduction sector.

"We thank the Ministry of Finance, when our taxes are reduced, our prices will also be reduced. The effect of this is on the nation," a representative of the oil tankers' union said.

According to officials of the Ministry of Finance, hotels and restaurants whose quarterly sales are less than 750,000 afghanis should pay a 2 percent tax and those with sales of more than 750,000 afghanis must pay a 5 percent profit tax.

Residents criticize lack of standard roads

KABUL 9TOLOnews): Residents of Shina Village in the 12th district of Kabul city have criticized the non-implementation of road construction projects in this area.

According to the residents, although some secondary roads in this village have recently been concreted, they still face serious challenges.

This village is 12 kilometers away from the center of Kabul city and nearly 2,000 families live there.

Zain-ul-Abidin Saeedi, a representative of this village, told TOLOnews: "It is approximately ten or twelve kilometers from the city center, and unfortunately, throughout history, despite its long-standing existence, there has been the least work or attention from previous governments before the Emirate."

Shakib Ahmad, a resident of Shania village, says: "More than one kilometer of the road has been concreted, which does not solve our main problem. We have many challenges. Additionally, we have many unpaved secondary alleys where there are a lot of problems."

Meanwhile, Kabul Municipality has stated that, based on balanced development, they have developmental projects planned for all districts, including District 12, for this year.

Nematullah Barakzai, a representative of Kabul Municipality, said: "In District 12, alhamdullillah, very large projects worth hundreds of millions are being implemented, and all of these, inshallah, will be executed."

Previously, Kabul Municipality had stated that it would implement 165 projects worth 6.4 billion Afghanis in the capital this solar year.

Chindawol: Kabul's historic area with a three-century legacy

KABUL (TOLOnews): Chindawol is considered one of the oldest and most historic areas of the capital, with a history spanning nearly three hundred years. This ancient place connects several regions such as Pul-e-Artel, Sarak-e-Seh Dokan, Kuh-e-Shir Darwaza, and Jad-e-Maiwand.

Sayed Hassan Parvezi, the representative of the Chahar Chindawol district, said, "Its name indicates that it is like a collection of flowers. Flowers mean people; people from Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek backgrounds from every province have come to live in Chendawol. That's why it means Chindawol or a collection of flowers."

Some of the old streets and alleys of Chindawol in Kabul include the Kurds (Qurtas), Jawanshirs, Kale Khors, Charsuq, Khafis, Kablurs (Kibris), Kuche Bala Kuh, Kuche Shalbafs, Kuche Ziarat, and several other old passages and streets.

The clay walls and narrow, dark alleys are representative of old Chindawol.



Habibullah, a resident of Chindawol, said, "Only four alleys remain now: one is next to Chahardah Masoom, one is in Kuche Qurtas, one is up, and one is down towards Hammam-e-Jafari. Four alleys remain now."

Residents who have spent years in this ancient area recount their memories of Chindawol.

Ghawsuddin, a resident of Chindawol, said, "In the past, they used to make very good local dairy cheese, pastries, jams, and jellies in Chindawol. Those people are no longer there."

According to the residents, in the past, this area had goldsmiths, copper-smiths, blacksmiths, gunsmiths, locksmiths, apothecaries, silversmiths, bakeries, carpentry shops, falooda (a type of dessert) shops, fish and jalebi (a sweet) vendors, haleem (a type of stew) shops, samovar vendors, and butcher shops.

Canada provides over \$2 million aid to Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has announced that Canada has contributed approximately \$2.2 million to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund.

This agency expressed gratitude for the Canadian government's aid to Afghanistan in a message posted on its X page on Wednesday, August 7.

OCHA has emphasized that since 2019, Canada has contributed a total of 15.8 million Canadian dollars to Afghanistan.

Previously, OCHA had issued a report warning about the organization's budget shortage for continuing humanitarian activities in Afghanistan. According to the agency, 23.7 million people in Afghanistan will need humanitarian assistance to survive this year.

Meanwhile, several aid agencies have attributed the increase in Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis to climate change, including increased heavy rains, floods, storms, and the return of Afghan refugees from countries like Iran and Pakistan.

The current dire humanitarian crisis highlights the urgent need for international support and collaborative efforts to address the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

As Canada and other nations step forward with assistance, it is vital to continue and expand these efforts to ensure that the millions in need receive timely and effective aid. Addressing the root causes, such as climate change and geopolitical challenges, will also be crucial in developing sustainable solutions to prevent future crises.

Taimani project residents concerned about drinking water shortage

KABUL (Khaama Press): Successive droughts caused by climate change have led to a reduction in water resources in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, residents of the Taimani Project area in Kabul, the capital, are also reporting a decline in groundwater levels in this area and are concerned about the worsening situation.

Aseel, a resident of the Taimani Project, told Khaama Press that the lack of water, coupled with economic problems, has caused him difficulties.

He says, "The lowering of the water table has caused our deep well to dry up, leaving us without access to water."

According to him, people in this area have always tried to meet their water needs by digging private wells in their homes over the years. However, the water level has dropped so much that many can no longer deepen their wells.

Aseel adds, "Now, accessing water is difficult for me, with several small children, and I have to travel kilometers away from home to fetch water."

According to him, if he does not travel kilometers away from his home to get water, he is forced to buy it, which is challenging due to economic problems and unemployment.

Meanwhile, Parwana, another resident of Second Road, Taimani Project, says, "The water in the Taimani Project area is not drinkable because it is entirely salty, and getting fresh water requires more money because the water level is low."

Parwana says, "We buy water for drinking, but we use salty water for other purposes, and we are worried about skin problems because of the excessive salt in the water."

Bilal, a resident of First Road, Taimani Project, says, "We have been digging a well with modern equipment for more than ten days, but there is no sign of water."

Qari Mutiullah Abed, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Energy and Water, told Khaama Press, "Since there is a shortage of drinking water in different parts of Kabul city, the Ministry of Energy and Water has short-term and long-term plans in place, including transferring Panjshir water to Kabul, and the Shatoot Dam and the Shah and Arous Dam to Kabul are among the ministry's long-term plans."

According to Mr. Abed, "The short-term plan includes transferring water from areas with the most water to areas suffering from water shortages, creating absorption wells, and working on water storage has also begun."

Alongside water shortages in various parts of the country, the spokesperson of this ministry has asked people to pay attention to water consumption and emphasize creating absorption wells, which help store water.

The water crisis in the country arose when the United Nations Development Program previously expressed concern about the severe drinking water shortage in Afghanistan in a statement issued on Earth Day.

This organization says 79 percent of families in Afghanistan do not have access to drinking water.

The ongoing water crisis in Afghanistan is a multifaceted issue exacerbated by climate change, economic hardships, and infrastructure challenges.

While the government is initiating measures to address water shortages, immediate and coordinated efforts are needed to alleviate the situation for affected communities.

Increased awareness and strategic planning are vital to ensure sustainable water management and long-term access to clean water for Afghan families, potentially alleviating the broader humanitarian challenges faced by the country.



Increased awareness and strategic planning are vital to ensure sustainable water management and long-term access to clean water for Afghan families, potentially alleviating the broader humanitarian challenges faced by the country.



ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

UK braces for day of unrest amid fears of 100 more far-right riots

LONDON (AFP): Thousands of riot police stood ready on Wednesday as Britain remained on alert for disturbances during far-right protests across the country. Nightly riots, during which mosques and migrant targets have been attacked, erupted after three children were murdered on July 29.

Police said they were investigating several racially motivated hate crimes in Belfast on Tuesday, including an attack on a young boy that left him with minor facial injuries. Far-right groups plan demonstrations on Wednesday in more than 30 locations, with immigration lawyers and buildings hosting asylum seekers as primary targets, according to posts on messaging app Telegram leaked to the British media. The government has said 6,000 specialist police are on standby to deal with the disorder, which has seen more than 425 people arrested and at least 120 charged, according to the latest police figures.

The violence broke out after girls aged nine, seven and six were killed and five more children critically injured during a knife attack at a Taylor Swift dance class in Southport, northwest England. False rumours initially spread on social media saying the attacker was a Muslim asylum seeker. The suspect was later identified as 17-year-old Axel Rudakubana, born in Wales. UK media reported that his parents are from Rwanda. Despite the police statement, initial disturbances in Southport centred around a mosque, and widespread violence has rocked England and Northern Ireland since.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer late on Tuesday warned anyone involved would face “the full force of the law”,

including those inciting violence online. Starmer, a former chief state prosecutor, said he expected “substantive sentencing before the end of this week” for the rioters. “That should send a very powerful message to anybody involved, either directly or online,” he added in televised comments.

The unrest, Britain’s worst since 2011 London riots, has led several countries to warn citizens about travelling in Britain. Rioting in several cities has seen demonstrators throw bricks and flares at police officers, burn cars and attack mosques and at least two hotels that have been used for asylum seekers. Scores of alleged perpetrators were hauled before judges on Tuesday, with some entering guilty pleas.

A 19-year-old man became the first person to receive a prison sentence for the unrest when he was jailed for two months, PA Media reported. Derek Drummond, 58, was sentenced to three years in prison at Liverpool Crown Court having pleaded guilty to violent disorder and assaulting an emergency worker by punching a police officer. “The genuine and collective grief of the residents of Southport was effectively hijacked by this callous behaviour,” Judge Andrew Menary said.

Another man, Declan Geiran, 29, was jailed for 30 months after pleading guilty to violent disorder and arson by setting the seatbelt of a police van on fire in Liverpool city centre on August 3. Liam Riley, 41, was jailed for 20 months having pleaded guilty to violent disorder and a racially aggravated public order offence. Another man was convicted after he admitted assaulting a police officer outside a hotel for asylum

seekers in Rotherham, northern England, on Sunday.

A 15-year-old boy pleaded guilty to committing violent disorder in Liverpool on Saturday after he was identified from a TikTok video. A man in Leeds admitted posting threatening words on Facebook to stir up racial hatred. The government, which is only one month old, has vowed to take a tough line on the unrest. Starmer said, “99.9 per cent of people across the country want their streets to be safe and to feel safe in their communities, and we will take all necessary action to bring the disorder to an end.”

Justice Minister Heidi Alexander told BBC radio that the government had freed up an extra 500 prison places. Police have blamed the disorder on people associated with the now-defunct English Defence League (EDL), a far-right Islamophobic organisation founded 15 years ago, whose supporters have been linked to football hooliganism. EDL founder Tommy Robinson has been blamed by authorities for stoking tensions, and police in Cyprus, where he was reported to be on holiday, said Wednesday they were ready to assist UK police if needed.

However, Robinson later wrote on the X social media platform: “Lucky I’m not in Cyprus then”. The rallies have been advertised on far-right social media channels under the banner “Enough is enough”. Interior Minister Yvette Cooper said that social media has put a “rocket booster” under the violence. Tech billionaire Elon Musk escalated a dispute with the UK government on Tuesday by likening Britain to “the Soviet Union”. A spokesperson for Starmer had said there was “no justification” for Musk’s earlier comment that a British “civil war is inevitable”.

Election Amend Act aims to thwart PTI: Omar Ayub

F.P. Report

LAHORE: National Assembly Opposition leader and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader, Omar Ayub has berated the newly enacted Election Amendment Act, labelling this government’s cowardly move to roadblock PTI way to success.

Talking to the media outside anti-terrorism court where he appeared for hearing of a case, the PTI general secretary regarded the act as contradictory to the constitution and law and announced to challenge this act at every forum. Omar Ayub also cleared the air about negotiations of PTI, he stated, “We are not creating dialogue with anyone.” He demanded fresh election and return of his party’s stolen mandate, as Pakistan needed a new election.

The PTI leader also regarded the budget, anti-people and claimed that this budget would exacerbate inflation. Giving his remarks on the current situation of Bangladesh, where PM Hasina Wajid fled to India after student’s protests, “Where will Sheikhaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz escape? Hasina Wajid fled to India but they (incumbent government) will not be rescued by helicopter.”

PTI stalwart and opposition leader in the Upper House, Shibli Faraz said that the Election Act Amendment Bill 2024 was an attack on the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Advisor Barrister Saif said on Wednesday that the government was trying to drive a wedge between institutions by amending the Election Act. The Senate on Tuesday passed the Election Act Amendment Bill by a majority vote despite protest by the opposition PTI.

As the session started with Yousuf Raza Gilani in the chair, Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Talal Chaudhry presented the Election Act Amendment Bill. The amendment provides that “a candidate who does not submit the party certificate before obtaining the election symbol will be considered an independent candidate. If the list of candidates for reserved seats is not submitted within the specified period, no political party will be entitled to those seats.”

It also provides that any candidate’s declaration of affiliation to a political party will be irrevocable. Earlier, the National Assembly passed the Election Act Amendment Bill by a majority vote amid an uproar by the opposition. As the session started with Speaker Ayaz Sadiq in the chair, PML-N MNA Bilal Azhar Kayani and Zeb Jaffar tabled the Election Act Amendment Bill.

NAB summons NICVD officials

KARACHI (INP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has issued a notice to officials of the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) in a corruption case worth Rs 4 billion.

The NAB has asked the officials to provide records and appear before the bureau for an inquiry. The administration has been asked to provide records of recruitments, purchases, and salaries.

The corruption allegations include embezzlement of funds, illegal recruitment, and misuse of salaries. The NAB has already received a letter from the NICVD administration and is cooperating fully with the investigation.

KP CM directs stern action against adulteration mafia

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has directed the quarters concerned to immediately complete the food testing lab being established in Peshawar for testing and registration of food products in the province, adding that all the resources required for this purpose would be provided on priority. He also directed them to ensure procurement of all the equipment required by the food authority as early as possible.

He was chairing a meeting of the Food Safety and Halal Food Authority, held here at Chief Minister’s House Peshawar on Wednesday. Provincial Minister for food Zahir Shah Toru, Additional Chief Secretaries Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah, Muhammad Abid Majeed, Secretary Health Adeel Shah and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

Briefing about the baseline survey and drive recently conducted by the authority for milk quality

testing in the province, it was informed that a total of 583 milk samples were tested in different districts of the province, out of which 541 samples were found substandard and adulterated. The authorities informed that 78% samples of local tank suppliers and 99% samples of inter provincial tank suppliers were declared adulterated, adding that cumulatively, 93% milk samples have been declared unhygienic and substandard.

The Chief Minister has expressed great concerns over adulteration of harmful chemical in milk and directed the authority to take stern action against adulteration mafia across the province.

Earlier, the Chief Minister also chaired a meeting of the transport department wherein matters with regard to introducing modern public transport facilities in Divisional Headquarters also came under discussion. The Chief Minister, on the occasion, directed the authorities of the transport department to complete the homework for introducing modern public transport in the

divisional headquarters and solid proposals be submitted for approval within a week.

Ali Amin Khan Gandapur said that providing quality transport facilities to the public is a part of the government’s priority areas adding that the provincial government would utilize all the resources required for this purpose. In the meeting, the Chief Minister has also directed quarters concerned to complete commercial plazas of BRT on fast track and prepare a business plan for the said plazas.

He has directed the PDA to speed up work on the Peshawar Ring Road upgrade project and said that steps should be taken to provide modern facilities on the Ring Road. Ali Amin Gandapur has also directed the authorities concerned for a plan to make BRT financially self-sufficient. Adviser to Chief Minister on Finance Muzamil Aslam, Secretary Transport Masood Younis, CEO Trans Peshawar and representatives of a private transport company also attended the meeting.

PHC stops appointment of teaching staff

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice has stopped the appointment of teaching staff on management posts in the Education Department and sought a response from the provincial government within 14 days, on Wednesday.

PHC annoyed replacement of management officers by teaching cadre and most management cadre officers are being made Officers on Special Duty (OSD) and are being paid salaries at home. PHC made this observation during the hearing of a writ petition filed by Mansoor Jafar. Section Officer Education Department along with Additional Advocate General appeared before the court.

The counsel Khalid Rehman advocate informed PHC that the petitioners are management cadre officers of grades 16, 17, 18, and 19 who were appointed to these posts after the separation of management and teaching cadres in the Education Department in 2009. He said that the provincial government had implemented the 2009 Education Policy, creating separate management and teaching cadres to improve the quality of education.

However, despite the court’s orders, the Education Department has made 25 management cadre officers as OSDs and replaced them with teaching cadre officers over the past two and a half months, the counsel argued.

The lawyer added that it has created administrative issues, as management offi-

cers have received training to perform administrative tasks, but teaching cadre officers are being appointed to these posts. He added that there are currently 466 management cadre posts and 501 teaching cadre posts in the Education Department, with 109 posts vacant.

However, the provincial government and Education Department officials are appointing favorite individuals and posting teaching cadre officers to important positions, violating the principles of the Education Policy. PHC’s divisional bench comprising of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Ijaz Khan Sabi stopped further appointments of teaching staff on management posts and sought a response from the provincial government within 14 days.

New polio case in Quetta detected

F.P. Report

QUETTA: A new case of polio has been reported in an 11-month-old child in Qilla Abdullah, bringing the total number of polio cases in Pakistan for the year to 13. The latest case, detected in July, marks the fifth instance of polio in Qilla Abdullah alone.

According to the Polio Eradication Laboratory, the child exhibited symptoms of the disease starting July 17. Dr. Malik Mukhtar Bhirh emphasized that preventing polio remains a top priority for the government, which has initiated measures to increase vaccination coverage in Balochistan.

Ayesha Raza Farooq highlighted that Qilla Abdullah, along with Quetta and Chaman, are areas with higher rates of polio transmission. She noted that a comprehensive road map is being implemented, in consultation with all provinces, to halt the spread of the virus.

National Coordinator Anwarul Haq assured that federal teams are fully supporting the polio program, maintaining Pakistan’s commitment to eradicating the disease. He urged parents to actively participate in the polio vaccination campaigns.

Harris draws more support among Black voters

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris is drawing more support from Black voters than President Joe Biden did when he was in the race this year, while Republican Donald Trump’s support among white voters has risen somewhat in recent months, according to an analysis of Reuters/Ipsos polling.

The analysis, which examined more than 10,000 responses from seven nationwide Reuters/Ipsos polls conducted since May, points to significant strengths and vulnerabilities for Harris, the US vice president who took over Biden’s campaign when the president dropped his reelection bid on July 21. Some 70 per cent of Black voters polled in July picked Harris over Trump on a hypothetical ballot, up from 59pc who backed Biden in May and June polls.

Trump’s share of the Black vote rose marginally to 12pc in July from 9pc in May and June. Trump, meanwhile, is seeing increased support from white voters. Some 50pc picked Trump in July polls, up from 46pc in May and June. Harris had the support of 38pc of white voters in July, compared to 36pc in May and June.

The race remains essentially tied, with Harris and Trump each getting 43pc support in an aggregate of last month’s polls. Biden and Trump each had 40pc in the polls conducted in the previous two months. The analysis examined poll responses gathered throughout July on a hypothetical Harris-Trump contest and included responses from before Biden, 81, ended his bid. All responses on Harris, however, were gathered after Biden’s June 27 debate against Trump, when the president’s faltering performance led Democrats to call on him to end his campaign.

White voters make up the biggest racial bloc, accounting for 72pc of all voters in the 2020 election, according to the Pew Research Centre, though their share of the electorate has dropped sharply in recent decades. African Americans accounted for only 11pc of voters that year. But they are a critical component of the Democratic Party’s coalition and could play an outsized role in this year’s election.

Black voters in Georgia, for example, propelled Biden to victory over Trump in the 2020 presidential election. But a surge in the cost of living and

what they see as a lack of progress on racial justice issues has prompted disillusionment in some quarters. Terrance Woodbury, a Democratic pollster who specialises in minority voter outreach, said Harris needs overwhelming support from African Americans to compensate for her weakness among white voters, particularly white men and seniors.

Biden won 92pc of the Black vote in 2020, while Trump won 55pc of white votes, according to analysis of exit polls by the Pew Research Centre. “She’s going to have to consolidate her base of Black voters, of young voters and women of colour,” Woodbury said.

Harris could be picking up a larger share of Black voters who had previously been on the fence. Some 19pc of Black registered voters in July said they were undecided, might pick a third candidate or not vote at all, down from 31pc in May and June. A Harris campaign official said the campaign expects the race to remain close in the run-up to November. The Trump campaign did not respond to a request for comment. Trump has falsely accused Harris of previously downplaying her Black heritage.

Israel vows to ‘eliminate’ new Hamas leader as war enters 11th month

JERUSALEM (AFP): Israel vowed to “eliminate” new Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar, the alleged mastermind of the October 7 attack, whose appointment further inflamed regional tensions as the Gaza war entered its 11th month on Wednesday.

The naming of Sinwar to lead the Palestinian militant group came as Israel braced for potential Iranian retaliation over the killing of his predecessor Ismael Haniyeh last week in Tehran. Speaking at a military base on Wednesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel was “determined” to defend itself.

“We are prepared both defensively and offensively,” he told new recruits. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said late Tuesday that Sinwar’s promo-

tion was “yet another compelling reason to swiftly eliminate him and wipe this vile organization off the face of the earth.” Sinwar — Hamas’s leader in Gaza since 2017 — has not been seen since the October 7 attack, which was the deadliest in Israel’s history.

A senior Hamas official told AFP that the selection of Sinwar sent a message that the organization “continues its path of resistance.” Hamas’s Lebanese ally Hezbollah congratulated Sinwar and said the appointment affirms “the enemy... has failed to achieve its objectives” by killing Hamas leaders and officials. Analysts believe Sinwar has been both more reluctant to agree to a Gaza ceasefire and closer to Tehran than Haniyeh, who lived in Qatar.

“If a ceasefire deal seemed unlikely upon Haniyeh’s death, it is even less likely under Sinwar,” according to Rita Katz, executive director of the SITE Intelligence Group. “The group will only lean further into its hard-line militant strategy of recent years,” she added. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters that it was up to Sinwar to help achieve a ceasefire, saying he “has been and remains the primary decider.”

Civilians in both Israel and Gaza met Sinwar’s appointment with unease. Mohammad Al-Sharif, a displaced Gazan, told AFP: “He is a fighter. How will negotiations take place?” In Tel Aviv, logistics company manager Hanan, who did not want to give his second name, said Sinwar’s appoint-

ment meant Hamas “did not see fit to look for someone less militant, someone with a less murderous approach.” Iran-backed Hezbollah has also pledged to avenge the deaths of Haniyeh and its own military commander Fuad Shukr in an Israeli strike in Beirut hours earlier. In a televised address to mark one week since Shukr’s death, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said Tuesday his group would retaliate “alone or in the context of a unified response from all the axis” of Iran-backed groups in the region.

The United States, which has sent extra warships and jets to the region, urged both Iran and Israel to avoid an escalation. President Joe Biden had calls with Jordan’s King Abdullah II,

the Qatari emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi on Tuesday. “No one should escalate this conflict. We’ve been engaged in intense diplomacy with allies and partners, communicating that message directly to Iran. We communicated that message directly to Israel,” Blinken told reporters. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian told his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron in a telephone call that the West “should immediately stop selling arms and supporting” Israel if it wants to prevent war, his office said.

The Jeddah-based Organization of Islamic Cooperation met on Wednesday to discuss the situation in the Middle East. Gambian Foreign

Minister Mamadou Tangara, whose country currently chairs the bloc, said the “heinous” killing of Haniyeh risked “leading to a wider conflict that could involve the entire region.” Israel has not commented on Haniyeh’s killing but confirmed it had carried out the strike on Shukr.

It held the Hezbollah commander responsible for a rocket attack in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights that killed 12 children. Hezbollah has traded near-daily cross-border fire with Israeli troops throughout the Gaza war. The group said Tuesday that six of its fighters were killed in Israeli strikes on south Lebanon and that it had launched “dozens of Katyusha rockets” at a military base in the Golan Heights in retaliation.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ship YARMOOK visited port Mina Salman of Bahrain and conducted bilateral exercises with friendly navies during deployment on Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP).

Upon arrival at port, the ship was received by senior officials of Bahrain Navy and officials of Pakistan Embassy.

Later, Commanding Officer of PNS YARMOOK called on Commander Royal Bahrain Naval Force, Rear Admiral Ahmed Mohammad Ibrahim Al Bin Ali, Commander Royal Bahrain Coast Guards, Brig Saqib Qamar and other senior officials of Bahrain Navy. The Commanding Officer also visited HQ Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and called on Dy Commander CMF, Commodore Mark Anderson. During the interactions, professional matters of mutual interests were discussed and enhancement of bilateral ties in all spheres was reaffirmed.

During stay at port Mina Salman, Ambassador of Pakistan to Bahrain, Commander Maritime Coalition Forces, officials

of Bahrain Navy, prominent businessmen, notables from Pakistani community, a large number of diplomats and Defence Attaché of friendly countries visited PNS YARMOOK. Various activities, including exchange visits onboard ships and orientation visits of military installations were also undertaken.

Upon culmination of port visit, PNS YARMOOK conducted bilateral exercises with Royal Bahrain Navy Ship AL-MANAMA, US Ship DANIEL INOUE and Japanese Maritime Self Defence (JMSDF) Ship, JS SAMIDARE. The exercises were aimed to develop synergy

and mutual understanding among partner Navies while rehearsing interoperability to undertake joint operations in the region.

Pakistan Navy is maintaining permanent presence in the Indian Ocean to keep the national and international Sea Lines Of Communications (SLOC) under surveillance. Pakistan Navy (PN) believes in collaborative efforts for maintenance of rule-based order at sea. PN actively collaborates with regional and international partners deployed in Indian Ocean to counter piracy and to undertake anti-narcotics operations for protecting global common interests.