

More Mpox cases detected  
F.P. Report

KARACHI: The signs of the monkey-pox virus were detected in three passengers who arrived from Jeddah and Dubai at Jinnah International Airport (JIAP) Karachi in a single day, reported on Sunday. Sources said that monkeypox was detected in a woman who reached Karachi from Jeddah while another man aged 18 arrived from Dubai.



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# Constitutional package in limbo

## NA session postponed till today as govt, opposition fail to reach consensus on constitutional amendments

ISLAMABAD: Amid the government's efforts to introduce a 'constitutional package' that reportedly gives it greater control over judicial procedures, Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has taken centre stage, with both the ruling coalition and the opposition vying for his support in Parliament.

"We haven't received the draft amendment bill yet [...] How can we vote before analysing it?" JUI-F General Secretary Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri said speaking to journalists outside Fazl's residence. He said that the government delegation had been asked not to rush in tabling the bill. "We will participate in the [special parliamentary] committee's meeting and present our stance," he added.

Haideri stressed that the opposition parties should also review the amendment bill, saying they have sought "some time" before making a decision. After a slew of meetings with the ruling coalition and opposition, Maulana Fazlur Rehman arrived at the Parliament House to attend the special parliamentary committee meeting. "Stay tuned," the veteran politician responded to a journalist's question in the parliament corridor.

Both sessions of the National Assembly (NA) and the Senate — originally scheduled for earlier in the day — have been delayed multiple times as both the government and the opposition were holding consultations. However, sources told media that the federal cabinet meeting — summoned for the approval of the draft amendment — has been postponed until today.

The government has been tight-lipped on the proposed amendments to the Constitution, but clarified that the package will not be a person-specific and would give the authorities ingress in the judicial procedure. The prospects of the said constitutional package come amid speculations revolving around extension in the tenure of Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa — who is set to retire in October this year — after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) sought an early issuance of notification regarding the next top judge last month.

Its key points likely include the

## Mengal demands release of missing persons in return of supporting bill

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan National Party Mengal (BNP-M) chief Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal has demanded the release of missing persons in return of supporting the ruling coalition in passing the constitutional amendment bill. Mengal got much importance in the current political landscape as the ruling coalition is desperate to pass the constitutional amendment bill at any cost. He was approached by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and former Senate chairman Sadiq Sanjrani on Sunday.

The sources said that the Baloch veteran has refused to vote till the recovery of missing persons. The ruling coalition is struggling to meet the required numbers in both houses of the parliament to pass the legislation and BNP-M has two votes in the Senate. The sources said that Mengal has sought the draft of proposed legislation from Sadiq Sanjrani. They added that the BNP-M chief has demanded the release of 2,000 missing persons in return of his two votes in the upper house of parliament. Earlier, BNP-M chief had announced his resignation from the National Assembly.

Mengal criticised the current political system, stating that it would be better to open a small business rather than to continue a role where the assembly does not listen to their voice. Mengal was elected a member of the National Assembly from NA-256 Khuzdar. The government has summoned an important session of the Senate and National Assembly on Sunday to table the constitutional amendment bill.

setting up of a constitutional court, a merger of the judicial and parliamentary commissions responsible for the selection of judges, as well as amendment to Article 63-A of the constitution of Pakistan, which deals with the issue of disqualification of members of parliament on grounds of defection. Aconsensus on increasing the retirement age of superior court judges has not yet been formalised, with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vowing to launch a country-wide protest if the age limit of Supreme Court and high court judges is revised.

Speaking to media, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif asserted that they have achieved the magic number in both upper and lower houses of parliament for the passage of the much-touted constitutional amendment. He said they have completed the numbers game for the constitutional amendment, also claiming the support of JUI-F chief Maulana Fazl Rehman after "his reservations are removed".

"Apart from Maulana Fazl and coalition parties, some other votes will be secured," the federal minister said without divulging into details. "They are not legally or constitution-

ally bound to any party." He hoped the 'constitutional package' would be adopted today, adding that its passage would improve the parliament's environment.

In response to a question regarding the Supreme Court's clarification on reserved seats verdict issued a day earlier, the defence czar said: "We will be successful despite the apex court's statement favouring the opposition." He castigated the July 12 reserved seats verdict, terming the apex court's decision 'an attempt' to block the way for the constitutional amendment.

Giving details of the package, Asif said it includes the formation of constitutional court and an increase in the number of judges in superior courts. Today's National Assembly (NA) session was initially slated for 11:30am but then changed to 4pm on a Special Parliamentary Committee's request made to the NA speaker. However, the session was unable to start even at the revised time and now sources claimed that it will likely be started at 8pm. Similarly, the Senate session slated for 4pm was rescheduled to 7pm, according to a notification from the Senate secretariat. — Agencies



RAWALPINDI: An illuminated view of buildings decorated with colourful lights in connection with Eid Milad-un-Nabi celebrations.

## Petrol prices down by Rs10

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has announced a reduction in fuel prices on Sunday, with the cost of petrol falling by Rs10 per litre, effective from midnight tonight. High-speed diesel (HSD) has also seen a price cut, dropping by Rs13.6 per litre.

The current adjustments reflect the ongoing fluctuations in global oil markets and are expected to offer some relief to Pakistani consumers.

Earlier this week, Federal Minister for Petroleum, Musadik Masood Malik, stated that Pakistanis will benefit from the decline in international petroleum prices but will also bear the burden when prices rise. Responding to a question in the National Assembly, the minister said that price fluctuations in the international market lead to speculation, making it too early to predict petroleum prices for the next fortnight.

"We often receive support from Saudi Arabia through oil on deferred payments," Malik noted, adding that domestic oil prices are determined by global market trends. He highlighted, "We buy petroleum products against dollars and sell in rupees. Since the inception of the incumbent government, the dollar-rupee parity has stabilised.

The minister pointed out the petrol price was slashed by Rs47 per litre since May, adding there is a gradual decline in the smuggling of Iranian petrol. He said there are no criteria to regularise the smuggling, adding the country has 21-day strategic stock of petroleum products. To a question, he said the country's gas reservoirs are depleting by the day. If additional connections are granted, it will lead to a severe gas crisis in the country. "You are not ready to pay the cost of imported gas," said Malik, adding the previous government imposed restriction on new gas connections, which was the right decision.

## PM reaffirms commitment to ozone layer protection

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has reiterated Pakistan's strong commitment to the preservation of the ozone layer, marking World Ozone Day.

In his message, the prime minister emphasized the crucial role of global collaboration in addressing ozone depletion and highlighted Pakistan's significant contributions to international efforts. Acknowledging the damage caused by human activities, the prime minister expressed concerns over the depletion of the ozone layer, which resulted in the formation of the ozone hole, posing severe risks to life on Earth.

However, he praised the positive impact of global initiatives such as the

United Nations Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol, which had facilitated the recovery of the ozone layer. "Pakistan has been an active participant in these UN agreements," PM Shehbaz Sharif noted, pointing out that the country ratified the Montreal Protocol in 1992 and has since made considerable progress in phasing out ozone-depleting substances (ODS).

The establishment of the National Ozone Unit (NOU) in 1996 has played a pivotal role in driving these efforts, working in collaboration with customs officials, the refrigeration and air conditioning industry, and other key stakeholders. He highlighted that Pakistan successfully phased out the first genera-

tion of ODS by 2009 and achieved a 50% reduction in HCFCs by 2020.

"The country is on track to meet its target of a 67.5% reduction by 2025, with many industries having already transitioned to ozone-friendly technologies." The prime minister also stressed Pakistan's preparedness for the phase-down of hydro-fluorocarbons (HFCs) under the Kigali Amendment. Additionally, he also reaffirmed his government's commitment to climate action and environmental sustainability. He urged for continued global cooperation, in line with this year's theme, "Montreal Protocol - Advancing Climate Actions", to ensure a safer and more sustainable planet for future generations.

## Typhoon: Shanghai shuts flights, halts train services

SHANGHAI (AFP): Shanghai has shut air, sea and major ground transport as it braces for Typhoon Bebinca, in what could be the strongest tropical storm to hit the Chinese financial hub since 1949. The Category 1 typhoon, packing maximum sustained wind speeds near its centre of around 144km/h (89mph), was about 400km (248 miles) southeast of Shanghai as of 5pm local time (09:00 GMT) on Sunday.

The typhoon, which left a deadly trail in the Philippines, is expected to make landfall along China's eastern coast after midnight on Monday. The China Meteorological Administration issued a typhoon red alert on Sunday afternoon, warning of gales and heavy rainfalls in eastern China. The strongest storm to make landfall in Shanghai in recent decades was Typhoon Gloria in 1949, which tore through the city with gusts of 144km/h (89mph). Resorts in Shanghai,

Shanghai was last threatened by a direct hit in 2022 by the powerful Typhoon Muifa, which instead landed 300km (186 miles) away in the city of Zhoushan, in Zhejiang province. Shanghai is typically spared the strong typhoons that hit further south in China, including Typhoon Yagi, a destructive Category 4 storm that roared past southern Hainan province last week. But Shanghai and neighbouring provinces are taking no chances with Category 1 Bebinca.

All flights have been ordered cancelled at Shanghai's two airports from 8pm (12:00 GMT) local time on Sunday, and the operator, the Shanghai Airport (Group) Co said it will announce adjustments depending on the typhoon's impact. The Shanghai railway station has also suspended some services to ensure passenger safety, and the Shenzhen government said trains to and from Shanghai will be halted. AFP news agency.

including Shanghai Disney Resort, have been temporarily closed, while most ferries have been halted to and from Chongming Island. In Zhejiang, ships have been recalled while several parks in the provincial capital Hangzhou announced closures. Bebinca's arrival will coincide with the Mid-Autumn Festival, a nationwide three-day holiday when many Chinese travel or engage in outdoor activities.

In the Philippines, falling trees killed six people after Typhoon Bebinca brought strong winds and floods on Saturday and Sunday. According to ABS-CBN's TV Patrol newscast, four children were killed when a huge tree fell on the motorised rickshaw they were on in the southern island of Mindanao. Another child and a woman were also killed in two separate incidents when trees fell on their respective homes in Zamboanga del Sur province, which is also in Mindanao, according to AFP news agency.

## US says preparing ‘substantial’ Ukraine aid package

WASHINGTON: The administration of United States President Joe Biden says it is preparing a large aid package for Ukraine in the coming weeks as a debate continues over whether Ukrainian forces should be allowed to use Western-supplied weapons to strike farther inside Russia.

White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said that Washington is working on a "substantial" round of further assistance for Kyiv and Biden will meet his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, this month. "I do think we need a comprehensive strategy for success in this war, and that is what President Zelenskyy says he is bringing," Sullivan said in remarks delivered via videolink at the Yalta European Strategy conference in Ukraine's capital.

"So we are very much looking forward to sitting down and talking that through, and President Biden is eager for that conversation," he said. Sullivan made the remarks as Ukraine has been pushing for more long-range weaponry to hit targets deeper inside Russian territory, a

development that analysts worried could escalate tensions between Moscow and Kyiv's Western backers.

More than two and a half years since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of its neighbour in February 2022, Ukrainian forces have struggled in recent weeks as Russia has made progress around Pokrovsk, a key transit hub in eastern Ukraine. Pokrovsk's capture could enable Moscow to open new lines of attack and complicate Ukrainian logistics. Sullivan said recent developments in the area are of "unique concern".

The White House adviser added that Biden, who is not seeking reelection and whose term ends in January, is working to put Ukraine in the "best possible position to prevail" during his final months in office. "President Zelenskyy has said that ultimately this war has to end through negotiations, and we need them to be strong in those negotiations," Sullivan said.

Meanwhile, NATO Military Committee Chairman Rob Bauer said he supported Ukraine's use of long-range weapons to strike inside

Russia. "Every nation that is attacked has the right to defend itself. And that right doesn't stop at the border of your own nation," the admiral said on Saturday at a committee meeting. Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned that if Western nations allow Ukraine to use such weapons to strike inside Russia then it will mean NATO would be "at war" with his country.

"This would be a significant way change the very nature of the conflict. It would mean that NATO countries, the US, European countries, are at war with Russia," Putin told Russian state TV on Thursday. "And if this is so, then, bearing in mind the change in the very essence of this conflict, we will make appropriate decisions based on the threats that will be created for us." A day later, Russia's ambassador to the United Nations delivered a similar message to the UN Security Council in New York.

"The facts are that NATO will be a direct party to hostilities against a nuclear power. I think you shouldn't forget about this and think about the consequences," Vassily Nebenzia told the 15-member council. — Aljazeera

# Tarar rules out any ‘person specific’ legislation

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD / LAHORE: Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Sunday ruled out any "person specific" legislation, reiterating the government's commitment to ensure speedy justice for the people of Pakistan.

"Reforms are overdue to give the people of Pakistan access to speedy justice," he said while talking to the media inside the Parliament House. To a query, he said the government would complete its numbers in both the Houses for the new legislation.

"This impression is wrong that there is any person specific legislation as we are legislating for only the greater good of the masses," he stressed. "All parties are unanimous to ensure speedy justice for the people at their doorstep," the minister remarked. He said the meeting of a special committee which comprised of allied parties was underway. The reforms were of the national importance and the Cabinet would meet

shortly on this matter. To another query, he said leader of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (F) Maulana Fazl ur Rehman is our old ally and partner.

Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said that reforms were essential to provide speedy justice to the people. Talking to the journalists here, the minister assured that any legislation to be done in the collective interest of the nation.

The minister remarked that many decades were passed to solve the cases in the judiciary and it was imperative to take measures for providing speedy justice to the people. He said that all coalition parties had representation in the special committee constituted for this purpose.

He said that Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar had talked about the Charter of Democracy to reform judicial system. "Any amendment in matters of national concern should benefit the entire Pakistani nation," he opined.

He maintained that due to legal lacunae, many times the cause list was not issued, notices were not served and orders were issued. There should be a balanced system to maintain balance in this regard, he observed. The minister said that members of the cabinet were present, there will be a meeting of the cabinet shortly. The government was positive about the number game, he said adding Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Amir Maulana Fazlur Rehman was an old ally and partner. He asked the media to wait a little to get good news in this regard.

Meanwhile, Attaullah Tarar has assured madrasas and Islamic universities of the government's full support in upgrading their facilities to include contemporary education alongside traditional Islamic teachings.

Addressing a one-day training workshop, organised by Dar-ul-Uloom Islamia in Allama Iqbal Town via video-link on Sunday, the minister emphasised that integrating modern education into the madrasa system is a "great national service". He congratulated Dar-ul-Uloom Islamia

for its efforts in introducing degree programs in modern subjects alongside religious studies.

He highlighted the importance of modern education for religious students, stating that many madrasa graduates have already begun contributing to various sectors, including the judiciary and bureaucracy. He underscored the historical role of Muslim scholars in advancing science, philosophy, and other disciplines and noted that madrasas, by offering a balanced education, could produce professionals in fields like medicine, engineering, law, and science.

The minister called on religious institutions to help fulfill the vision of Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah (RA) and Allama Muhammad Iqbal (RA) in making Pakistan a modern Islamic state. He also paid tribute to his grandfather, the late former president Rafique Tarar, for his contributions to promoting religious education and the philosophy of Pakistan. While apologizing for his inability to attend the workshop in person, Tarar reaffirmed his family's

respect for Ulema and religious scholars and reiterated the government's commitment to supporting their educational endeavors.

Attaullah Tarar said that introduction of latest knowledge in seminars and imparting latest education to their students was a great service to the nation. Addressing a ceremony at Jamia Darul Uloom Al-Islamia in Lahore through video link, he congratulated the management of the Darul Uloom for introducing new degrees in various educational sectors in many seminars. He said this would help equip the students of religious seminaries with modern education and they would be able to join the national mainstream. He expressed the hope that among the students of seminaries will emerge leading scholars, intellectuals, legal experts, doctors etc.

He said imparting modern education to all was need of the hour and steps taken by Jamia Darul Uloom Al-Islamia would prove a milestone in this mission. Tarar hoped that in the near future, graduates from semi-

naries would come forward and play an important role in making Pakistan an ideal Islamic welfare state as envisaged by the Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Poet of the East Allama Iqbal.

He said once there was a time when leading scientists, intellectuals, and experts of mathematics were Muslims and their books were taught all over the world and the time had come to revive the past glory. He said his family had been affiliated with service to Islam and Tehreek Khatam-e-Nabuwat since 1953 when his grand-father Justice (retired) and former president Muhammad Rafiq Tarar actively participated in this movement and remained steadfast in serving this mission till his last breath.

He thanked the management of the seminary for inviting him to this important event. He apologised for not physically being able to attend the event due to pressing engagements in Islamabad. Tarar assured that the government was ready to cooperate with seminaries for the upgradation of their educational curriculum.





KARACHI: Roads leading to the Korangi Industrial Zone in urgent need of repair due to severe damage. — APP Photo

## Ombudsman saves student academic year

KARACHI (PPI) Provincial Ombudsman Dr Muhammad Sohail Rajput has announced a significant decision in favor of Owais Ahmed Bhayo, a student of Shah Abdul Latif University, safeguarding his precious academic year. According to a statement issued today, Owais Ahmed, a second-semester student of Clinical Pharmacy, was declared as having failed by the university administration, despite his exemplary academic record. In response to this injustice, Owais Ahmed filed a petition with the provincial ombudsman, prompting a full investigation.

The investigation revealed that the university administration had made a grave error in declaring the student as having failed. Following the inquiry, Provincial Ombudsman Dr. Muhammad Sohail Rajput issued strict instructions to the university administration, including the Controller of Examinations, to rectify the mistake and ensure justice in the matter. Acting on the ombudsman's directives, the university administration reversed its decision and declared Owais Ahmed Bhayo as having passed the Clinical Pharmacy examination, saving him from losing an academic year. Owais Ahmed expressed his happiness over the decision, thanking the provincial ombudsman and calling it a victory for justice that has allowed him to continue his academic journey.

Dr Muhammad Sohail Rajput further instructed the university administration to adopt a fair approach in dealing with students and to ensure the protection of their academic rights to prevent such incidents in the future.

## PHA decorates Lahore

LAHORE (APP): The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) has installed a variety of colorful lights, religious models, and buntings across Lahore to mark the celebration of Eid Milad-un-Nabi.

PHA Director General Muhammad Tahir Wattoo told the media on Sunday that Eid Milad-un-Nabi, commemorating the birth of Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him, would be celebrated with religious zeal and fervour across Pakistan on Tuesday. Key roads including Davis Road, The Mall, Jail Road, and Raiwind Road have been adorned with decorative lights and religious displays such as models of Masjid-i-Nabwi and the Kaaba, creating a festive atmosphere throughout the city, he added.

The PHA has also decorated its offices with lights and buntings, giving them a distinct green appearance in honor of the sacred occasion. The boundary wall of Racecourse Park, which houses the PHA headquarters, has been illuminated to spell out the first Kalima.

Similarly, Liberty Roundabout has been transformed with decorative lights to give it a celebratory look. The DG emphasised the importance of observing the day with reverence and encouraged citizens to engage in charitable activities and community service as part of the celebrations.

# Democracy only way for bright future

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that Democracy is the only way for Pakistan's bright future and stability.

In a message on the occasion of International Day for Democracy, he said that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was the pioneer of democracy.

He said, 'We have made numerous sacrifices for the

survival of democracy and our leaders and workers sacrificed their blood for the democracy.'

The CM Murad said that democracy was a wonderful system, where people choose their representatives.

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto called democracy the best revenge, he said adding that the Pakistan People's Party believed in democracy and

democracy was the best system to serve the people.

He said that the Pakistan People's Party made sacrifices for the restoration of democracy.

He further said that the PPP had never surrendered to dictators.

The Chief Minister said that the restoration of democracy was our motto and that democracy made institutions strong.

# Minister announces evening OPDs

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare, Khawaja Imran Nazir, has announced the initiation of evening outpatient departments (OPDs) at Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) and District Headquarters (DHQ) hospitals in Lahore starting from next month.

This decision comes following directives from Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif as part of the government's ongoing efforts to improve healthcare services in the province. The announcement was made during a meeting held on Sunday at the Health Department, where the minister discussed the enhancement of healthcare facilities at Raiwind and Ghaziabad THQ hospitals. Several key decisions were taken to ensure the performance of

these hospitals is improved.

Imran Nazir also revealed plans to implement a Queue Management System (QMS) in all hospitals across the province, starting in phases, to streamline patient management. He instructed that all beds at Raiwind Hospital be replaced immediately with new ones and committed to conducting weekly reviews of the hospital's performance to ensure continuous improvements. Further announcements included the appointment of anesthesiologists at DHQ and THQ hospitals, and the introduction of a daily reporting system for doctors' duty schedules during evening and night shifts to the Health Department. Additionally, city dispensaries will undergo a major revamp, with consultants to be appointed to improve patient care.

To manage patient load more effectively, a referral system will be implemented according to established protocols, with audits scheduled every three months to evaluate its effectiveness. Committees comprising local dignitaries, in consultation with elected representatives, will also be formed to help improve hospital operations.

The minister directed the Punjab Health Facilities Management Company (PHFMC) to increase the number of nurses at Ghaziabad Hospital and submit a development plan for its expansion. The meeting was attended by MPA Malik Waheed, CEO PHFMC Barak Allah, CEO Health Lahore Dr. Zohaib Hassan, MS Raiwind Hospital Dr. Sharmeen, and MS Ghaziabad Hospital Dr. Aqeel.

# Loader rickshaws barred from plying city roads

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore traffic police have imposed a ban on loader rickshaws entering the city's major model roads, including The Mall road, Jail Road, Canal Road, Guberg Main Boulevard and Cantonment areas.

Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Amara Athar announced that loader rickshaws carrying oversized and dangerous items such as iron rods, steel pipes, T-iron bars and bamboo would no longer face mere fines, but legal action would be taken against drivers. "The increasing number of loader rickshaws carrying dangerous material poses a significant threat to the safety of other road users," she said.

Meanwhile, over 11,000 loader rickshaws had

already been issued challan tickets for violations. However, stricter measures are now being enforced, with a crackdown targeting overloaded and unsafe vehicles, she said. "There will be no compromise on the safety of lives. From now on, offenders will face FIRs instead of just fines," the CTO emphasized.

The traffic police official sources told APP that both the drivers and the owners of the rickshaws will be nominated in FIRs, if they exceed the load limits. Moreover, drivers who continue overloading would face a cancellation of their licence.

In this connection special checkpoints have also been set up on Allama Iqbal Road, GT Road, Multan Road, Ferozepur Road and

in Shahdara. Traffic police officers will conduct thorough inspections of headlights, backlights, reflectors and indicators of these vehicles to ensure compliance.

CTO Amara Athar in this regard has stated that a rigorous crackdown on dangerous vehicles will also be carried out, by using Safe Cities Authority cameras for better enforcement.

Additional personnel, including eight senior wardens and 24 wardens, have been deployed at the city's entry and exit points under the supervision of circle officers to ensure the campaign's effectiveness.

It is worth mentioning here that the move has been initiated following several accidents involving overloaded rickshaws.

## 35 new dengue cases reported

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Health Department confirmed on Sunday that 35 new cases of dengue fever had been reported across the province in the last 24 hours.

According to the latest figures, Rawalpindi recorded 33 cases, while Attock and Mianwali each registered one case.

This brings the total number of dengue cases to 219 over the past week alone, raising the cumulative total for the year 2024 in Punjab to 667.

In response to the rising numbers, the Health Department has issued an advisory urging the public to maintain clean, dry surroundings to curb the spread of the virus. Citizens have been asked to cooperate with health teams actively working on prevention and control measures.

A dedicated helpline (1033) has been established for those seeking treatment, information, or to lodge complaints related to dengue. Health officials stress that vigilance and proactive measures are essential to containing the outbreak across the province.

## IG pins ranks on 28 officers promoted

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar pinned new rank on 28 officers promoted from inspector to DSP. A ceremony was held at the Central Police Office in this regard, here on Sunday. Parents, children, and families of promoted officers attended the ceremony. The IGP, along with senior officers, pinned ranks on the newly-promoted DSPs and extended congratulations to both the promoted officers and their families.

In his address, the IGP said that over 1,500 departmental promotions across various cadres and ranks will take place this year. He added that soon, a board would be convened for promotion of over 80 sub-inspectors to the rank of inspector. Additional IGP Punjab Sultan Ahmed Chaudhry, DIG Headquarters/MD Safe City Authority Ahsan Younas, and DIG Establishment-I Sulaiman Sultan Rana were also present at the event.

## Two held for overpricing essentials

LAHORE (APP): The price control magistrates conducted inspections at 456 locations and got arrested two individuals for overpricing fruits, vegetables, and other essential items.

Lahore Deputy Commissioner (DC) Syed Musa Raza told media on Sunday that cases have been registered and two shops have been sealed for violations of government-set prices. Furthermore, fines totaling Rs 700,000 have been imposed for 149 instances of non-compliance.

The DC emphasized that Price Control Magistrates and Assistant Commissioners are actively ensuring adherence to official rates. Supervision of the auction process in fruit and vegetable markets is also underway to prevent any malpractices. Administrative officers are ensuring the sale of fruits, vegetables, and bread at government-approved prices. All stalls and shops are being instructed to prominently display the rate list, and strict action is being taken against those failing to comply.

# WB launches Punjab Family Planning Project

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: The World Bank has launched the Punjab Family Planning Program (2023-27) which seeks to enhance the overall well-being of families by increasing access, utilization of quality family planning services while addressing barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access in rural areas, and social, religious, and cultural opposition.

The project aims to improve maternal and child health outcomes, reduce unintended pregnancies, and strengthen the capacity of service providers through evidence-based approaches and innovation, ultimately contributing to improved health, socio-economic development, and quality of life for the population

of Punjab.

The objectives of the project are to improve the health status of mothers and children and improve overall quality of life of the whole family by increasing access and utilization of quality family planning services.

To increase access to use of quality family planning services are safe effective and acceptable to individual. To create an enabling environment for increasing access to quality family planning services to men and women.

To increase demand of family planning services by implementing various behavior change communication activities. To increase and sustain contraceptive use and reduce unmet need for family planning unintended pregnancies and contraception discontinuation.



To strengthen the capacity of service providers to expand family planning service delivery. To strengthen the evidence base for program implementation to research and innovation.

The program is being implemented by two agencies: Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department (P&SHD) and Population Welfare Department (PWD) through support of the World Bank to achieve the five disbursements.

# Cheema lauds Bilawal for his impactful speech

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is showing signs of mental desperation in response to Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's critical questioning, according to Shehzad Saeed Cheema, Secretary Information of PPP Central Punjab. In a statement issued on Sunday, Cheema lauded Bilawal for his impactful speech in parliament, which, he said, had effectively cornered PTI and its leadership.

He further highlighted the role of PPP Central Punjab President and former Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, stating that he has brought the PTI founder and his party into a difficult position, scrutinizing their actions and rhetoric. "The PPP will not allow institutions to be made controversial, nor will we let anyone benefit from tweets," Cheema said, referencing the PTI's reliance on social media for political narratives.

He asserted that the PTI founder is now entangled in his own tweets and must decide whether his political ambitions or the state are more important. Cheema warned that failure to choose wisely would result in consequences.

Cheema concluded by expressing confidence in the PPP's ability to defeat conspiracies both in the assemblies and in the political arena, as they demonstrated recently in Rahim Yar Khan.

# Great work for religious minorities being done

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora has said "great work is being done for religious minorities in Punjab, and for the first time, a minorities day has been celebrated at a high level."

He said this during his visit to suburban area of Rubensabad Chak 136-Sole-L in Mian Channu, where he attended a special prayers ceremony, organised by the Christian community. The assistant commissioner Mian

Channu, along with members of the religious minority community, warmly welcomed the provincial minister, while special prayers were offered for development and security of the country.

Ramesh Arora also attended a ceremony for distribution of laptops among Christian students, where Bishop Isaac Anwar Fazal conducted a draw to distribute laptops among 10 Christian students.

Additionally, the provincial minister distributed

Rs. 50,000 each among 10 deserving unemployed individuals to assist them financially and improve their living conditions.







In his address, Ramesh Arora said, "As a result of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif's commitment to protecting the rights of religious minorities, people of all faiths are more satisfied and at peace than ever before. The Chief Minister has called religious minorities the crown of her head."

# IPS students secured high score in Intermediate exams

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The female students from Institute of Professional Studies secured high score in Intermediate exams held by Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Peshawar. The student of First Year Mah Bushra secured 530 marks, Ashmel obtained 500 and Asma scored 498 in pre medical discipline. Moreover, Second year students named Sara Jabeen obtained 1003 marks and Bahst Rani scored 968 in the examination.

Meanwhile, Sana Ali secured 991 marks in the Faculty of Arts. IPS Director Bilal Afridi congratulated the students and hopeful for their bright future.

		
<b>Mah Bushra</b> 1st year <b>530 marks</b>	<b>Ashmel</b> 1st year <b>500 marks</b>	<b>Asma</b> 1st year <b>498 marks</b>
		
<b>Sara Jabeen</b> 2nd year <b>1003 Marks</b>	<b>Bahst Rani</b> 2nd year <b>968 Marks</b>	<b>Sana Ali</b> FA 2nd year <b>991 Marks</b>

# Eid Milad-un-Nabi's celebrations kick off

ISLAMABAD (APP): Eid Milad-un-Nabi, marking the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), is to be observed with religious reverence and traditional fervor across the nation on 12th Rabi-ul-Awwal falling on September 17, Tuesday.

The day is celebrated to express deep love and respect for the last Messenger of Allah Almighty, whose teachings of peace, tolerance, and compassion continue to inspire billions on the globe.

Since the advent of the blessed month of Rabi-ul-Awwal, homes, businesses, mosques, and public buildings across Pakistan have been adorned with vibrant lights and colorful flags. Major cities such as Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi,

and Peshawar are glowing with grandeur, as streets, alleys, and markets radiate with green and white decorations, symbolizing devotion to the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him).

The government buildings and public spaces have also joined the celebration, as the nation unites in an atmosphere of joy and spiritual reflection. The vibrant display is a testament to the deep-rooted love and respect the faithful hold for the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and his teachings.

As part of the celebrations, Mehfil-e-Milad (gatherings of praise and remembrance) are being organized in mosques, community centers, and private homes across the country. These events serve as opportunities for the faithful to gather in rever-

ence, recite Naats (poetry in praise of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him)), and reflect on the Seerat (life) of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him).

Special gatherings have been arranged at various religious and cultural centers, where renowned scholars, Ulema, and Mashaykh deliver sermons to highlight the teachings and legacy of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). These gatherings focus on promoting the values of love, tolerance, and kindness—hallmarks of the Prophet's life that continue to resonate across generations.

The Ulema and Mashaykh, while addressing the congregations, have emphasized the importance of following the example set by the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) in all

aspects of life. They urged the faithful to emulate his teachings to build a more compassionate, just, and humane society. The Prophet's model of simplicity, forgiveness, and social justice has been highlighted as essential principles that should guide everyday life.

Religious leaders across the country have taken this opportunity to call for unity among the Muslim Ummah and the larger human family. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him)'s teachings of universal brotherhood and the dignity of all humans have been stressed as vital principles for achieving peace in today's divided world.

In addition, prayers for the well-being of Pakistan, solidarity among Muslims, and global peace are being offered across

mosques and community gatherings. Special supplications have been made for the prosperity of the country and for the protection of its citizens from hardships.

Beyond Pakistan, Muslims worldwide are also celebrating this sacred day. In countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, the UAE, Indonesia, and beyond, similar events are being held. Mosques are illuminated, and gatherings are organized to honor the Prophet's teachings. The message of peace and humanity that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) brought to the world is being spread at every nook and cranny of the world.

As the faithful come together to honor the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad

(Peace Be Upon Him), the celebrations of Eid Milad-un-Nabi serve as a reminder of the values that bind humanity together - compassion, tolerance, and the pursuit of a just and peaceful world.

Given the large-scale public gatherings, law enforcement agencies have ramped up security to ensure the safety of all participants. Special security measures are in place around mosques, procession routes, and public venues to maintain law and order.

As the celebrations continue across the country, Pakistan remains united in its reverence for the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and committed to upholding the values of peace, kindness, and humanity in his honor.





PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur chairing a meeting of KP Environmental Protection Council.

## Sarhad Business Alliance’s magnificent and successful power show



### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The growing support for the Sarhad Business Alliance is proof that on September 25, we will sweep the elections and make the Peshawar Chamber a center for addressing the problems of the business community. Atif Shehzad, the nominee for the Executive Member, along with former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali, conducted a successful power show that served as a referendum in favor of the alliance. Former Provincial Health Minister Syed Zahir Ali Shah stated that on September 25, genuine representatives will be in the Chamber, and the issues faced by the business community will be resolved.

Malik Meher Elahi and Muhammad Ishaq also addressed the gathering, highlighting the alliance’s dedication to its cause.

The Sarhad Business Alliance is tirelessly campaigning to achieve its objectives, and the overwhelming support from members and traders has left the opposition sleepless. This support has enabled us to create a historical chapter in service, one that the business community will take pride in. Today’s grand power show was essentially a referendum. We have embarked on this mission with a promise to uproot the problems of the business community from the core. Unlike the other group, which has yet to present any candidates

beyond their relatives, our alliance has introduced highly educated and competent individuals from various sectors who are not bound by family ties but are dedicated to serving the business community.

We extend our appreciation to the business community of Peshawar and the members of the Sarhad Chamber for joining us in this struggle to end this dark chapter. By the grace of Allah, over 80% of support from every sector of the business community has been garnered for the Sarhad Business Alliance. The enthusiastic reception of our leadership and candidates in the marketplaces stands as a testament to this fact. We have identified various sector-specific

issues, such as those faced by the traders in Qissa Khwani Bazaar and importers from China. We have pledged that after our success, the import containers will pay duties either in Torkham or Qissa Khwani Bazaar, not in Rawalpindi, and no one will dare to harass the traders or buyers of imported goods. Former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali has instilled a new spirit among the traders.

Earlier, Haji Ghulam Ali, Muhammad Ishaq, Sirajuddin, Sartaj, and Shehzad Arif visited the Honey Association Market, where the traders warmly welcomed them. Flowers were showered upon them, and the Sarhad Business Alliance received a commitment of complete support. The traders expressed their gratitude, stating, “Your visit to us is a matter of honor, unlike the other group, which summoned us to the Chamber, against our traditions. Therefore, today, we not only announce our support but also pledge our full cooperation.”

## KP Police ban social media use for officers and personnel

PESHAWAR (INP): A ban has been imposed on the use of social media for police officers and personnel in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Central Police Office has issued a directive to Regional Police Officers and District Police Officers, stating that police officers and personnel were prohibited from using social media applications.

The directive restricted all ranks of officers and personnel from using platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube.

The letter emphasised strict adherence to Standard Operating Procedures, prohibiting the uploading of uniformed photos, weapons, police badges, or other evidence on personal social media accounts.

It also noted that many police personnel have been found violating SOPs, and RPOs and DPOs have been instructed to take departmental action against such violations.

The Central Police Office highlighted that social media use undermined the department’s reputation and posed risks to the safety of other police personnel.

## Competition to be held today

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the instructions of the provincial government, the Auqaf Department is organizing the Ashra Rehmat-ul-Alameen Competition, which will take place today (Monday), at the Auqaf, Haji, and Religious Affairs Department on Charsada Road, Peshawar.

The event will be presided over by Provincial Minister Sahibzada Adnan Qadri. Participants include divisional-level position holders in speech, recitation, and Naat Khwani competitions, along with religious scholars.

These participants will now compete at the provincial level, with winners in each category set to receive cash prizes, certificates, and shields.

The Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, along with Provincial Minister Auqaf Sahibzada Adnan Qadri and other dignitaries, will present the awards to those securing first, second, and third positions in the provincial-level Recitation and Naat Khwani competitions.

It is worth noting that the provincial government will also host the Rahmat ul Alameen Conference in Peshawar on Tuesday, celebrating the occasion with religious fervor and enthusiasm.

## Hot weather to remain in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Regional Meteorological Center on Sunday forecast mainly hot and dry weather in most parts of the province during the next 24 hours.

According to the daily morning weather report, weather would remain very hot in southern districts or plain areas of the province.

However, thundershowers and gusty winds are expected in the upper regions of the province, including Chitral, Upper Dir, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Khyber, and Kurram districts.

# Constitutional amendments akin to attack on SC: Saif

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Adviser Barrister Dr. Saif has condemned the proposed constitutional amendments, equating them to an attack on the Supreme Court.

In a statement, Barrister Saif criticised the “fake government” for its failed attempts at constitutional amendments.

He called the amendments an act of treachery

against the constitution and a direct assault on the Supreme Court.

He accused the so-called coalition government of roaming in groups to push through these amendments, asserting that their hostility towards Imran Khan has driven them to trample the constitution.

He claimed that the government with a “fake mandate” was once again ready to launch an attack on the

Supreme Court through these amendments.

Barrister Saif reaffirmed that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) stood with the judiciary and would not allow any step towards restriction of judicial freedom.

He further criticised the Election Commission for its role in the country’s current turmoil, alleging that it had done nothing to mitigate the situation.

## University of Peshawar inks MoU with GARL



### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A memorandum of understanding was signed between the University of Peshawar and Geological Survey of Pakistan, premier laboratory GARL (Geo-sciences Advanced Research laboratories).

Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naeem Qazi from University of Peshawar and Director General, GSP, GARL, Prof. Dr. Sajjad Ahmad signed the agreement.

Presenting the case for mutual agreement Prof. Dr. Bushra Khan, Director Planning and Development briefed the parties that agreement will bolster the

research exchange, collaboration and resources besides students internship opportunities.

Focal person from University of Peshawar Dr. Sajjad Ahmad (junior) elaborated the agreement that researchers will be feeling easing in utilizing laboratories from both institutions, minimizing time lag, besides holding joint workshops and conferences. He showed his intention to go for international bids for geological expeditions in the wake of the agreement.

The worthy vice chancellor termed the agreement another feather in the cap of flagship department Geology. He hoped that

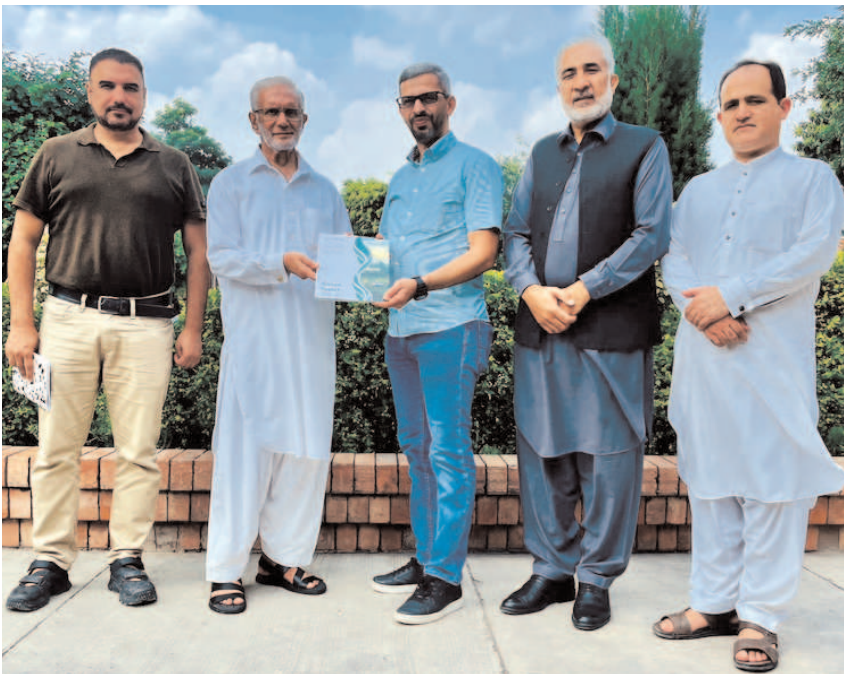
Director General long term association with University of Peshawar will reap further dividends for the professional excellence.

Speaking on the occasion, director general, Prof. Dr. Sajjad Ahmad (senior) briefed University officials that Geosciences Advanced Research Laboratories are state of art labs in Islamabad being built by the government of Japan.

He hoped that University of Peshawar would be availing facilities at discounted rates.

Muhammad Ashraf from GSP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Deputy Director P&D Ather Hussain were also present during the meeting.

## Director ICRC pays visit to PCP



### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Ahmad Al-Musa, Director Physical Rehabilitation Program of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), on Sunday paid visit to Paraplegic Center Peshawar and reviewed various sections of the center including its rehab wards, OPD, Club Foot Clinics, Autism Section and Artificial Aids Factory.

Chairman of the Board of Directors of PCP and former Secretary of the Finance Department Ziaur

Rahman, Chief Executive Dr. Syed Mohammad Ilyas, Director Rehab Aamir Zeb Khan and Project Officer Imran Latif also accompanied him.

Ahmed Al-Musa appreciated the performance of this unique and only institution in Pakistan for the treatment and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and assured of all possible support from ICRC.

On this occasion, it was agreed to extend the MoU of ICRC with PCP to provide valuable material

required for the manufacturing of supportive devices and equipment for paraplegic patients of the merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Pertinent to mention that this global organization is also a big buyer of customized wheel chairs and accessories made by Paraplegic Center for the rehabilitation centers under command of ICRC.

The last one year performance report of the Paraplegic Center was also presented to him, that he highly appreciated.

## Unity lifelines for a nation

### Fareeha Bibi

Unity is a great power it fill over life with strength happiness and it’s make a country strong.

It becomes one of the major cause of development for a country and society.

Human beings are blessed with intellect and consciousness, and are also well aware of the etiquette of conversation. Sometimes, good words come out of our mouths that lead to friendship and peace, while other times, words that promote hypocrisy and enmity are spoken. Brotherhood and humanity are eternal relationships that help unite all human beings. Love and sincerity are the golden principles of social life that can reduce the intensity of negative emotions like hatred, jealousy, and malice, and can even change hearts.

Naturally, humans have a deep connection with their parents, children, loved ones, and their region. The land where we are born and raised is like a mother to us, and our country is like a motherland that deserves our respect. When we strengthen our relationships with love and harmony, our country’s honor and prestige also increase. No one can look at our country with an evil eye.

The security, survival,

and strength of any country depend on national unity and harmony. The more united, aware, and determined a nation is, the stronger the country will be. The path to building a state passes through national unity. The teachings of Islam also play a vital role in uniting the Pakistani nation. Islam teaches us to hold fast to the rope of Allah and promotes unity and harmony. It is not harmful to have differences of opinion, as Allah has created every individual with unique qualities and characteristics.

However, the world has made progress in the field of technology, but we are still stuck in the jungle of ignorance. Civilized nations do not fight with each other; instead, they resolve their issues through dialogue. But here, the question arises.

Who is behind the chaos and unrest.

It is obvious that noble people do not engage in such activities; they are concerned about their livelihood. The losers in these conflicts are the honest people and laborers. The capitalists are only concerned about increasing their wealth.

Then who is behind the unrest...?

It is the politicians who create chaos for their personal interests and leadership. They do not hesitate to shed human blood for their selfish motives.

If we learn from history and learn to live together, our problems can be solved, and we can live a happy life. There are many stories about unity in history and literature, but we do not benefit from them. Today, Pakistan needs national unity more than ever. Today, personal interests are being prioritized over national interests, and the country’s security and unity are being compromised. It is a well-established fact that the policies of our rulers and powerful individuals are causing irreparable damage to the unity and solidarity of the state of Pakistan.

On one hand, there are terrorist attacks in the name of Talibanization, while on the other hand, the deprived classes of Balochistan and disgruntled youth are being used as tools by foreign powers. Moreover, numerous Afghan criminals have made Pakistan their haven, and the Jundullah organization is active on the Pak-Iran border. Apart from this, political and religious parties are paralyzing the country’s economy through protests and strikes.

Meanwhile, local criminals are involved in crimes, especially in Karachi and Lahore, which are beyond control. The irony is that the young generation is being misled through negative propaganda, which is creating hatred towards

national unity, country’s defense, and institutions. The young generation is being led astray. Economic instability is one thing, but moral decay and conspiracies against national unity are like termites eating away at the country’s foundations.

Some factors play a crucial role in achieving national unity, which aligns the interests and goals of various groups, determines the destination, and enables the entire nation to move forward in one direction. After religion, language becomes a means of national unity. In Pakistan, various regional languages such as Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Saraiki, Hazarvi, Gujar, and Dogri are spoken in different areas, but Urdu is the national language and medium of education, which also serves as a means of communication and exchange of ideas between people. The third important factor is geographical similarity, which leads to ethnic and cultural harmony. This geographical similarity was the reason why East and West Germany were reunified. Common traditions, history, and culture also serve as means of national unity.

‘Life is a name that has to be lived, but what a pity that we are being led astray.’

(The author is a BS student at Govt. Degree College, Bathkela

## Time to revitalize Quaid’s vision for a prosperous Pakistan

PESHAWAR (APP): As 76th death anniversary of founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah passed a few days back, nation is still struggling to revitalize his vision for making the country a prosperous welfare state.

With more than 77 years down the road after Pakistan was came into being, the country passed through different phases on way to the destination envisioned by ‘Father of the Nation.’ But hurdles after hurdles hampered this journey and the country is still confronting gigantic issues like political harmony, speedy dispensation of justice, economic revival and internal and external security threats.

No doubt that Quaid’s personality, vision and struggle is recognized globally but materialization of his vision still seems like a dream as the nation is waiting miracles to happen

for rectification of the time lost on way to progress and prosperity. So, the time is passing fast and limited clues are left.

Stanley Wolpert, a renowned academic, historian and writer had stated in his famous book ‘Jinnah of Pakistan’ that ‘few individuals significantly alter the course of history. Fewer still modify the map of the world. Hardly anyone can be credited with creating a nation-state.’ Muhammad Ali Jinnah did all three.

No doubt it is a great acknowledgement for the leader and his unflinching struggle for a separate motherland for the Muslims of Sub-Continent. But seeing through the annals of history, we find that we remained lost somewhere in the dust oozing out from our own follies as well as conspiracies of our evil wishers, still looking for a way to rush out of this dust storm.

Lot of experiences made time and again by different regimes and rulers to hammer out our problems dashed down to ground due to one reason or the other and once again we are on crossroads of history seeking a clue to reach our destination. Can it be the noble principles of governance envisioned by our great Quaid?

‘Wolper’s remarks signified the political stature of Quaid e Azam who was a leader of par excellence and commitment. It was his undefeated courage that kneed down his treacherous opponents like Nehru and colonial rulers,’ remarked Younas Khan, Chairman Pakistan Studies Department University of Peshawar.

‘It was unfortunate that intrigues starting from the very beginning against a nascent state posed serious challenges to our rulers. Traps after traps kept us dragging away from our destination,’ Younas Khan said.

But, still he was hopeful to find a way out for our success in Quaid’s vision as he stated, ‘if we still follow his vision diligently and in letter and spirit, we can emerge to highest pinnacle from bewilderment.’

As the desire for following Quaid’s vision is still alive at top level, we may have hope for a better future as stated by President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in their messages on Quaid’s anniversary.

‘I am sure that by acting upon his (Quaid-e-Azam) teachings and advice, we can make Pakistan strong and prosperous,’ said President Zardari. ‘Quaid-e-Azam’s vision for Pakistan was fundamentally democratic as he firmly believed in a state where all citizens, irrespective of religion, would be equal before the law.’

‘Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s struggle not only laid the foundation of

Pakistan’s democratic system but continues to influence our aspirations for parliamentary democracy and communal harmony,’ the President said. ‘Jinnah had envisioned a Pakistan based on Islamic principles of democracy and socio-economic justice.’

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also remarked that the Freedom Movement serves as a testament to Quaid’s political acumen and visionary leadership, reflecting his dedication to the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

‘The Quaid’s unwavering commitment to principles of democracy, social justice and equality laid the foundation for a nation where every citizen could aspire to thrive despite diverse cultures,’ the Premier said.

‘In remembering the Quaid-e-Azam, we are also reminded of our duty to the future generations. It is

our responsibility to instill in them the values of integrity, hard work and patriotism that Jinnah embodied,’ he stated.

Since, we are well aware of Quaid’s vision and have a will to tread on his footsteps, we need national unity, justice and equality to create a nation where peace prevails and justice is served as stated by the Prime Minister.

‘We can achieve every goal in life by strictly adhering to Quaid’s principles of unity, faith and discipline,’ remarked Professor Dr. AZ Hilali, former chairman, political science department, university of Peshawar.

‘By revisiting symbols of the Quaid’s legacy, every strata of life must be encouraged, properly guided and taught the noble principles of Quaid’s philosophy in syllabi to evolve a nation that earns respect among comity of nations,’ he said.





## In brief

### Arrangements finalized F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: In order to celebrate Eid Milad-un-Nabi (SAW) on 12 Rabi Awwal with religious enthusiasm and fervor, district administration, police and other departments finalised all necessary arrangements in the district. This was stated by the Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq while addressing the meeting of District Emergency Board Hafizabad. DC directed the concerned officers to ensure security of Masajid and processions of Eid Melad-un-Nabi (SAW), cleanliness and streets lights and other arrangements. He also directed the officers to arrange lighting on government and private buildings while traffic would be responsible to maintain traffic movement without any hurdle on this occasion. Rescue 1122 and health department will be setup medical camps on the routs of processions, he added. The other hand, people are decorating their homes and workplaces with colorful bunting, flags, banners and flexes in connection with celebrating Eid Milad-un-Nabi (SAW) while government, private buildings and Masques are also illuminated with colorful lights at nights. Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq and DPO Faisal Gulzar visited routs of processions and Masajid to review security and other arrangements made by the different departments to ensure safety of processions and masques as well as provision of different facilities to devotees.

### Four injured in Dir mishap F.P. Report

UPPER DIR: A mother and her children were among four people who were critically injured after the rope of their chairlift broke in the Makhnokhas Shangal area of Upper Dir. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government failed to build any bridge despite many accidents on such sites. After government failure, residents of the area built this bridge after devastating floods in 2010 completely damaged the bridge. Residents of the area appealed to concerned authorities to build a proper bridge for the transportation of local people to avoid such kind of incidents in the future.

### Man injured in grenade attack F.P. Report

GWADAR: A man sustained minor injuries after unidentified motorcyclist lobbed a hand grenade at Ajwa Bakery near Javed Complex area of Gwadar on Sunday. According to police, unidentified motorcyclist lobbed a hand grenade at Ajwa Bakery, owned by a man named Azeem, resident of Punjab, near Javed Complex area of Gwadar, however, hand grenade exploded at the entrance of the bakery, causing minor injuries to a salesman of the bakery named Akdas resident of Gwadar. On information, police reached the site to collect evidence.

### Relief to citizens

BAHAWALPUR (INP): The office of Federal Ombudsman Bahawalpur provided relief to citizens against a number of complaints related to Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO), SNGPL, State Life Insurance and others during the last eight months. Talking to the media, Incharge, Federal Ombudsman Bahawalpur Office, Dr. Muhammad Zahid said the Office had been authorized powers to listen complaints against all federal government departments and agencies including utility providers.

# Thousands march in Bara for peace

## F.P. Report

BARA: Thousands of people from different walks of life in tehsil Bara of district participated in a peace march on Sunday against what they said was the failure of the incumbent government to control unrest.

The rally was organized under the auspices of Bara Sayasi Ittehad (Bara Political Union) and was



initiated at Khyber Chawk, Bara and hundreds of thousands tribesmen travelled from the entire district to participate in it.

Local leaders from the mainstream political parties including Jamat-e-Islami (JI), Awami National Party (ANP), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazal Rehman (JUI-F), Awami Inqilabi League, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) besides representatives of traders and lawyers unions present at the demonstration. The Participants were

holding white flags demanding restoration of durable peace in their areas.

Addressing on the occasion speakers including Hamidullah Jan (JUI-F), Member National Assembly Iqbal Afridi, Abdurraziq (ANP), Member Provincial Assembly Sohail Afridi (PTI) Khan Wali Afridi (JI) Advocate Farhad (Khyber Bar Association), Attaullah

Afridi of Awami Inqilabi League, Imran Lala, Aftab Shinwari and others said that since last year including merged districts people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been protesting against the troublemakers and demanding of the security agencies to ensure peace in the province but to in avail.

They added that the government institutions had completely failed in controlling unrest that caused loss of life besides loss of properties of laymen. We

endure no more unrest especially in Bara and rest of areas of Khyber and will react strongly to foil mal-designs of those involved in it, they remarked.

They expressed their concern that deliberate efforts were made to disturb the peaceful environment of Khyber but ironically the government had turned blind eyes towards it. The tribesmen had not recovered from the sufferings of the last two decade, war of terror so far that another curse was imposed on them in form of Azm-e-Istehkam forces operation that was unfair to them, they opined.

The speakers declared Action and Aid of Civil Power Act, a draconian and root cause of all social disease and unlawfulness in the merged district and demanded forthwith abolishment of it.

They urged the law enforcing agencies to accept citizens of the country, honor all human rights of tribal ensured by the Constitution of the country and stop genocide of the tribesmen in the name fake military operations. No one will be allowed to disturb peace in Khyber and peace rallies and demonstrations will continue to restore durable peace in Khyber, the participants vowed.

# Commissioner visits schools, hospitals

## Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAR: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah has under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Program "Awami Agenda" visited various Schools, Hospitals, Animal Husbandry in Shakardara, Lachi and

Banda Daud Shah Tehsils of Kohat and Karak districts on Saturday to review the activities of various institutions. He also visited Markets, Bazaars, Bus Stands, Schools, MOL Oil and Gas installations of Nishpa.

Commissioner Kohat, during his visit recommended immediate suspension of TMA Shakardara for non-cleaning of the drains in bazaar and bus stand of Shakardara and also sought an explanation from the Tehsil Municipal Officer. Similarly, he directed the DHO and Deputy Commissioner to inquire into the lack of doctors in Shakardara Hospital and the allegedly missing staff from the hospital

while lack of required staff in the hospital and water problems will be discussed with the relevant authorities. He on the spot discussed the slow pace of work in hospital with the Health Secretary.

The Commissioner also visited 3 schools of Tehsil Shakardara which were found excellent in all respects and prizes were also given on the occasion.

Meanwhile, Motasim Billah Shah, in a meeting with the polio workers at the Lachi Hospital, praised their excellent performance who working hard under very difficult conditions. The said hospital was also inspected along with the local MPA Daud Shah Afridi and instructions were given to the cleaning staff and the local Tehsildar to clean the entire hospital within 24 hours otherwise Tehsildar will be relieved.

Commissioner also visited High School Ahmadi Banda in Banda Daud Shah and praised the staff for excellent cleaning and planting. He during the

visit to Banda Daud Shah Tehsil Headquarters Hospital recommended immediate disciplinary action against 4 employees for extremely poor condition and the absence of some staff. Similarly, action was also recommended against the EPI in-charge center for gross negligence.

Likewise, Commissioner Kohat was given a detailed briefing on safety measures and social activities of the MOL Company in the area while inspecting the Oil and Gas installations of MOL and NISHPA Oil Field. Police and District Administration Officers were also present on this occasion. On the proposal of the commissioner, immediate approval was given to set up medical camps for women and children in the adjacent rural areas and funds were also allocated for organizing sports events for the youth. Sports for girls will be organized in Government Girls High School under the supervision of women education officer.

# Distribution of Kissan cards begins in Chakwal

## F.P. Report

CHAKWAL: Parliamentary Secretary to Chief Minister's Inspection Team, Chaudhry Sultan Haider Ali Khan, inaugurated the distribution of Kissan

Cards at the Agriculture Department Office on Talagang Road, Chakwal. The event was attended by Deputy

Director Agriculture Extension, Malik Muhammad Arif, along with several other officials from the Agriculture Department and a large number of farmers.

Speaking at the event, Chaudhry Sultan Haider Ali Khan highlighted the Punjab government's vision of "Prosperous Farmers, Prosperous Punjab," calling

it a key milestone in agricultural development. He explained that Kissan Cards are being distributed to enable farmers to benefit from interest-free loans, subsidies on agricultural equipment, solar panels, and various other initiatives, such as the Green Tractor Scheme and agricultural tube wells.

# Da Haq Awaz strike against expensive electricity

## Zulfiqar Ali

**DISTRICT Swabi is suffering since after the Pakistan federal government unit established and come into being. The lands of district Swabi have rich brilliant culture, traditions and very hospitable inhabitants. Swabi has fertile, Vast, Cultivated thousands of acres land in all Pakistan, The best Tobacco Produces Swabi which cause the arab million rupees of revenues to federal government.**

It play prominent role in the economical, industrial development of Pakistan state. Moreover Swabi Sugarcane, Vegetables and cash crop are the main production of Swabi. Tarbella dam situated in tehsil Topi near international University of Engineering Sciences GIK. Tarbella dam established in 1960. Millions of inhabitants of Tehsil Topi affected by construction of this Vast and great Project. The people of Swabi specially Tehsil Topi forefather Sacrificed of their lives, Properties for the sake of Pakistan economical, industrial development. Tarbella Power

units have the capacity to generate 3,478 mw in all Pakistan. Tarbella dam generate more and extra electricity than all Pakistan Power plants. Tarbella dam and Ghazi Barotha are both the hydro Power plants and the biggest hydro Projects and units in Asia.

After the completion these biggest mega projects and power plants the generous of topi especially much more effected physically, financially. Generous of topi ascendants graves came under dam water flow, their homes Sanked in Dam water and they lost properties, wealth lives everything, but in vain. Forty thousand acres area came under water flow. Any way for these huge and great power plants district Swabi and specially topi belongs sacrifices everything for the economic development of Pakistan.

These power plants generates electricity with favour water and there is no expanse of fuel extra charges. One unit total cost of electricity is Rs:-3 to 4 Rs:- Pakistani rupees. But federal government and Wapda electricity's charges the people from Rs:- 17 Pakistani rupees to 65 rupees per unit. This is economical cruelty,

un justice and also the economic killing of Pakistan occupants specially over of dam topi belongs. The federal government sells Tarbella Dam power energy (Electricity) very expensive. All employers and workers are outsiders brought by Wapda authorities and federal government 80% stop are from Punjab and very less from local area and other unit of Pakistan.

Federal government exploiting with every point of view tehsil Topi and district Swabi, Swabi people tolerate the in justices, over abundances, excessiveness since more than 60 years. This great mega hydro power plants supplying electricity to all Pakistan their residential, Commercial, Industrial need, but have no profit or advantage for Swabi. The Pakella dam illuminated all Pakistan, but belongs of this huge Vast Power plants are avoided of all types of benefits and advantages district Swabi and dam possessors tolerated, beared too much all this while since 67 years.

Due to much more expensive electricity Gadoon industrial state zone all industrial units are closed approx. Fourty thousand people are became Jobless,

because of much more expansive electricity. This is the mischief of government with people of district Swabi, and is still continuous. Government stop this strategy of economic killing. All Pakistan and specially Swabi owners are now compelled to come out for strike Tarbella dam red zone and siege power house for their legal rights.

The issue of cheap and legal right of electricity raised first of all in Swabi (Da Haq Awaz Tanzeem) and his chief well known journalist Ihsan Ul Haq Bamkhelvi. Afterward other local social organization followed like Swabi action committee and others as well. So the credit goes to Haq Awaz Tanzeem of chief electricity from Tarbella dam and other rights for Swabi. Before Da Haq Awaz strike fourteen times in district headquarter Swabi opposite Wapda office Swabi and DC Office Swabi, but every time they passed even written agreement with Da Haq Awaz organizing committee cabinet and tell a lie broke promise even DC and Wapda local authorities. Da Haq Awaz is really represent the burning issue related expansive electricity and other flash points

which links with load shedding additional illegal taxes on Gadoon industrial zone, increasing unemployment, un peaceful law and order situation etc.

The main demand of district Swabi areas following, 300 units free means Rs: 4.00 rupees per unit for per house for district Swabi. Adjust of all previous additional taxes which charged district Swabi. Peoples in last 60 years by federal government in their electricity bills. Accountability of last 60 years of Tarbella dam electricity royalty where is this huge amount spent by KPK government. Recruitment of district Swabi people first of all in Tarbella project before outsider's.

Tobacco revenue of past 40 years which collected from Swabi. Full audit and where this thousand million amount disappeared. Those who are residing along bank side of river Indus and affected or affecting then immediate relief allowances award all district Swabi will be free load shedding zone. Rehabilitation of Gadoon industrial zone, restoration of industries in old position and healthy condition.

Avoidation of all additional illegal unnecessary cruel addi-

tional taxes from Gadoon industrial state. Local people will be adjusted on jobs on priority, then there will be given employment to strangers and from other provinces.

Remember after extreme power shortage and load shedding and full force taxes hundred industrial units are closed lying dead and forty thousand people became are jobless in Gadoon state. Finishing as soon as possible new additional meter rent (tax) of Rs:- 1000 on commercial customers which recently impose government, on past base on justice.

Fast relief for affected of Tarbella Dam and topi. Electricity price will be Rs:- 3.00 rupees per unit for all district Swabi. The royalty of billion rupees of Tarbella dam of last 60 years will be adjusted in KPK and Swabi peoples health, education sectors. Government and Wapda make sure of water flow of river Indus in Tarbella throughout in year. Wapda officer always told a lie with us. Therefore there will be siege in power house in red zone and huge strike along with millions of people on 16 September 2024 government must consider our legal demands.



QUETTA: Police official removing wrongly parked vehicle with fork lifter from 'no parking area.'

## No uplifsans female education, says Safia F.P. Report

MARDAN: Vice-Chancellor Women University Mardan Professor Dr. Safia Ahmad has said that dream of progress and prosperity was incomplete in society without imparting education to women.

She expressed these views on the occasion of inauguration of admission expo held on premises of the Women University here the other day.

She stressed that it was very important to impart education to women as half of the population of country was comprised of female. She pointed out that the educational expo was organized with the purpose to provide guideline to the newly admitted students in the university. Besides, the educational expo was also helpful to create awareness among students about getting of education.

She urged that the educated women had also to play their due role along with men for the development and prosperity in the country as it was a joint responsibility of both of the genders. The Women University Mardan vice-chancellor Prof. Dr. Safia Ahmad urged parents to motivate their children towards modern education so that they could perform their responsibilities through a well proper-manner in future.

## Freelancing hub for school students F.P. Report

GILGIT: Pakistan Army established a freelancing hub in district Shagar for school students and the people of Gilgit-Baltistan on Sunday.

Gilgit-Baltistan, rich in natural beauty, was given a rare gift by the Pakistan Army. The Mini Freelancing Hub at Shagar by the Pakistan Army was established under the (SIFC) This freelancing hub was established in Govt Boys High School Shagar. The vice principal of the school, Mehboob Ali, while appreciating said that this is a good initiative of the Pakistan Army for the school students.

# NAB KP closes inquiry against officials in Dir

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter of the National Accountability Bureau has issued an order to close the inquiry against the officials of Timergara Medical College (TMC), District Headquarters Hospital Timergara and others, including the former Director General health department Dr Shaukat Ali. According to a letter of the National

Accountability Bureau, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa bearing number 1/849/IW-II/NABKP280476/1224 and addressed to the Secretary Health Department, copy of which is available with this scribe, the competent authority has approved closure of the inquiry against the officers, officials of TMC and DHQ hospital Timergara regarding corruption, corrupt practices and misuse of authority.

The letter said the case was inquired under the supervision of National Accountability Ordinance (NAO), 1999 against the officials, officers of TMC, DHQ hospital Timergara and others for corruption and corrupt practices and misuse of authority in purchase of 340 Kanal and 2 Marla land for TMC doctors' colony and procurement of medical equipment and illegal appointments. According to the NAB letter, the closure of the inquiry only related to the allegations mentioned above and it would not affect any other case, if already under investigation against the officials.

Talking to local journalists at Timergara here on Sunday, the former DG health Dr Shaukat Ali said the NAB inquiry had

proved him and his officers as not-guilty. He said that he would now file a defamation suit in the court against the elements involved in disgracing him and his family. Dr Shaukat was suspended from services after several inquiries were launched against him.

**Citizen's complaint:** A citizen of Kumbhar Maidan, Elhamud Din while speaking at a news conference at the Timergara press club here on Sunday complained that the Lal Qila station house officer (SHO) had charged him in a fake drug selling case. He said that he had nothing to do with drug selling but he was trapped by local police.

He explained the SHO Lal Qila Abdul Sattar Khan called him to the police station and arrested him on the charge of keeping 510 grams of charas. He said that another SHO Juma Rehman was suspended from services in the past when he complained against him to the higher authorities. He said the sitting SHO wanted to teach him a lesson of that incident. Taking oath on the Holy Quran in front of local journalists, he claimed that he was innocent. He demanded the IG police KP, district police officer Lower Dir and RPO Malakand to initiate an inquiry against the case and ensure justice to him.

Meanwhile the Lower Dir in a press release rejected the charges and said that Elhamud Din was properly involved in drug selling and other crimes. It said that so far 11 FIRs had been registered against him. The release said that he always baseless allegations against police officers whenever he is arrested in a case. "He has been convicted in

courts in four cases so far and his appeals have been rejected", the release adds.

**Three-day free eye camp set up for eye patients:** A total of 200 patients got free medical treatment on the first day of a three-day free medical camp set up by the Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) at Zwall Baba hospital. The additional deputy commissioner Bashir Khan along with the JI district chief Izazul Mulk Afkari and general secretary Hafiz Yaqub ur Rehman formally inaugurated the camp during a simple function. The AKF volunteers, area elders and government officials were also in attendance.

The hospital director Majidullah briefed the participants about the facilities provided to the patients on the occasion. He said that eye specialists would examine the patients while the AKF would provide them free of cost medical care. The ADC Bashir Khan and the JI leader Izazul Mulk Afkari lauded the services of the Al-Khidmat Foundation.

Later on, Mr Majidullah told local journalists that 200 patients were checked up on the first day of the camp while 50 of them were provided with lenses after their surgeries.

**Youth commit suicide:** A youth identified as Haris s/o Tajpur Khan 22, a resident of Warsak Adenzai reportedly ended his life due to unknown reason in the jurisdiction of Chakdara police station. The victim was brought to the tehsil headquarters hospital Chakdara wherein the doctors declared him dead. The Chakdara police registered a case and started further investigations.

# KP CM Adviser demand judicial inquiry on May 9

## F.P. Report

CHAKDARA: Hamayun Khan, Special Adviser to the Chief Minister of Chakdara for Jails, has said that in the last two years every worker and official of Tehreek-e-Insaf has been in jails in fake cases, party founder Imran Khan is in jail along with his wife. They are well aware of

the violations and the lack of facilities, they will reform the jails under the direction of Imran Khan and the guidance of the Chief Minister.

Addressing the gathering and later talking to the local journalists, while addressing the gathering, the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister said that the cantonment in front of which we are

being welcomed today on May 9 from the same cantonment on our workers. There was firing in which one worker was martyred and many injured and after that FIR of our worker's murder and injuries was also registered against our killed worker and injured and as part of a conspiracy by unknown people in the cantonment.





## Germany to welcome 250,000 Kenyans in deal

BERLIN (BBC): Germany has agreed to open the doors to 250,000 skilled and semi-skilled Kenyan workers in a controlled and targeted labour migration deal. Kenya is struggling with increasing difficulties in providing work and sufficient income for its young professionals, while Germany is facing a shortage of skilled labour.

Five Kenyan bus drivers have already been welcomed to Flensburg, in the north of Germany, in a pilot project. Migration agreements are a central pillar in the German government's efforts to curb immigration. The agreement will also simplify the repatriation of Kenyans who are in Germany without legal permission. Immigration is a huge issue in Germany at the moment, following the rise in popularity of the far-right anti-immigration party, Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Successive governments in Berlin have allowed relatively large numbers of asylum seekers to settle in the country in recent years. Germany took in more than one million people, mostly fleeing war in countries such as Syria, during the 2015-2016 migrant crisis, and has received 1.2 million Ukrainians since Russia's full-scale invasion began in February 2022. The labour deal was signed in Berlin by Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Kenya's President William Ruto.

Germany agreed to ease some of its immigration laws to enable

Kenyans to find employment in Europe's biggest economy. Authorities in Berlin will also consider extending temporary residence permits for Kenyan workers who have secured an approved job. Kenyans will also be issued with long-term visas to study or do vocational training in Germany.

"On the expiry of the long-stay visa, Kenyans may receive a temporary residence permit for study purposes in Germany for up to two years," the agreement states. The temporary residence permit may be extended if the purpose of residence has not yet been achieved but is achievable within a "reasonable" period, it adds. According to the deal, IT specialists from Kenya will be allowed to enter and work in Germany, even if they do not have formal qualifications.

Both governments will support the immigration of skilled workers who have finished vocational training or earned a university degree, as long as their qualifications are recognised by the relevant authorities of the other party. The deal also includes provisions for the readmission and return of citizens between the two nations. It spells out guidelines to prevent and fight against labour exploitation, forced labour and human trafficking.

While welcoming five Kenyan drivers in Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein's Transport Minister Claus Ruhe Madsen said Germany was in need of hard-working hands and

clever minds. "We simply have to position ourselves in Germany in such a way that it is attractive to come here," Mr Madsen added. The drivers are the first batch of Kenyan workers, who will be trained by the Aktiv bus company in a pilot project, hoping to get a job in Germany.

Doctors, nurses and teachers are among those expected to take part in the programme. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) said the deal was expected to significantly increase access to decent foreign jobs for Kenyan workers in Germany and address labour shortages in Germany. "It includes mechanisms to protect the rights and welfare of Kenyan migrant workers in Germany, ensuring safe, orderly, and productive migration," ILO added in a statement.

But there are concerns about a brain-drain in Kenya with professionals like doctors and nurses going abroad for jobs, leaving local hospitals with a huge shortage of medical workers. "It is sad that we are going to service other countries at the expense of our own country," Ekuru Aukot, a Kenyan lawyer and politician, told the BBC's Newsday programme. But Roseline Njogu, a senior foreign affairs official, said Kenya was simply responding to the global labour market demands. "We have a youth bulge in Kenya and every year we have a million people joining the local labour market. It takes time and resources to create job opportunities at home," she added.



BUCHAREST: Local residents rescue an elderly man from the rising floodwater in the Romanian village of Slobozia Conachi.

### Navalny allies accuse colleagues of foul play

LONDON (Reuters): Splits in Russia's opposition in exile have widened sharply, shifting their focus from political activism to infighting after allies of late opposition leader Alexei Navalny accused another opposition figure of ordering attacks on their activists.

The scandal undermines already troubled efforts to forge a united front against the Kremlin, risks damaging the opposition's credibility in the eyes of supporters and the West, and pits the two most high-profile opposition groupings against one another setting up a potentially protracted standoff. The two opposition movements - one run by allies of the late Navalny and the other run by Kremlin critic Mikhail Khodorkovsky, have been involved in public disputes before, but their latest disagreement is the most potent yet, with the Navalny camp publicly accusing Leonid Nevzlin, an Israel-based tycoon and Khodorkovsky ally, of ordering assaults on senior Navalny aides Leonid Volkov and Ivan Zhdanov and on the wife of an Argentina-based activist.

In the most serious incident, Volkov was attacked outside his house in Vilnius, Lithuania in March this year, a month after Navalny died in an Arctic prison, by a hammer-wielding assailant who he said had left him with a broken arm and a badly damaged leg. In a nearly one-hour long video investigation published on Navalny's YouTube channel, his team alleged that the assault and two others had been ordered not by the Russian state, but by Nevzlin.

Both Nevzlin and Khodorkovsky, who himself spent a decade in Russian prisons on what the West said were politically-motivated charges, dismissed the claims as groundless. With Navalny dead, the opposition has been left without a clear leader.

## Ukraine missile request under discussion: Lammy

LONDON (BBC): The foreign secretary has insisted no single weapon can win a war, as he said the UK was still discussing with allies whether to allow Ukraine to fire long-range missiles into Russia. David Lammy told the BBC it was important that countries supporting Ukraine had "a shared strategy to win".

Ukraine already has supplies of long-range missiles from the UK, the United States and France but at the moment it is only allowed to fire them at targets within its own borders. President Zelensky has been pleading for months for these restrictions to be lifted so Ukraine can use them against targets inside Russia. There have been strong indications that the US and UK are poised to change their position.

However, no confirmation came after talks between Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and US President Joe Biden in Washington. Pressed over whether the delay in lifting restrictions on the use of long-range missiles was emboldening Russian President Vladimir Putin, Mr Lammy told the BBC's Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg programme:

"No war is won with any one weapon." He refused to confirm whether the UK and its allies were planning to allow missiles to be used against targets in Russia.

But he added: "This is under careful discussion with the Ukrainians, as we assess what they need as they head into the winter." Lammy said the UK and other allies would be meeting President Zelensky at the United Nations General Assembly in New York in less than 12 days' times and suggested the issue would be discussed then. Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davey said Ukraine should be allowed to use long-range missiles to attack military bases inside Russia, even if the UK had to act "unilaterally".

Asked whether the UK would "go it alone" and lift restrictions without US support, Lammy told the BBC "it's important that as allies supporting Ukraine we have a shared strategy to win going forward". Gen Sir John McColl, former deputy supreme allied commander Europe of Nato, said he believed Ukraine would eventually be allowed to use long-range missiles against targets in Russia.

But he told the programme Ukraine's allies needed to be "firm" and "not signal this kind of dither and dilemma". "At the end of the weekend President Putin will be encouraged and emboldened and President Zelensky will be disappointed," he said. However, Sir John said the missiles would have only "a limited effect" on the war as a whole. A number of former Conservative defence secretaries, including Ben Wallace, have urged the PM to lift restrictions.

He told BBC Radio 4's Today programme the delays and wrangling over the decision were only benefiting President Putin. Earlier this week President Putin warned Western nations against allowing Ukraine to fire long-range missiles into Russia, saying this would represent "direct participation" by Nato in the war.

Ukraine's allies have been reluctant to do anything which could drag them into direct conflict with Moscow. Lammy accused the Russian president of "throwing dust up into the air" by making such threats. "There's a lot of bluster - that's his modus operandi," he said.

## Congo court sentences 3 Americans and 34 others to death on coup charges

KINSHASA, Congo (AP): A military court in Congo handed down death sentences to 37 people, including three Americans, after convicting them on charges of participating in a coup attempt. The defendants, most of them Congolese but also including a Briton, Belgian and Canadian, have five days to appeal the verdict on charges that include attempted coup, terrorism and criminal association. Fourteen people were acquitted in the trial, which opened in June.

The open-air military court in the capital, Kinshasa, convicted the 37 defendants and imposed "the harshest penalty, that of death" in the verdict delivered in French by presiding judge Maj. Freddy Ebuma. The three Americans, wearing blue and yellow prison clothes and sitting in plastic chairs, appeared stoic as a translator explained their sentence. Richard Bondo, the lawyer who defended the six foreigners, disputed whether the death penalty could currently be imposed in Congo, despite its rein-statement earlier this year, and said his clients had inadequate interpreters during the investigation of the case. "We will challenge this decision on appeal," Bondo said.

Six people were killed during the botched coup attempt led by the little-known opposition figure Christian Malanga in May that targeted the presidential palace and a close ally of President Felix Tshisekedi. Malanga was fatally shot while resisting arrest soon after live-streaming the attack on his social media, the Congolese army said. Malanga's 21-year-old son Marcel Malanga, who is a US citizen, and two other Americans were convicted in the coup attempt. He told the court that his father had forced him and his high school friend to take part in the attack.

"Dad had threatened to kill us if we did not follow his orders," Marcel Malanga said. Other members of the ragtag militia recounted similar threats from the elder Malanga, and some described being duped into believing they were working for a volunteer organization. Marcel's mother, Brittney Sawyer, maintains that her son is innocent and was simply following his father, who considered himself president of a shadow government in exile. In the months

since her son's arrest, Sawyer has focused her energy on fundraising to send him money for food, hygiene products and a bed. He has been sleeping on the floor of his cell at the Ndolo military prison and is suffering from a liver disease, she said. The other Americans are Tyler Thompson Jr., 21, who flew to Africa from Utah with the younger Malanga for what his family believed was a free vacation, and Benjamin Reuben Zalman-Polun, 36, who is reported to have known Christian Malanga through a gold mining company. The company was set up in Mozambique in 2022, according to an official journal published by Mozambique's government, and a report by the Africa Intelligence newsletter.

US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller told reporters in Washington that the federal government was aware of the verdict. The department has not declared the three Americans wrongfully detained, making it unlikely that US officials would try to negotiate their return. "We understand that the legal process in the DRC allows for defendants to appeal the court's decision," Miller said. "Embassy staff have been attending these proceedings as they've gone through the process. We continue to attend the proceedings and follow the developments closely."

Thompson had been invited on an Africa trip by the younger Malanga, his former high school football teammate in a Salt Lake City suburb. But the itinerary might have included more than sightseeing. Other teammates alleged that Marcel had offered up to \$100,000 to join him on a "security job" in Congo, and they said he seemed desperate to bring along an American friend. Thompson's family maintains he had no knowledge of the elder Malanga's intentions, no plans for political activism and didn't even plan to enter Congo. He and the Malangas were meant to travel only to South Africa and Eswatini, his stepmother, Miranda Thompson, told The Associated Press.

The Thompsons' lawyer in Utah, Skye Lazaro, said the family is heartbroken over the verdict. "We urge all who have supported Tyler and the

family throughout this process to write to your congressmen and request their assistance in bringing him home," Lazaro said.

Utah's US Sens. Mitt Romney and Mike Lee have not publicly urged the US government to advocate for the Americans' release. "My thoughts are with the families during this difficult time," Lee told the AP. "We will continue to work with the State Department to receive updates on this case." "This is an extremely difficult and frightening situation for the families involved," Romney spokesperson Dilan Maxfield said. "Our office has consistently engaged with the State Department and will continue to do so."

### NATO could have done more to prevent Ukraine war

BERLIN (Reuters): NATO could have done more to arm Ukraine to try to prevent Russia's invasion in 2022, the outgoing head of the Western military alliance said in an interview released. "Now we provide military stuff to a war - then we could have provided military stuff to prevent the war," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told German weekly newspaper FAS.

Stoltenberg pointed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's reluctance to provide weapons that Kyiv had asked for before Russia's full-scale invasion because of fears that tensions with Russia would escalate. After the war began, Kyiv, which is not a member of NATO, received one weapons system after another from its allies after initial hesitation.

Stoltenberg, a former prime minister of Norway, will step down in October from his role at NATO, which he has held since 2014. Dutch former Prime Minister Mark Rutte was announced in June as the organisation's next boss. In the interview, Stoltenberg said an end to the war in Ukraine would be achieved only at the negotiating table. "To end this war there will have to be again dialogue with Russia at a certain stage. But it has to be based on Ukrainian strength," he said.

## In Belarus, native language vanishing as Russian takes prominence

TALLINN (AP): When school started this year for Mikalay in Belarus, the 15-year-old discovered that his teachers and administrators no longer called him by that name. Instead, they referred to him as Nikolai, its Russian equivalent.

What's more, classes at his school — one of the country's best — are now taught in Russian, not Belarusian, which he has spoken for most of his life. Belarusians like Mikalay are experiencing a new wave of Russification as Moscow expands its economic, political and cultural dominance to overtake the identity of its neighbor.

It's not the first time. Russia under the czars and in the era of the Soviet Union imposed its language, symbols and cultural institutions on Belarus. But with the demise of the USSR in 1991, the country began to assert its identity, and Belarusian briefly became the official language, with the white-red-white national flag replacing a version of the red hammer and sickle. But all that changed in 1994, after Alexander Lukashenko, a former Soviet collective farm official, came to power. The authoritarian leader made Russian an official language, alongside Belarusian, and did away with the nationalist symbols.

Now, with Lukashenko in control of the country for over three decades, he has allowed Russia to dominate all

aspects of life in Belarus, a country of 9.5 million people. Belarusian, which like Russian uses the Cyrillic alphabet, is hardly heard on the streets of Minsk and other large cities anymore. Official business is conducted in Russian, which dominates the majority of the media. Lukashenko speaks only Russian, and government officials often don't use their native tongue. The country depends on Russian loans and cheap energy and has created a political and military alliance with Moscow, allowing President Vladimir Putin to deploy troops and missiles on its soil, which was used as a staging area for the war in Ukraine. "I understand that our Belarus is occupied. ... And who is the president there? Not Lukashenko. The president is Putin," said Svetlana Alexievich, who won the 2015 Nobel Prize for literature and lives in Germany in effective exile. "The nation has been humiliated and it will be very difficult for Belarusians to recover from this."

Belarusian cultural figures have been persecuted and hundreds of its nationalist organizations have been closed. Experts say Moscow is seeking to implement in Belarus what the Kremlin intended to do in neighboring Ukraine when the war there began in 2022. "It is obvious that our children are being deliberately deprived of their native language, history and Belarusian identity, but parents have

been strongly advised not to ask questions about Russification," said Mikalay's father, Anatoly, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition his last name not be used, for fear of retribution.

"We were informed about the synchronization of the curriculum with Russia this year and were shown a propaganda film about how the Ukrainian special services are allegedly recruiting our teenagers and forcing them to commit sabotage in Belarus," he said. Mikalay's school was one of the few where paperwork and some courses were conducted in Belarusian. In recent years, however, dozens of teachers were fired and the Belarusian-language section of its website vanished.

Human rights advocate Ales Bialiatski, convicted in 2023 on charges stemming from his Nobel Peace Prize-winning work, demanded his trial be conducted in Belarusian. The court rejected it and sentenced him to 10 years. Lukashenko derides his native language, saying "nothing great can be expressed in Belarusian. ... There are only two great languages in the world: Russian and English."

Speaking to Russian state media, Lukashenko recounted how Putin once thanked him for making Russian the dominant language in Belarus. "I said, 'Wait, what are you thanking me for? ... The Russian language is my

language, we were part of one empire, and we're taking part in (helping) that language develop,'" Lukashenko said. Belarus was part of the Russian empire for centuries and became one of 15 Soviet republics after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Daily use of the Belarusian language decreased and continued only in the country's west and north and in rural areas.

In 1994, about 40% of students were taught in Belarusian; it's now down to under 9%. Although Belarusian, like Russian, is an eastern Slavic language, its vocabulary is considerably different. In 1517, Belarusian publisher Francysk Skaryna was one of the first in eastern Europe to translate the Bible into his native language. Even speaking Belarusian is seen as a show of opposition to Lukashenko and a declaration of national identity. That played a key role in the mass protests after the disputed 2020 election gave the authoritarian leader a sixth term. In the harsh crackdown that followed, a half-million people fled the country.

"The Belarusian language is increasingly perceived as a sign of political disloyalty and is being abandoned in favor of Russian in the public administration, education, culture and the mass media, upon orders from the hierarchy or out of fear of discrimination," said Anaïs Marin, the United Nations special rapporteur for human

rights in Belarus. At the same time, "more people want to speak Belarusian, which has become one of the symbols of freedom, but they're afraid to do it in public," said Alina Nahornaja, author of "Language 404," a book about Belarusians who experienced discrimination for speaking their native language.

Like Ukraine, Belarusians had a desire for rapprochement with Europe that accompanied their nationalist sentiment, said Belarusian analyst Valery Karbalevich. "But the Kremlin quickly realized the danger and began the process of creeping Russification in Belarus," he added. That prompted pro-Russian organizations, joint educational programs and cultural projects to spring up "like mushrooms after the rain — against the backdrop of harsh repressions against everything Belarusian," Karbalevich said. Censorship and bans affect not only contemporary Belarusian literature but also its classics. In 2023, the prosecutor's office declared as extremist the 19th-century poems of Vincent Dunin-Martsinkievich, who opposed the Russian Empire.

When the Kremlin began supporting Lukashenko against the anti-government protests in 2020, it ensured his loyalty and received carte blanche in Belarus. "Today, Lukashenko is paying Putin with our sovereignty," said exiled opposition leader Sviatlana

Tsikhonouskaya. "Belarusian national identity, cultures and language are our strongest weapons against the Russian world and Russification."

Four cities in Belarus now host a "Russia House" to promote its culture and influence, offering seminars, film clubs, exhibitions and competitions. "The goal is to plant Russian narratives so that as many Belarusians as possible view Russian as their own," said analyst Alexander Friedman. "The Kremlin spares no expense and acts on a grand scale, which could be especially effective and dangerous in a situation where Belarus has found itself in information isolation, and there is almost no one left inside the country to resist the Russian world."

Almost the entire troupe of the Yanka Kupala Theater, the country's oldest, fled Belarus amid the political crackdown. Its former director, Pavel Latushka, now an opposition figure abroad, said the new management couldn't recruit enough new actors, and had to invite Russians, "but it turned out that no one knew the Belarusian language," "Putin published an article denying the existence of an independent Ukraine back in 2021, and even then we understood perfectly well that he was pursuing similar goals in Belarus," Latushka said. "The main course was supposed to be Ukraine," he added, with a Russified Belarus "as a dessert."



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# Not all is well inside the Taliban

ON August 21, a strict public morality law was issued in Afghanistan. The 114-page document outlining the legislation contains provisions that cover transportation, media, music, public spaces and personal conduct. Among its most restrictive provisions are a ban on music and on women singing or reading aloud in public. The announcement of the law provoked widespread condemnation internationally and raised questions about the direction in which the Taliban government is taking Afghanistan given past promises to ease restrictions on women. The law also caused a lot of unease in Afghanistan, even if opposition was not voiced publicly. This has prompted the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, to call for the group's members to avoid division and embrace unity.

While the public morality legislation makes clear that the Taliban is pressing ahead with ultra-conservative policies in the face of international criticism, it also reflects growing tensions within its leadership. In the lead-up to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban takeover of Kabul in 2021, some Taliban officials sought to persuade the international community that a Taliban 2.0 had emerged, which held more moderate views on governance compared with the old guard's highly conservative and stringent approach. This new guard spoke the language of international diplomacy and made clear its desire to scrap more conservative policies to attract international support and secure legitimacy for the new Taliban government. The formation of the interim cabinet, however, showed the first signs that the old guard was not ceding power. Promises of an inclusive government were not fulfilled, and some members of the old guard were given key roles, including Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, one of the Taliban's founders who was appointed prime minister; Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who was appointed as his deputy; and Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, the son of another Taliban founder, Mullah Omar, who was made defence minister.

As the interim government took on the uneasy task of steering the country away from collapse, Akhundzada established his residence in Kandahar as another seat of power, declaring himself in charge of political, military and religious affairs. Over the past two years Akhundzada has made clear he does not intend to step back from his hardline positions. In March 2022, on his order, girls and women were banned from attending secondary school and university. He has also sought to concentrate power in his own hands and further tighten the old guard's grip on the government. He ordered a number of cabinet reshuffles in which his loyalists were appointed. In September 2022, Education Minister Noorullah Munir was replaced by Maulvi Habibullah Agha, one of the figures closest to the supreme leader. In May this year, Health Minister Qalandar Ebad, a trained doctor and the only technocrat in the Taliban government, was replaced by Noor Jalal, a hardline cleric and former deputy interior minister.

While Akhundzada appears in control, signs of growing internal divisions have surfaced. In February 2023, Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani implicitly criticised him, saying, "Monopolising power and hurting the reputation of the entire system are not to our benefit. ... The situation cannot be tolerated." In his Eid al-Fitr message this year, the interior minister again hinted at internal troubles. He called on the Taliban to avoid creating divisions with the Afghan people.

Akhundzada, for his part, urged Taliban officials during Eid to set aside their differences and serve the country properly. He has repeated this call for unity frequently, most recently during a rare trip to northern Afghanistan, in which he met with local leaders. The public morality law codifies rules that the Taliban promoted before but did not fully enforce. Now, the law empowers the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice to monitor, censure and punish any Afghan citizen found in violation of it. The announcement of this legislation demonstrates that the old guard of the Taliban led by the supreme leader have an upper hand in directing policy. This is yet another sign that the Taliban 2.0 is not a more "moderate" version of the group that ruled in Afghanistan in the 1990s. Previously, Taliban representatives who touted the Taliban 2.0 idea hinted behind closed doors at international forums that certain hardline officials could be replaced to appease the international community.

But developments over the past year, including the vice and virtue law, show that the old guard, who believe in the need for a rigid stance to maintain unity within the group, are suppressing the voices of the new guard, creating a culture of conformity through fear, replacement and sidelining. In interviews I have conducted with current and former Taliban representatives who do not support some of the conservative policies of the Taliban government, some have shared that they have relocated their families to other countries. One of them said: "The family is more comfortable abroad and the children's education can seamlessly continue." The lack of public response to the vice and virtue law may signal that disgruntled Taliban members who disapprove of it would not risk breaking the unity of the group over policy disagreements. Silencing of dissent, however, does not help with the two major problems the Taliban is facing: growing dissatisfaction among the Afghan population and continuing international isolation.

The government in Kabul is feeling the pressure from the Afghan people, who are asking for services and jobs amid a collapsing economy and limited international assistance. That can be alleviated only by gaining international recognition of the Taliban government. However, efforts of some Taliban members, including Haqqani, to reach out to the international community and seek engagement, more aid and investment are being undermined by Kandahar doubling down on policies like education bans for girls and women and the morality law. In the end, Akhundzada's strategy of consolidating power may have the opposite of the intended effect: It may sow more internal division that could lead to fragmentation or even rebellion.

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# Israeli-Palestinian battleground in US election

Yossi Mekelberg

INEVITABLY, the horrific bloodshed of the war in Gaza has entered American political discourse. It was inevitable because the US is not a neutral force in the conflict but very much a main actor in every aspect. As such, it can make a difference — for better or for worse.

Sadly, over the past 11 months it has been for the worse and it remains to be seen how this is going to affect not only the presidential election but also congressional contests, especially in what is one of the most critical election years in American history for the future of the nation's democratic system and its relations with the world.

As a rule of thumb, domestic issues tend to define the voting patterns of the American electorate, not foreign affairs. Nevertheless, the Electoral College system through which presidents are elected means that swing states — those in which there is no clear majority for either Democrats or Republicans but there is a concentration of voters likely to vote based on a single issue — are particularly consequential to the overall result. For instance, in one key swing state, Michigan, official figures reveal that there are 211,405 Arab American residents (some suggest the true number is closer to twice that figure). Consequently, the votes of that community, should it mass in support of one candidate over the other in large numbers, could prove decisive, especially since the margin of victory for the winner in Michigan at the last election was relatively small.

Until President Joe Biden decided to withdraw from the race, the prospect of the Democrats winning the presidential election seemed to be slipping away toward a second term for Donald Trump, largely because of Biden's stance on the war in Gaza. When he stepped aside and was replaced by Vice President Kamala Harris, it provided the Democrats' campaign with a new lease of life. But this was not necessarily because she distanced herself from Biden on Gaza — although she can, rightly, claim to have called for a ceasefire early in the war, and she can somewhat distance herself from Biden's

one-sided policies because the role of the VP in foreign policy decisions is usually quite marginal.

Part of the debate on this issue in the US, as it is in some other countries, is too simplistic. It is presented simply as a choice between pro-Palestinians and pro-Israelis, rather

the rules of international humanitarian law. Biden is, instinctively and sentimentally, a supporter of Israel; although at the same time his growing disdain for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government is clear. But his unwillingness to contain Israel and prevent it from

***What many Americans could not understand was Biden's reluctance to ensure that the Israeli government followed the advice he gave at the very beginning of this war: Do not fight in vengeance but with a political aim in mind, and one that is within the rules of international humanitarian law. Biden is, instinctively and sentimentally, a supporter of Israel; although at the same time his growing disdain for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government is clear.***

than a choice between those on both sides who would like to bring the carnage to an end and move on toward a permanent and peaceful solution, and those who thrive on prolonging the conflict indefinitely until some elusive idea of "total victory" is achieved. If the outpouring of sympathy for Israel and the losses it suffered on that horrific Oct. 7 day was understandable, the mood among many in the US has gradually tilted against Israel because of its disproportionate response.

It is the tens of thousands of Palestinians who have been killed in Gaza, many of them civilians and many of them children. It is the destruction of their homes, and it is the fact that Gazans have been displaced time and time again with no end in sight that has led many Americans to question US support for Israel — even if in some cases the way in which their criticisms are expressed is troubling.

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using its military might indiscriminately cost him popularity and has left an uneasy legacy for Harris to deal with.

So far she has struggled to strike a balance, including during the Democratic Party's recent convention when she was vocal about her commitment to Israel's security and well-being, while at the same time ignoring pro-Palestinian protesters outside the conference hall in Chicago.

Neither political party can ignore the fact that as the war in Gaza continues, the public is not only becoming weary of it but their support for Israel is wavering. A recent ABC News/Ipsos poll found that nearly 40 percent of Americans believe the US is doing too much to support Israel in its war against Hamas, up from about 30 percent in January. Should this trend continue, it should not only be a concern for Israel but it might cause the two main US political parties to reconsider the political price of providing the Israeli government with a blank check for how they operate, whether in Gaza, the West Bank or on other fronts, and facilitating their actions financially and through the supply of sophisticated weaponry.

A major dilemma for those upset with the Biden administration's handling of the war in Gaza, and its inability to help bring it to an end, and in particular those who closely associate Harris with those policies, is that Trump has not suggested a better alternative. He actually claimed, during his TV debate with Harris on Tuesday, and with no shred of evidence, that Harris hates Israel. Moreover, in one of his regressively incoherent ramblings during a speech to the Republican Jewish Coalition in Las Vegas, he claimed that should Harris be elected, "Israel is gone."

And although he has said he urged Netanyahu to agree to a ceasefire, during their meeting at his Mar-a-Lago residence Trump stated: "He (Netanyahu) knows what he's doing. I did encourage him to get this over with. It has to get over with, fast." Make of that what you will but it was just more encouragement to use more force in a shorter time span, not a plea to show more humanity toward the people of Gaza. This is hardly an appealing proposition for those who care about the lives of Palestinians there.

To vote for Trump, and his Republican allies in the House of Representatives or the Senate, would be a punitive act. After all, it was mainly Republicans who, during the summer, could not contain their enthusiasm while welcoming Netanyahu to Capitol Hill, giving him more standing ovations during his speech than anyone could remember. Meanwhile, many Democrat legislators opted not to attend. Americans who would cast their vote primarily with the aim of ending both the war in Gaza and the wider conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians face a tough choice — but Trump can hardly be considered the one most likely to achieve this. It might actually be a Harris presidency, considering her care for human rights and her understanding of what it means to belong to a mistreated minority, that would offer some hope for change in US foreign policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Maybe she can become the honest broker that so many in the US, and elsewhere, are hoping for.

# Shaking the foundations

Yang Bojiang

RECENTLY, some Japanese senior officials expressed views that deviate from its stance on Taiwan question since 1972 on many occasions. This will inevitably exacerbate regional tensions in the Asia-Pacific and impact regional security.

In 1972, when China and Japan established diplomatic relations, Japan made a solemn commitment in the joint communique: "The government of Japan recognizes that the government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China" and "The government of the People's Republic of China reiterates that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the territory of the People's Republic of China. The government of Japan fully understands and respects this stance of the government of the People's Republic of China, and it firmly maintains its stand under Article 8 of the Potsdam Proclamation."

Article 8 of the Potsdam Proclamation states that "the terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out", which refers to the statement in the Cairo Declaration that all the territories Japan had stolen from China, including Taiwan, should be restored to it. Japan has always accepted the Potsdam Proclamation and the Cairo Declaration, as reflected in Emperor Hirohito's Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War released on Aug 15, 1945, and the Instrument of Surrender signed by Japanese representatives on Sept 2, 1945.

Japan's stance on Taiwan has been reaffirmed many times in subsequent political documents and statements by Japanese leaders. In the China-Japan Joint Declaration of 1998, Japan explicitly expressed its position on one China. The document reaffirms the connotations of "one China" set forth in the joint communique, and clarifies that engagement between Japan and Taiwan should only be limited to "people-to-people and regional exchanges".

On Dec 28, 2007 when meeting then Chinese premier Wen Jiabao in Beijing, then Japanese prime minister Yasuo Fukuda further clarified Japan's position on Taiwan, saying that Japan would not support "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan"; and would not support "Taiwan independence"; would not support Taiwan's participation in the United Nations; and would not support any referendum on this matter by the Taiwan authorities. In 2010, China surpassed Japan to become the world's second-largest economy. With the shift in power balance between the two countries, structural contradictions began to surface. In 2017, Donald Trump initiated a trade war against China, and the prolonged strategic competition between China and the United States also had a negative impact on Japan's China policy. As Japan loses its competitive advantages, the Taiwan question has become one of a few "strategic cards" left for it to play.

After the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022, Japan has deliberately confused the Ukraine issue with the Taiwan question, despite them being completely different in nature. Japan has been hyping up the idea that "a Taiwan contingency is a Japan contingency" and using the pretext of preventing a "Taiwan con-

tingency" to strengthen its military capabilities on the "southwestern islands". In May 2024, several Japanese politicians visited Taiwan to attend Lai Ching-te's "inauguration ceremony".

There are two reasons for the regression in Japan's Taiwan stance. The first is Japan's strategic entanglement with the US. On May 28, China Times, a leading newspaper in Taiwan, revealed that when then Japanese prime minister Eisaku Sato visited the US in November 1969, the US offered to "return" administrative rights over Okinawa in exchange for Japan's agreement to allow US forces to launch military operations from Japanese mainland and Okinawa to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or Taiwan, if there was a "contingency". The two sides also signed a secret clause on "joint defense of Taiwan", in which Japan pledged that, in the event of a war in the Taiwan Strait, it would allow US forces to establish forward operating bases in Japan.

The second reason is Japan's desire to be perceived as a "normal country". Japan is in the middle of the most significant strategic transformation since World War II, with strengthening military and security capabilities being a key element, but it needs an external excuse to make its transformation appear "reasonable". Meanwhile, Japan's domestic politics underwent significant changes after the Cold War. Pro-Taiwan forces that were previously scattered across different parties began to come together, further driving Japan's policy regression.

Japan's changing position on Taiwan will undoubtedly undermine the political foundation of China-Japan relations and severely damage political trust between the two countries. The Taiwan question is a core interest of China. The one-China principle was the political precondition for the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan in 1972, as well as being a crucial cornerstone for maintaining the stable development of bilateral relations. Political mistrust will inevitably affect economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation, ultimately harming the fundamental interests of both countries.

Japan's actions will also impact the regional security landscape and heighten divisions over the post-war international order. In the Asia-Pacific region, there have always been deep-seated differences and conflicts over the regional order and its legal basis since World War II. Japan and the US advocate that the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco is the legal foundation of the regional order, while China and Russia uphold the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation. China did not sign the Treaty of San Francisco and has never recognized its legitimacy.

In this sense, the one-China principle that was established in the China-Japan joint communique and was repeatedly reaffirmed later has a profound meaning beyond the bilateral relations between China and Japan. It not only forms the political foundation and legal framework of contemporary China-Japan relations, but also marks China and Japan's mutual confirmation of the legal basis of the postwar Asia-Pacific order.

The China Daily

# Growth stimulator

Yaseen Anwar

World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Bank, Sovereign Wealth Funds, private equity, infrastructure funds, among others, will adequately fulfill the needs of the financing gap.

To further support infrastructure financing in the Global South, several regulatory changes are necessary. Since the 2008 global financial crisis, central banks have tightened macro prudential regulations. While these measures were aimed at stabilizing the financial system, they have unintentionally discouraged banks from holding long-term risk assets. As a result, this has also led to a decline in the expertise needed to manage such assets.

To address this, the Bank for International Settlements

and central banks should create a supportive regulatory environment for systemically important financial institutions and developmental financial institutions. This could be done by adjusting capital requirements, specifically by reducing the capital needed for infrastructure financing, especially when multilateral organizations are involved in co-financing. This would encourage financial institutions to invest more in infrastructure projects. Additionally, banks should realign their lending priorities to focus on long-term shareholder value. This means creating a more balanced balance sheet, with greater emphasis on infrastructure financing, especially through co-financing with multilateral organizations.

Global trade historically was the key instrument for economic development. However, with protectionist policies, decades of integra-

tion and interdependence are now in jeopardy. With the benefit of hindsight, the lessons of history can be heeded.

The United States' Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act introduced in 1930s led to a 64 percent reduction in world trade. Using sanctions as an economic weapon is also detrimental to economic development and global trade, as it creates supply chain disruptions that are particularly painful for emerging market economies reliant on exports of raw materials and resources.

The evidence is compelling that the BRI spurs the economic growth of participating economies. Numerous countries have already felt the benefits of new employment opportunities and improved productivity thanks to the BRI. In 2017, the Greek port of Piraeus handled more than 4 million containers for onward distribution to Europe. Germany's Duisburg Inner Harbor has become one of the world's

largest inland ports. And companies are now operating across Africa through an expanding transportation network of railways and roads.

Tens of billions of dollars of new business has been generated across a range of operations, including increased investment and tourism into Africa, new housing in Indonesia, power projects in Bangladesh, roads in Pakistan and Kazakhstan, and rising global and intra-regional trade in Southeast Asia.

The Asia-Pacific and Central Asia regions represent potential success stories toward elevating growth rates and per capita income. Intra-regional trade and the integration of regional economies will also cushion them from future exogenous shocks. The desirable attributes of the BRI will also help restore faith and confidence in the international monetary system and as such it behooves the international community to collectively expand the opportunities it offers and to use them wisely.



# Algeria after President Tebboune’s overwhelming election victory

Hafed Al-Ghwel

**I**N an election marked by apathy and skepticism, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune secured an overwhelming — albeit predictable — victory, clinching 94 percent of the vote when Algerians went to the polls last week. Yet the landslide result raises as many questions as it answers. With fewer than 6 million of 24 million eligible voters participating, the abysmally low turnout is a strange contrast to the decisive result, revealing cracks in a facade of democratic legitimacy.

The victor’s reelection campaign, framed nostalgically as a choice for “Uncle Tebboune,” might have struck a chord with some sections of the electorate but the broader narrative here is one of enduring disillusionment. This was particularly evident given the legacy of his first term in office, a tenure marred by persistent economic challenges, high living costs, severe drought conditions, and wildfires that have compounded the nation’s political difficulties. The 78-year-old president’s personal political journey is closely linked to his nation’s volatile political climate, shaped significantly by the 2019 pro-democracy Hirak protests that led to the ousting of his predecessor, Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

Despite the impressive vote tally last week, Tebboune’s claim on presidential legitimacy remains contentious. The election process itself, criticized for irregularities by independent observers and even by Tebboune’s own party, has cast a shadow over the authenticity of his mandate. This skepticism is not unfounded; the electoral exercise was perceived by many as a rubber-stamp operation to reinforce the status quo, rather than as a meaningful democratic endeavor. Activists openly condemned a prelection crackdown that only fueled the narrative that genuine political pluralism in Algeria remains a distant dream.

The existential question for President Tebboune’s second term revolves around his capacity to transition from electoral consolidation to substantive governance. Can he translate the electoral mandate he received into action that addresses Algeria’s pressing socioeconomic issues, while pacifying a populace weary of unful-

filled promises? During his first term there were attempts to leverage the country’s oil and gas revenues to help ease public discontent through the enhancement of social benefits. However, these measures, while palliative, did little to address the root causes of the unrest that has plagued Algeria and exasperated his administration.

Facing a second term with the weight of public expectation and scrutiny on his shoulders, Tebboune must now navigate a path that not only bolsters his claims of legitimacy but also engenders tangible sociopolitical and economic progress. Firstly, while the nation’s hydrocarbon windfall can offer some temporary relief, long-term solutions must address systemic economic fragility. Tebboune’s administration faces the monumental task of diversifying an economy in which hydrocarbons constitute 95 percent of export revenues and fund vital social programs.

Ramped-up foreign interest in Algeria’s natural gas, particularly from Europe as an alternative to Russian supplies, underscores this urgency. However, meaningful progress will demand structural reforms, from efforts to attract diversified sources of investment to plans for tackling unemployment, especially among the nation’s youth. Without such actions, economic stability will remain shackled to the whims of volatile energy markets. Secondly, the geopolitical challenges Algeria faces remain formidable. A growing military entente between Morocco and Israel, following the US recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, has strained Algeria’s regional posture and escalated its military preparedness.

The presence of Russian mercenaries in Mali and the continuing political gridlock in Libya increase the burden on the security apparatus, further stretching Algeria’s attention and focus. Meanwhile developments in the Sahel region’s “coup belt,” marked by military takeovers of countries, diminishes the region’s stability, and exacerbates complex cross-border threats. Moreover, while French and American military withdrawals have been compensated for, in part, by Russian

private military company Wagner Group, this represents a delicate balancing act for Algeria, which historically has opposed external interventions.

Tebboune’s administration must navigate these external pressures while addressing internal expectations for democratic reforms that have been stifled by an omnipresent security discourse, creating a virtual tightrope for him to walk in a country that has a history of civil strife, combined with a heightened sense of vulnerability among the populace. Thirdly, the enhanced prominence and visibility of military institutions exacerbates this fragility. Tebboune has frequently appeared alongside the army’s chief of staff, Said Chengriha, and the increased public presence of the military signals a deviation from its traditional behind-the-scenes influence.

Although this overt association might solidify the regime’s control in the short term, it risks alienating civilian support and perpetuating distrust among the populace. Tebboune’s second term will therefore have to navigate a complex political terrain in which a blurring of the lines between military and civilian governance might spur resistance. A revised constitutional framework declaring the military to be the protector of the nation’s “vital and strategic interests” portends a scenario in which ambiguous legal language empowers the army to intervene in civilian affairs under loosely defined terms.

This new electoral landscape, coupled with legislative changes that curtail parliamentary oversight, could potentially stifle democratic reforms and catalyze dissent reminiscent of the powerful Hirak movement. Provisions restricting public discourse on national defense, coupled with legal reforms that broaden the definition of terrorism to include actions perceived as threats to government stability, indicate an institutional clampdown poised to quash opposition.

Amid these measures, the treatment of civilian leaders and activists such as Karim Tabbou, who face stringent penalties for perceived insubordination, serve to accentuate an environment in which the pursuit of a democratic

transition might clash forcefully with entrenched military power. In this delicate dance of power, the real test for the Tebboune administration lies in balancing a growing militarized ethos with genuine democratic engagement, lest it further inflame and radicalize a populace wary of authoritarian overreach.

The persistent lack of new political figures since the Hirak movement underscores a failure to rejuvenate the Algerian political landscape. Previous crises, such as the 1988 riots and the turbulence of the 1990s, yielded new political movements and actors. But in the post-2019 era there has been a stifling rather than a flourishing of political diversity, as evidenced by the minimal success of new candidates in recent elections and allegations of judicial manipulations. Persistently low voter turnout is increasingly reflective of pervasive skepticism toward supposed reforms, feeding disillusionment and, lately, apathy. With the military still embedded as a key political player in Algeria, fundamental shifts toward genuine democratic governance are likely to remain elusive.

Tebboune’s public reassurances of economic diversification are so far unfulfilled, further entwining the fate of the nation with its volatile hydrocarbon revenues. Meanwhile, the electoral cycle has only tightened the noose on dissent, casting a long shadow over the rule of law as new legislative measures will further suppress political freedoms under the guise of state security. Meanwhile, integral regional parties, such as the Socialist Forces Front, struggle to mobilize voters who are disenchanting by systemic repression, even within their robust base in regions such as Kabylia.

Tebboune’s second term therefore risks widening the chasm between government proclamations and grassroots realities, a dichotomy that could more deeply entrench national frustration if left unaddressed. Navigating these issues will require more than governance by decree; it will demand genuine engagement with political pluralism and economic transformation — avenues hitherto blocked but which are imperative for any substantive progress toward Tebboune’s purported vision for a “New Algeria.”

Arab News

# Trump’s fantasy that migrants eating cats

Kenan Malik

**I**F one town could be emblematic of the vicissitudes of blue-collar life in America, Springfield, Ohio, might be as good a pick as any. At the heart of the midwest, Springfield’s prosperity was built on manufacturing and publishing. But its decline began early. The giant Crowell-Collier publishing plant closed on Christmas Eve 1956. Three decades later, in 1993, Newsweek dedicated a whole issue to Springfield. Entitled “The American Dream”, it concluded sadly that “The times have not been hospitable to dreaming”.

The years that followed proved even less hospitable as manufacturers deserted the town and wages plummeted. A 2016 Pew Research report found that Springfield had lost more high-income earners and gained more low-income earners than any other metropolitan area in America. The town became stalked by the diseases of despair that now haunt many other post-industrial working-class communities, from soaring alcohol and opioid addiction to rising numbers of suicides.

Then, a decade ago, the city council crafted a programme to draw in new employers, including food-service firms and logistics companies, an Amazon warehouse and a microchip maker. Thousands of new jobs were created, though most remained poorly paid. The problem now became not too few jobs for the workers, but too few workers for the jobs. And, so, migrants came in to fill the gap, mainly Haitians living legally elsewhere in America.

The influx of migrants helped revive a dying city. It also created tensions, as access to housing and health services became more strained. Racist and far-right groups seized upon the issue, attempting to turn tension into hatred with talk of an “invasion” destroying the town. The claims became ever wilder, leading eventually to denunciations of Haitians for eating people’s pet dogs and cats, a claim turned into a national issue by Donald Trump in his presidential debate with Kamala Harris last week. “In Springfield, they’re eating the dogs,” Trump said. “The people that came in. They’re eating the cats.” Even before Trump’s outburst, leading Republicans, including the vice presidential candidate JD Vance, Texas senator Ted Cruz, the House judiciary GOP and Trump supporters

such as Elon Musk, had all perpetuated the myth, giving it legitimacy. Many, including Musk, have pushed another far-right conspiracy theory that the Democrats are deliberately “importing millions of illegal immigrants” as voting fodder to entrench “single party rule”.

The case of Springfield could have been an occasion for a fruitful debate about the policies and resources needed both to encourage economic growth and to absorb large numbers of outsiders; a debate about how to create decent jobs with decent wages and how to assuage pressures on social infrastructure. Instead, mainstream politicians and public figures have used it to sponsor sordid far-right conspiracy theories and urban myths, and to fuel racist hatred. Conservatives often claim that the public are denied a debate about immigration. But given the opportunity for such a debate, many prefer to display their bigotry than engage in reasoned discussion.

The debate over Springfield also illustrates the continuing “memeification” of politics – the turning of politics more into a collection of signals and symbols than discussions of content or policy. Trump has always insisted on dragging politics into the gutter. He is only able to do so, though, because the desire to feed the outrage machine rather than engage in nuanced discussion has become such an integral feature of politics.

This is a characteristic not merely of American politics. As far as I know no British politician has accused asylum seekers of eating pets, but mainstream politicians routinely regurgitate far-right conspiracy theories such as “the great replacement” and fears of whites losing their homeland. Policymaking, such as the now-abandoned Rwanda deportation scheme, is often designed to be more performative than practical.

Nor is it just with immigration that signalling has become all-important. Rachel Reeves’s “iron chancellor” shtick, for example, and Labour’s refusal to back down over, or even ameliorate, the removal of the winter fuel allowance from all apart from those on pension credits, stems from a desire to signal toughness on economic policy even at the cost of leaving millions of pensioners shivering. Symbolism and signalling has always been part of politics. Today,

though, it often seems as if it is politics. The meme has become the message. And, when that happens, the tribal affiliations you want to display or the symbolism you want to pitch become ever more important, and the signalling ever less restrained.

In Springfield, despite the town’s Republican mayor and Ohio’s Republican governor both calling out the falsehoods about Haitians, many not just continued with the lies but doubled down upon them. At an election rally in Tucson, Arizona, on Friday, Trump denounced “illegal Haitian migrants taking over a beautiful place” and decreed “young American girls being raped and sodomised and murdered by savage, criminal aliens”, ratcheting up the rhetoric and unashamedly feeding deep-seated racist myths and fears. Feeding the outrage machine has inevitable consequences. Springfield’s city hall and two schools with large numbers of Haitian children had to be evacuated last week after bomb threats which “used hateful language towards immigrants and Haitians in our community”.

Shortly before the presidential debate, Nathan Clark spoke at a Springfield city commission meeting. Clark’s 11-year-old son, Aiden, was killed last August when his school bus was hit by a minivan driven by a Haitian migrant, Hermanio Joseph, who has since been convicted of involuntary manslaughter and imprisoned for a minimum of nine years. It was a terrible tragedy, and one of the few crimes thrown at Haitian migrants in Springfield that is true. Clark began his speech with what might seem a shocking comment: “I wish that my son was killed by a 60-year-old white man.” Why? Because then “the incessant group of hate-spewing people would leave us alone”. For Clark, the tragedy of his son’s death had been magnified by “morally bankrupt politicians” using his son to “vomit all the hate” about Haitians. “Please stop the hate,” he beseeched.

Clark’s speech showed not just that many people in Springfield are not as the bigots would wish to portray them, but also that even amid a personal tragedy, it is possible to command extraordinary empathy and compassion that reaches out across the fissures of race and identity. If only our politics, too, could be imbued with such humanity and moral integrity.

The Guardian

# EU hit by double trouble, with Macron, Scholz on the ropes

Andrew Hammond

**F**OR much of the postwar era, Germany and France have been the twin motors of European integration. Yet, as the continent faces one of its potentially most challenging periods, there are possible crises brewing in both nations.

To be sure, it is not uncommon for there to be big political problems in one or the other of these two traditional pillars of the EU. However, what makes September 2024 much more unusual is there have been significant crises in the eurozone’s two largest economies at the same time. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is still reeling from regional election results in East Germany earlier this month that saw the Alternative for Deutschland gaining the most votes in Thuringia, the first time since the Nazi era that any far-right party has won in this way in any state. The AfD secured over 32 percent of the vote, almost 10 percentage points ahead of the second-placed Christian Democratic Union.

The results are disturbing, but the AfD is unlikely to win power nationally at the next national election, even though it is a growing political force. However, the unpopular three-party coalition headed by Scholz’s Social Democratic Party, which includes the Greens and the liberal Free Democratic Party, may not survive in power until the scheduled federal ballot in September 2025.

While it remains possible that Scholz could win power again, albeit potentially with a different coalition, a long-running political

crisis continues to fester in France following the success of the far-right National Rally in June’s European Parliament ballot when it won the most votes in that country. This conundrum is potentially worse than in Germany, as there is a serious possibility that National Rally leader Marine Le Pen could become France’s next president in 2027.

Immediately after the landmark European Parliament result, French President Emmanuel Macron called snap elections in late June and early July for the General Assembly that saw a stalemate, with no one party winning close to an overall majority. France still had a caretaker prime minister until the Sept. 5 appointment of technocrat Michel Barnier, who led the EU’s Brexit negotiations with the UK. It remains to be seen if he can form a strong, sustainable government.

The political weakness of Scholz and Macron is made worse by their poor political relationship. It is noteworthy that since the end of Angela Merkel’s long chancellorship, Macron has sought to balance French ties with Germany with those of other key nations. Most recently, for instance, he signed the Barcelona Treaty with Spain, stepping up cooperation on trade and energy. This includes building a massive underwater pipeline to carry hydrogen and other renewable gases between Barcelona and Marseille.

Moreover, in 2021, Macron signed the Quirinale Treaty with

Italy. Under that pact, France and Italy committed to greater coordination in areas such as migration and AI. This highlights that, while the Franco-German alliance has been the traditional motor of European integration, cooperation between the two powers ebbs and flows, depending in part on the personalities of the office holders in Berlin and Paris. Under Scholz and Macron, bilateral relations have generally been far from fruitful, despite the galvanizing impact of the Ukraine war.

This matters not just for bilateral relations, but also the future of the EU. It is now just over six decades since the landmark 1963 Elysee Treaty between France and Germany established a new foundation for relations following centuries of rivalry. The European Economic Community at the time had six founding members: France, West Germany, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The EEC’s initial aim was to bring about economic integration among its member states.

Six decades later, in a transformed European landscape, the Franco-German alliance remains important. In this context, and with big potential challenges approaching, including a possible second US presidency for Donald Trump, it remains unclear if Macron and Scholz can enhance their domestic political positions, and patch up their poor personal relationship. It should be remembered that Merkel and Macron, despite not seeing eye-to-eye on

every issue, were quite often successful in shaping the future of Europe and its wider role in the world. Key achievements that they were central to include when they persuaded fellow EU members to agree to give the bloc, for the first time in its history, debt-raising powers.

This was to finance a 750 billion (\$831 billion) post-coronavirus recovery plan, potentially paving the way for greater supranational powers of taxation and a more federalized continent. It represented a potentially major milestone in the post-war history of European integration with the solidarity it shows between larger and smaller economies, and the generally more affluent north and less prosperous south. So, a stronger Macron-Scholz relationship could still help steer the EU toward a pathway of deepening cooperation in coming years. Yet, there is a significant risk, instead, of different futures, as neither leader may have the answers or the political capital to address the growing challenges ahead.

It should be remembered that Trump, in his first term, called for countries beyond the UK to leave the Brussels-based club. At best, the EU may only be able to muddle through from where it is today. This is why the brewing crises in Berlin and Paris matter. With potentially limited time left in office, Macron and Scholz know the remainder of their terms could still have outsized impact in defining the bloc in the late 2020s, but they may be unable to seize the opportunity.

# Exploitation of critical energy elements needs to be equitable

Ranvir S. Nayar

**A**S the world races toward energy transition, there has been a sharp rise in demand for critical elements, such as copper, cobalt, and lithium, which are essential to the production of renewable energy technologies. In the past 10 years, this has led to a mad rush of companies trying to gain control over the entire ecosystem of critical elements, from mining to refining, as well as use in renewable energy generation.

Many governments, especially those sitting on huge reserves of these relatively rare elements, have also seen the opportunity to make a quick buck, and are auctioning mining rights of these at ever-increasing rates, while some have seen the opportunity to help their own cronies by imposing numerous conditions, especially over foreign companies involved in mining and refining.

These conditions involve a degree of localization, which could certainly help the local communities that live on or near the lands where the mines or the refining and manufacturing facilities for these materials are located. However, for an overwhelming part, the entire process, from mining and refining to manufacturing, is bypassing the communities, or even entire countries, where these key resources are tapped by the companies in renewable energy sector, most of which are from distant lands.

At a global level, there is intense competition between companies from the US, EU, and China, with Western countries trying to weaken the stranglehold that the latter has over the current global supplies of critical energy elements and, indeed, the entire renewable energy sector, from automobiles to batteries and wind turbines. The race is set to get more complicated and competitive as other countries look to join in. The demand for these ele-

ments will likely triple within the next six years.

But in this race, the interests of the local communities and the poor are being ignored, and the world seems to be headed for a rerun of the colonial era when natural resources from the colonized countries were greedily over-exploited by the colonizers, with little regard to the environmental and social impact of their activities, and also totally excluded the people from the colonized nations, who simply watched their natural resources being looted by outsiders who garnered immense wealth, while leaving the locals not just poorer but also with a destroyed land.

In this context, a recent decision by the UN to set up a panel to monitor the entire process is highly welcome and timely. According to the UN, the Secretary-General’s Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals seeks to build trust between governments, local communities, and industry, by addressing issues relating to equity, transparency, investment, sustainability, and human rights.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has rightly said that for developing countries, critical minerals are a critical opportunity to create jobs, diversify economies, and dramatically boost revenues. He also cautioned that these natural resources must be managed properly, and the race to get these materials cannot trample over the poor. As most of these mines are located in remote and underdeveloped parts of the poorest countries, the world must ensure that the use of these resources ought to first and foremost benefit the communities that are the guardians of these elements. In many ways, this race toward net zero represents both a huge opportunity and a major threat for the world as a whole, but especially for the developing

countries endowed with these highly sought after resources.

The setting up of the panel is certainly a timely and right step, but it is also important that the message of equitable distribution reaches the various private companies and governments involved in the exploitation of these resources. Complex as it may sound, the world needs to develop a common standard operating procedure for the exploitation of these resources for many reasons. First and foremost, as we are potentially looking at mining billions of tons of earth and using trillions of liters of water, the impact on the environment and the societies near the mining sites will be unprecedented.

In view of the large-scale impact of mining and refining, it is crucial that companies, as well as the relevant governments, immediately establish clear practices to minimize the ecological footprint. The second issue is to ensure that the hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of people directly affected by the mining and refining processes are not only properly compensated, but also provided with suitable alternatives for livelihoods and living arrangements.

Another important issue is the likely lifecycle impact of critical elements, or products with these elements, on human and animal health. If companies and governments can rapidly agree on a common approach toward critical elements, it could prove to be a boon to the communities and countries endowed with these elements, and also ensure that the collateral damage is minimized and managed properly. However, if these measures are not agreed on and implemented rigorously, then one could be looking at a repeat of the past two centuries in which a few have benefitted from nature’s bounty, while ravaging the earth and leaving hundreds of millions of people mired in extreme poverty.

# Britain has become the literal sick man of Europe again – here’s how I’d fix it

James Cleverly

**I**N the Office for Budget Responsibility report, released on Thursday, there’s a shocking graph. It shows government spending running away from revenue over the next 50 years, like some sort of freight train that has lost its brakes. Labour commentators were quick to jump on the OBR report as evidence of the need for more tax rises. They say this as if there is no other possible path.

But there is. As a country, we need to get ourselves out of this Hobson’s choice politics where the only answer to every problem is more taxation to fund more government spending. Throughout my leadership campaign, I have been banging the drum for smaller government. Smaller government, with supply side reforms and less red tape, so we can boost growth and reduce taxes. If we don’t reduce the amount we spend, we can’t reduce the amount we tax.

This is not an unfamiliar prescription, but I’m afraid we need to remake the economic argument to a new generation in the face of Sir Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves, who are forgetting all the lessons of the 1970s. The reality is we are going to have to reduce the size of the state and be honest about the need to limit government spending. The welfare budget, for example, has spiralled out of control so that we are an international outlier.

Since Covid-19, the number of working-age people economically inactive due to long-term sickness has increased by 700,000 to more than 2.8 million people, equivalent to one in every 15 working age person. This hasn’t happened in the rest of Europe, so we have quite literally become the sick man of Europe again. We need to do far more to get these people back into work — and paying tax to boost the economy.

The welfare state was always meant to be a safety net, not a way of life. But over the past 30 years, total health expenditure in the UK has risen from below 6 per cent to over 11 per cent of GDP and is set to rise further. With the baby boom generation now getting older, putting greater pressure on the state, we face a demographic time bomb that needs to be carefully diffused.

It is not hard to see why the Treasury would want to boost the working age population with immigration, often seen as a quick fix. But high immigration also comes with costs, especially if it is low skilled. What the OBR has also shown us this week is low-skilled migrants cost the UK between £150,000 and £500,000 each over their lifetime.

It’s why the reforms I put in place as home secretary were so important, to cut low skilled migra-

tion, cut dependants, and increase the salary threshold needed to come to the UK. We need a system based on control and contribution, and to break the low-growth, high immigration cycle. It’s one of the reasons I am so keen for governments to talk more about GDP per capita when it comes to the health of the economy.

It’s no good to increase the overall size of the economy if everyone feels poorer. On the flip side, we need to enable families to have more children, which means recognising children in the tax system and cutting the cost of childcare so that it is not double the cost of France and triple that of Germany. As I have been setting out in recent weeks, we must resell Conservatism to a new generation if we are to win back power, and if we are to get the chance to fix the generational problems that the country faces. That’s what I plan to do.

The Telegraph



# CIFTIS 2024: Global enterprises showcase interest in China’s market

ISLAMABAD (APP): The China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) 2024 has once again demonstrated China’s high level of openness by fostering international cooperation and mutual benefits.

According to the information, over 450 Fortune 500 enterprises and leading companies, along with representatives from 85 countries and international organizations, are participating in the event.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) debuted its National Pavilion at CIFTIS this year, showcasing a keen interest in exploring the vast Chinese market.

The pavilion, featured a completely open design, prominently displays the national brand ‘Halawah’, one of the best Marathi sweets. “We are really excited to introduce our products here in China. Our sweets, representing a unique flavor from the Middle East, will bring a whole new taste for

Chinese consumers,” Marilou Malacaste, staff of Halawah, told China Economic Net.

Business Development Manager Amer Tolba added, “In just two days, several companies have expressed interest in cooperation. We are optimistic about finding distributors in China to expand our presence in this expansive market.”

Pakistan, having inaugurated its National Pavilion, seeks collaborations in various sectors, including textiles, chemicals, and agriculture.

Muhammad Barbar Khan, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Multinational Export Bureau, a knitted garment manufacturer and exporter, attended the fair to seek potential buyers and investors. “Our company has operated successfully for 30 years, serving clients globally. This platform offers a great opportunity to expand our business in China,” he said. Barbar

emphasized the cost-effectiveness of doing business in Pakistan, which could attract Chinese investment and technology transfer, benefiting both economies.

Swiss company IQAir, which has sold air purification systems in China since 1998, views China as a crucial market.

“China is one of our top three markets, accounting for about a quarter of our sales, and remains stable,” noted Frank Hammes, global CEO of IQAir. Though it was Frank’s first time at CIFTIS, he had participated in China International Import Expos (CIIE) for many consecutive times. He expressed optimism about the development potential of China’s air purification market and plans to expand business further in the market.

Azerbaijan, another returning participant since 2019, highlighted the importance of the fair as a ‘very important platform’ and one of the ‘world’s largest exhibitions in serv-

ices’. Azerbaijani representative Ikhtiyar Atalizada remarked, “Azerbaijan has indeed found success in securing partnerships. For this year’s fair, Azerbaijan chose to showcase its investment opportunities, tourism sector, and logistics capabilities”.

In July 2024, Azerbaijan introduced a visa-free policy for Chinese citizens, which led to a doubling of tourists coming from China. “Azerbaijan is rich in historical sites and cultural attractions. I hope more Chinese tourists will come and visit the long history and unique cultural landscape of my country,” Ikhtiyar said.

These diverse engagements reflect the global interest in China’s market and its commitment to openness. The fair not only serves as a testament to China’s ongoing efforts to deepen international economic ties but also as a catalyst for exchange of ideas, technologies, and business practices worldwide.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor selling fish to customers outside his shop in a local market.

## Malik urges members to enhance trade

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik called on Sunday for enhanced cooperation among Shanghai Co-operation Organization members to boost trade facilitation, reduce tariffs, and eliminate non-tariff barriers, aiming to deepen regional economic integration.

Hailing here today holding of 23rd SCO ministerial meeting successfully in Islamabad, he said recognizing the challenges posed by unilateral trade barriers, SCO ministers emphasized that collaboration through multilateral platforms is essential to addressing these issues.

He said meeting emphasized the urgent need to counter rising protectionist trade measures globally and they stressed that such practices hinder international trade and undermine global economic growth, calling instead for a strengthened, inclusive, and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system based on WTO framework. The meeting also highlighted the importance of upholding the core principles of the WTO, particularly in ensuring free, fair, and predictable trade rules that apply equally to all member states.

He said SCO ministers also underlined the need for modernizing trade rules to reflect current global economic realities. By reinforcing the role of WTO, the SCO aims to protect the interests of developing economies and create a level playing field for all, fostering a more equitable global trade environment, he concluded.

## Carpet exhibition starts from Oct 9

LAHORE (APP): The 40th International Exhibition of Handmade Carpets is set to kick off on October 9 at a local hotel bringing together industry experts, buyers, and enthusiasts from around the globe.

The Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA), in collaboration with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), presents a highly anticipated three-day event, showcasing Pakistan’s vibrant carpet-weaving legacy and poised to propel exports to new heights.

PCMEA Senior Vice-Chairman Usman Ashraf told media here Sunday that the registration process is currently underway for the upcoming global exhibition, where manufacturers and exporters of handmade carpets will showcase their products.

“A diverse group of more than 100 foreign buyers from around the world is expected to participate in the upcoming global exhibition, with the final list being finalized in collaboration with TDAP,” he added.

In a groundbreaking move, he said, an international conference will be held for the first time as part of the exhibition, featuring esteemed foreign delegates who will share their insights and expertise on the hand-woven carpet industry, with a special focus on exports. He said they collaborated with National College of Arts (NCA) to promote effective and modern requirements of global exhibition with very positive results.

According to Usman Ashraf, the upcoming global exhibition has sparked high hopes among industry

stakeholders, with projected export deals expected to surpass last year’s figures, revitalizing the industry and boosting Pakistan’s foreign exchange reserves. “We are looking at the global exhibition as a future perspective whereby bilateral meetings will also be organized to build long-term relationships with foreign buyers visiting Pakistan,” he added.

He expressed gratitude towards TDAP for providing comprehensive support, which has significantly contributed to the successful organization of the exhibition.

He also appealed to other relevant institutions to lend their full support and urged the government to direct Pakistani embassies to streamline visa acquisition processes, ensuring a hassle-free journey for international buyers.

## Tight monetary policy to thwart growth of industry: APBF

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has called for a significant cut in the monetary policy rate to attain the high position in Ease of Doing Business ranking, amidst record high markup rate, hyperinflation and rising energy prices.

In a statement issued today, APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the already high cost of production has drastically reduced private sector borrowings during the outgoing fiscal year, besides the country has been far behind in the ease of doing business ranking. So, a major cut in markup rate was due, as constant high discount rate has been deteriorating the economic conditions, he added.

He said the SBP had kept the rate very high for the last many years, mainly to

curb soaring inflation. However, it started holding rates steady for some time saying inflation had down in this period. It decreased rates by 200 bps at recent meeting in an effort to secure IMF funds, citing slightly deteriorated inflation outlook.

APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi said that the central bank, in the past, constantly raised its key interest rate, exceeding investor expectations, as the cash-strapped country attempts to encourage the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to release critical funding.

The key rate of the State Bank of Pakistan now stands at 15.5 percent, which is also highest in the region. Now, there are reports that the SBP would not cut the interest rate at the upcoming meeting of the MPC to please IMF.

Ibrahim Qureshi suggest-

ed the central bank to adopt an accommodative monetary policy stance, asking the finance minister to fulfill his commitment of reining in inflation besides cutting interest rate and strengthening the undervalued local currency against dollar.

In the previous scheduled meeting of, the SBP maintained the policy rate unchanged citing that the decision took into consideration the impact of the surge in gas prices, which exceeded the MPC’s initial projections for inflation.

The MPC acknowledged that this could have repercussions for the inflation outlook, but also noted certain mitigating factors, such as the recent decline in international oil prices and improved availability of agricultural produce.

APBF president Syed Maaz Mahmood said the SBP had adopted a wrong way of dealing with infla-

tion as high discount rate would jack up the cost of doing business that would ultimately hit the economic growth.

With weaknesses in private capital inflows continue to persist, the Central Bank should announce major cut in policy rates to spur growth, as cut would infuse confidence in the business community and propel economy which was hostage to the past policy of austerity.

The businessmen expecting huge cut in interest rate, as the move could help boost private sector growth. He also complained that lending to private sector by the commercial banks during the current fiscal year has not picked up pace.

Syed Maaz also called for steps to fight energy shortage, security challenges and political instability to make interest rate cut meaningful and result-oriented. He called for supporting large scale manufacturing and credit to the private sector which is sliding, stopping flight of capital, improving tax machinery and curbing speculation of different sectors.

## FRIA asks govt to improve governance — to ensure 5% growth

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) senior vice chairman Shahbaz Aslam suggested the government to observe restraint while getting loans from commercial banks and improve governance to ensure over 5 percent growth target which has not been achieved so far.

He appealed the SBP to review its tight monetary policy stance as it will hamper the production and thwart the economic growth of the country.

The FRIA SVC was of the view that the SBP had taken the decision to enhance the policy rate as per instruction of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as the decision is not based keeping in view the situation of trade and economy, he added. He said the SBP had taken a

unilateral decision in view of the absence of any government.

He said the SBP had previously cut the interest rate on government intervention and pressure from businesses, but now it was free to raise the policy rate.

The FRIA cannot understand how the policy rate will curb food inflation as the high-interest rate and rupee depreciation will increase the cost of doing business, he said.

He said the SBP had been watching the rupee fall against the greenback from the sidelines since the political uncertainty has gripped the country. Now it has come up with minor cut in interest rates to do the rest of the damage to the economy.

He came down hard on the latest monetary policy declaration by the central bank, which he said would make borrowing too expen-

sive for them to continue with their operations.

He said inflation in Pakistan was cost-push, which spiked due to surging prices of commodities in world markets as well as depreciation of the rupee against the dollar.

The economy doesn’t have the capacity to absorb the high interest rate as it was already struggling with the weak exchange rate,” he pointed out.

He added that the free hand given to the SBP was in fact making matters complicated for the country, as well as industry.

Ruling out the impression that high interest rate would dent credit off-take to industry, he said in reality only large businesses were the beneficiaries of bank credits. SMEs are still deprived of this facility and will remain so in the present situation, he said.

## Reduction in solar panels prices

LAHORE (APP): The rates of solar panels have shown a decline lately, as the price of five to fifteen kilowatt systems has recorded a decrease of Rs 200,000, to 300,000.

Sources told APP that for five kilowatt system, the price has been fixed at Rs. 650,000, while for the seven kilowatt system, the price has been fixed at Rs. 725,000. Similarly, the price has been set at Rs 950,000 for 10 kW system, Rs 1,100,000 for 12 kW system, and Rs 1,250,000 for 15 kW system.

Sources said these prices have been fixed for the on-grid system, but for the hybrid system, additional cost of batteries would have to be paid.

## CIFTIS opens new avenues to boost China-Pakistan banking ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Shaikh Muhammad Shariq, Vice President of National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) and Chief Representative in China Sunday said that China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) had emerged as a pivotal platform, fostering enhanced financial cooperation between Chinese banks and their international counterparts.

Addressing a seminar titled ‘Investment in Pakistan’, he said, “This year’s fair not only showcases innovative financial services but also facilitates meaningful dialogues and

partnerships to strengthen global financial ties, particularly for NBP.”

“As the National Bank of Pakistan seeks to navigate an increasingly interconnected world, CIFTIS offers a unique opportunity to explore collaborative ventures that can drive mutual growth and stability in the financial sector,” he added.

He said, “NBP can leverage the opportunity to showcase its services, connect with potential business partners, and explore new avenues for collaboration with Chinese financial institutions.”

“We are constantly working on technology upgradation to position ourselves as a digitally competitive, agile, and secure bank driven by data and innovation. The upgrade of the core banking application will continue through 2024, alongside the strengthening of our cyber security. Substantial investment in hardware and software will continue this year,” he stated.

He mentioned, “With a total asset base of PKR 6.7 trillion (USD 23.6 billion) and accounting for 14% of total industry assets, NBP

is the highest capitalized bank in Pakistan with PKR 382.8 Bn (USD 1.36 Bn) in net assets.”

“This year, NBP has participated in two major locations of CIFTIS: the Shougang Park where NBP presents its portfolio with all international banks, and the main National Convention Center,” China Economic Net reported.

It is to mention here that Shougang is the main venue for financial institutions to present their services in CIFTIS 2024, which is scheduled from September 12-16.

## Stringent monetary policy adversely affects economy and business

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry’s Businessmen Panel (BMP) has emphasized that the central bank’s stringent monetary policy has adversely affected the businesses and economy for the last several years, stressing the needs to employ other policy tools to tame the economic volatility.

Addressing a delegation of various trade and industrial associations, FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar pointed out that despite the successful completion of IMF past several programs and high policy rate, Pakistan remains overwhelmed with issues of dwindling exports and economic

instability. This phenomenon well-establishes the fact that the government needs to employ other policy tools to tackle the low growth of economy.

He advocated for the lower markup rate to alleviate the financial burden on the business community and stimulate economic activity.

The BMP Chairman urged the central bank to implement a substantial reduction in the monetary policy rate, terming the current meager reduction in key policy rate as very depressing disappointing for the trade and industry.

The FPCCI former president said that the slash in discount rate announced recently was not enough to compete the regional countries, since the businessmen, was expecting a huge reduction

in the monetary policy rate in line with the neighboring countries in view of decline in inflation, which has come down to single digit.

He advised the State Bank of Pakistan to announce a substantial reduction in interest rate by at least 300 basis points to bring the existing interest rate down in the next monetary policy statement as the inflation continues to descend to reach 9.6 percent in August whereas the Moody’s recently upgraded local and foreign currency issuer and senior unsecured debt ratings to Caa2 from Caa3.

Anjum Nisar highlighted that the tight monetary policy, combined with the government’s significant domestic borrowing, has left minimal room for business growth.

He stressed the urgent need for the government to freeze both domestic and foreign borrowing and to devise a comprehensive strategy to showcase Pakistan’s economic potential to international investors.

“The current low levels of domestic investment have sent negative signals to potential foreign investors,” Anjum Nisar said.

“If the government is serious about achieving an economic turnaround, it must take immediate steps to address these issues,”

He proposed a 300-500 basis points reduction in the policy rate, potentially bringing it down to 15 percent, a level last seen several years ago. This anticipated cut is supported by several favorable economic indicators, including a

significant decline in inflation rates.

On the external front, the current account deficit has improved remarkably, narrowing by 95 percent in the first two months of this fiscal year. This reduction has contributed to the stability of the rupee against the US dollar.

The IMF emphasized the need to maintain a tight monetary policy for continued stability. However, the IMF suggested that this stance could be reassessed if inflation continues to decrease and the foreign exchange market remains stable.

Anjum Nisar also pointed out a decline in yields for government securities in both primary and secondary markets since the last monetary policy announcement. In the pri-

mary market, yields across various tenors have decreased. Similar trends have been observed in the secondary market.

He lamented that the cost of production has surged to its highest level in years due to the depreciation of the rupee against the dollar and record-high interest rates, leading to a slowdown in economic growth. Nisar called for a considerable reduction in the key policy rate to provide the private sector with access to low-cost borrowing.

He recommended that the SBP should target core inflation; non-food non-energy; for operational guidance. The SBP needs to strip out volatile changes in particular prices to distinguish inflation from temporary fluctuations in inflation.

Efforts need to be made to control price manipulation and hoardings in liaison with the respective federal and provincial government departments.

An active and efficient Competitive Commission of Pakistan and effective price control mechanisms also need to play their due role. He said that SBP should focus on core inflation rather than general inflation on an immediate basis as these exclude the most volatile components of the basket.

The government must ensure the effectiveness of price control measures through vigilant actions against hoarding and malpractices.

He explained that despite the progressive and major hikes in the policy rates, general inflation remained stubbornly-high

and didn’t respond to the policy rate.

He was of the view that although the inflation has drastically come down, after touching 38 percent but the ease in inflation was not because of SBP’s tight monetary policy stance.

“The government risks missing its annual growth targets in major sectors unless it takes decisive action to lower energy prices for local industries, ease the cost of production, and resolve the liquidity crunch through timely refunds,” Anjum Nisar warned.

He also advocated for improved ease of doing business, a consistent energy tariff policy, and a relaxed import policy for industrial raw materials to promote industrialization and enhance exports.





## In brief

## Messi scores 2 in 4 minutes

MIAMI (Agencies): Lionel Messi marked his return from injury with two goals and an assist to help Inter Miami to a 3-1 win against Philadelphia Union. The World Cup-winning Argentina captain had not played since injuring his ankle in his country's Copa America final victory over Colombia in July. That saw him miss this month's World Cup qualifiers, while he also sat out eight games for his Major League Soccer side – though they lead the MLS Eastern Conference standings. But the 37-year-old former Barcelona star played the full 90 minutes in his first Inter Miami start for three months and ran the show. Philadelphia took the lead after 58 seconds through Mikael Uhre but Miami equalised in the 26th minute, Messi beating a defender and lashing home after collecting a pass from Luis Suarez following good work from another ex-Barca team-mate in Jordi Alba. Messi fired his team ahead four minutes later after being teed up by Alba and went on to set up Suarez for Miami's third deep in second-half injury time. After the match Messi, who now has 14 goals in 13 games this season, acknowledged he was "a little tired". "I really wanted to come back, I had been off of the field for a long time," he added. "Little by little I was training with the group, feeling good and that's why we decided that I would start, and I'm very happy." Elsewhere, LA Galaxy fought back from two goals down to beat Los Angeles rivals LAFC 4-2 as the top two teams in the Western Conference met.

## Gadecki into 1st WTA final

GUADALAJARA (AFP): Australian qualifier Olivia Gadecki powered into her first career WTA final on Saturday, beating Camila Osorio 6-2, 6-3 to book a title showdown with Magdalena Frech in Guadalajara, Poland's Frech, seeded fifth, battled back in both sets to beat fourth-seeded Caroline Garcia of France 7-6 (7/4), 7-5. Sunday's winner in the 500-level hard court tournament will claim a first WTA title. Gadecki, 22, had never reached a quarter-final until this week, and she hadn't won a tour-level match since January. At 152 in the world, Gadecki is the third-lowest ranked player to make a WTA final this year, but her run to the final has included victories over former US Open champion Sloane Stephens and second-seeded Danielle Collins. She is guaranteed to break into the top 100 for the first time when the new rankings are released on Monday. "This week's been a special one, and to be top 100 is pretty amazing and something I've strived for my whole career," Gadecki said. "My game plan was really just to play how I've always played. I'm an aggressive player, and I know I do well when I back myself and just commit, and I really feel like I did that well today." Against Garcia, Frech trailed 3-0 in the opening set and saved two set points before forcing a tiebreak, in which she also trailed 3-0. She was also down 3-0 in the second, but it was more disappointment for Garcia, whose second-round victory over Ena Shibahara snapped a three-match losing streak that included a first-round exit at the US Open. Garcia had then reached the semis via a walkover when Marie Bouzkova withdrew because of illness.

## Piastrri wins Azerbaijan Grand Prix thriller

BAKU (AFP): Oscar Piastrri claimed an impressive second victory of his burgeoning career on Sunday when he drove his McLaren to a well-judged triumph ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc in a tense Azerbaijan Grand Prix.

The 23-year-old Australian's victory enabled McLaren to replace Red Bull as leaders of the constructors' championship, ending the champions' two-year dominance, in a race of attrition that ended under a Virtual Safety Car following a spectacular late collision between Carlos Sainz of Ferrari and Red Bull's Sergio Perez as they battled for third.

George Russell finished third for Mercedes ahead of title-chasing Lando Norris in the second McLaren, who fought from 15th on the grid to beat three-time champion and series leader

Max Verstappen of Red Bull, who was fifth.

"Well, that was the most stressful afternoon of my life," said Piastrri on team radio. "A big move! Thanks for the car! What a day that was! Thanks everyone."

Norris, who picked up an extra point for the fastest lap, reduced championship leader Verstappen's lead to 59 points with seven races and three sprints to go.

The race began in warm sunshine under a cloudless sky with temperatures of 27 (air) and 46 (track) bathing the 6km street track.

Hamilton in the other Mercedes and Esteban Ocon (Alpine) both started from the pit-lane following overnight power-unit overhauls and Pierre Gasly (Alpine) from the back of the grid after being excluded from qualifying for a fuel flow infringement.

Leclerc made an excel-

lent start from his fourth Baku pole without a win to pull clear of Piastrri while both Red Bulls gained a place and Norris rose to 13th on lap one.

Flurry of pit stops Hamilton also made early progress. By lap five, he was 15th as Leclerc led Piastrri by 0.936 seconds ahead of Perez, Sainz, Verstappen and Russell. Alonso was seventh, four seconds adrift and Norris 11th.

Leclerc increased his pace and established a gap of 3.6 seconds to Piastrri. Norris, on hards, was up to ninth and Hamilton 14th, the Britons managing the hot conditions with care.

The pit stops began on lap 12, most switching from mediums for hards. Hamilton dropped to 18th and Norris, without stopping, rose to fifth.

After the flurry of stops,

during which Leclerc briefly gifted the lead to Sainz, Piastrri stormed into the lead on lap 20, squeezing by on the inside at Turn One. "They are pushing like crazy – or they have more grip than us," reported Leclerc.

Behind him, a battle royal developed for fifth as Norris resisted Verstappen and Russell behind Albon until he pitted on lap 32. "I have rear grip," grumbled the frustrated Dutchman before Russell swept by on lap 34. Norris pitted on lap 38 to set up a late charge, passing the champion on lap 48 for sixth.

By then, the leading trio were separated by less than two seconds with Piastrri resisting Leclerc's pressure and Perez chasing and it stayed that way, the Australian's superior traction exiting Turn One, keeping him on top as



Leclerc's tyres deteriorated before Sainz and Perez crashed on lap 50.

Fernando Alonso was sixth for Aston Martin ahead of Williams' Alex

Albon and Argentine new boy Franco Colapinto with seven-time champion Hamilton finishing ninth.

Ollie Bearman, standing in for the suspended Kevin

Magnussen, was 10th for Haas ahead of his teammate Nico Hulkenberg. He became the first driver to score points on debut with two different teams.



FAISALABAD: Jahandad Khan dismissed Fakhar Zaman, Stallions vs Markhors, Champions One-Day Cup.

## Brook to captain England in ODIs

LONDON (Agencies): Harry Brook will captain England in their one-day international series against Australia after Jos Buttler was ruled out through injury.

A right calf issue forced Buttler, 34, to miss the T20 series as well as The Hundred and he has not recovered sufficiently to feature in the five-match 50-over series.

Left-arm seamer Josh Hull has also been withdrawn from the ODI squad because of a quad injury.

All-rounder Liam Livingstone, who starred in England's win over Australia in the second T20 at Cardiff, has been added to the 15-man squad.

The first ODI takes place at Trent Bridge on Thursday, 19 September.

Buttler's injury gives Brook, who only made his

ODI debut 18 months ago, the opportunity to captain England for the first time.

The 25-year-old has impressed in his short international career to date but arguably more so in Test and T20 cricket rather than the one-day format, in which he averages 29.07 in 15 innings.

However, he skipped Northern Superchargers in The Hundred this summer and, having been touted as a future England captain, admitted he has been paying close attention to the leadership style of Test captain Ben Stokes.

"I've played with Stokes quite a bit now and, watching the way he goes about it, I'd be lying if I said I didn't take a few learnings from him," Brook said.

Phil Salt, who captained England in the T20 matches

against Australia, is also in the squad.

Meanwhile, Hull misses out after making his Test debut in the defeat by Sri Lanka at The Oval but his injury is not thought to be serious enough to make him a doubt for October's tour of Pakistan.

England will again be led by interim coach Marcus Trescothick for the ODI series, with Brendon McCullum not taking over the white-ball duties until January.

## England ODI squad to play Australia

Harry Brook (captain), Jofra Archer, Jacob Bethell, Brydon Carse, Jordan Cox, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Liam Livingstone, Matthew Potts, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Jamie Smith, Olly Stone, Reece Topley, John Turner.

## Ronaldo to miss Asian Champions League

TOKYO (AFP): Cristiano Ronaldo was diagnosed on Sunday with a viral infection and will miss Al Nassr's Asian Champions League opener this week at Iraq's Al Shorta.

The Portuguese veteran is targeting Asia's top club crown to add to his long list of achievements when the competition kicks off on Monday. "Al Nassr captain Cristiano Ronaldo was not feeling well today and was diagnosed with a viral infection," said a club statement posted on social media platform X on Sunday.

"The team's doctor confirmed he needs to rest and stay at home. As a result he will not be travelling with the team to Iraq today. We wish our captain a speedy recovery." The former Real Madrid and Manchester United forward saw his first attempt with the Saudi side Al Nassr end in a quarter-final penalty shootout defeat to eventual champions Al Ain earlier this year.

Now rebranded as the Asian Champions League Elite, Al Nassr and the other teams from Saudi Arabia will be a major threat after spending vast sums of money in the last two years on the likes of Ronaldo and Neymar.

England forward Ivan Toney was the latest big name to swap Europe for Saudi when he left Brentford for Al Ahli last month for

more than \$45 million.

As part of the new-look competition, Saudi Arabia – which is expected to host the 2034 World Cup – will stage a mini knockout tournament from the quarter-finals onward to decide the champions, who will take home at least \$12 million.

Al Nassr, Al Ahli and Neymar's Al Hilal will all be involved when the Champions League Elite launches on Monday with a new format that splits 24 teams evenly into two groups of East and West.

Each team will play eight different opponents in the group stage. The top eight teams from each zone will play in the last 16 over two legs in March, before the action moves to the final stages in Saudi Arabia from April 25 to May 4.

Injured Neymar missing

Saudi champions Al Hilal are looking to win a record-extending fifth Asian title but they are still waiting for the return of Brazilian ace Neymar, who has been sidelined since suffering a serious knee injury last year.

Al Hilal have signed Portugal full-back Joao Cancelo from Manchester City, bolstering a squad that already featured Aleksandar Mitrovic, Sergej Milinkovic-Savic and Ruben Neves. Despite the absence of the 39-year-old Ronaldo for Monday's

opening encounter in Baghdad, Al Hilal are still able to call on Sadio Mane, Aymeric Laporte and Marcelo Brozovic.

The defending champions, Al Ain, are from the United Arab Emirates and were coached by Argentina great Hernan Crespo to victory against Japan's Yokohama F-Marineros over two legs in May's final.

Al Ain are one of two UAE clubs taking part in this year's edition, with teams from Qatar, Iran, Uzbekistan and Iraq completing the West zone lineup. In the East, clubs from Japan have posted the best results in recent years and Yokohama return to the Champions League to spearhead their challenge.

Coach Harry Kewell has been sacked since leading them to last season's final, with the former Liverpool and Leeds forward paying the price for his team's lacklustre domestic form.

Kawasaki Frontale and Vissel Kobe are also representing Japan, while three-time champions Pohang Steelers, twice winners Ulsan and debutants Gwangju will carry the flag for South Korea. Chinese clubs' spending power has long since dried up, but former Chelsea attacker Oscar is still on the books of Shanghai Port, who are led by Australian coach Kevin Muscat.

## Saleema nominated to ICC's umpire panel

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistani umpire Saleema Intiaz made history on Sunday after she was nominated to the ICC's International Panel of Development Umpires, making her the first woman from her country to achieve the honor.

The nomination qualifies Intiaz, 52, to officiate in women's bilateral international matches and ICC Women's Events, marking what the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said was a "major milestone" in the country's cricketing history.

Intiaz, who is the mother of Pakistan women's international player Kainat Intiaz, began her umpiring career with the PCB Women's Umpires Panel in 2008. Her extensive experience includes officiating in high-profile events under the Asian Cricket Council such as the 2022 and 2024 ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup and the 2023 ACC Emerging Women's Cup in Hong Kong.

"I am beyond thrilled to join the ICC International Panel of



Development Umpires," Intiaz said according to a press release issued by the PCB. "I owe immense gratitude to the Pakistan Cricket Board for the invaluable opportunities that paved the way for this achievement."

She described her journey as one filled with "hard work and personal sacrifices," adding that the achievement was not only a win for her but for every aspiring Pakistani woman

cricketer and umpire.

"I hope my success motivates countless women who dream of making their mark in the sport," Intiaz said. "This moment reflects the growing influence of women in cricket and the PCB's commitment to fostering that development."

Her first on-field appointment in a bilateral series will see her officiate the Pakistan-South Africa women's T20I series in Multan, which begins on Monday.

She will be partnered by Nasir Hussain from the PCB Elite Panel of Umpires, while Humairah Farah will serve as the third umpire and Muhammad Javed Malik from the PCB International Panel of Match Referees will oversee the series as match referee.

"With her nomination to the ICC International Panel, Saleema Intiaz not only breaks barriers but also sets an inspiring precedent for the next generation of female cricket professionals," the PCB said.

## Axelsen cruises to first Hong Kong Open title

HONG KONG (AFP): Double Olympic badminton champion Viktor Axelsen cruised to his maiden Hong Kong Open title on Sunday, defeating China's Lei Lanxi 21-9, 21-12.

The Dane had not dropped a game all week in his first tournament since winning gold in Paris and took just 44 minutes to dispatch Lei 21-9, 21-12 in front of an adoring capacity crowd at the Hong Kong Coliseum.

It was the world number second Badminton World Federation tour title this year following his win at May's Malaysia Masters and he said he was "a bit surprised but happy", because maintaining his form since the Olympics had been



"stressful".

"I managed to play very aggressively, but also with a great balance to my game," he told AFP, biting into a traditional mooncake -- a gift from fans for the Mid-Autumn Festival, a national holiday in China this week.

World number 22 Lei, in only his second tour level final, made a bright start to both games but the 26-year-old soon found it tough to keep pace with Axelsen, who became the first Dane to lift the men's singles title in Hong Kong since Peter Gade in 1997.

In the women's singles, China's Han Yue confirmed her status as a rising star after the 24-year-old outplayed Indonesia's unseeded Putri Kusuma Wardani 21-18, 21-7. The mixed doubles was an all-China clash, with Jiang Zhenbang and Wei Yaxin edging Feng Yanzhe and Huang Dongping 21-17, 21-19.

Malaysia's Pearly Tan and Thinaah Muralitharan, runners-up a year ago, secured the women's doubles title 21-14, 21-14 against China's Liu Shengshu and Tan Ning.

Korea's Kang Minhyuk and Seo Seung-jae won the men's doubles 21-13, 21-17 against Sabar Karyaman Gutama and Moh Reza Pahlevi Isfahani from Indonesia.

## Canelo Alvarez pummels Berlanga to retain supermiddleweight belts

LOS ANGELES (AFP): Mexican superstar Saul "Canelo" Alvarez retained his unified super middleweight world title with a punishing unanimous decision over Edgar Berlanga on Saturday in Las Vegas.

Alvarez knocked down the previously unbeaten Berlanga in the third and was relentless throughout the 12 rounds.

The champion rocked Berlanga with a big right in the waning seconds of the ninth round and Berlanga's cornerman could be heard asking his fighter: "Are you awake?", as he sat on his stool before the 10th.

Berlanga, who was warned for an intentional head butt, remained defiant, taunting Alvarez as they came out for the 12th.

But the Puerto Rican-American, who launched his pro career with 16 straight first-round knockouts, couldn't find the stoppage he'd brashly predicted.

The vastly experienced Alvarez put him under pressure early, Berlanga looking tentative in the opening two rounds as he was backed repeatedly into the corner. He tried gamely to respond in the third after Alvarez landed a right to the head, but a devastating left hook from Alvarez sent him down. Berlanga



banged his gloves together as he sat on the canvas and hopped up quickly.

Berlanga had no answer as Alvarez went after him with debilitating body blows round after round. "I did good," said Alvarez, who was awarded the fight by a score of 118-109 by two judges and by 117-110 from the third.

'Best fighter in the world'

"Now what are they going to say? I fight younger fighters? Before they say I fought older fighters. Now what are they going to say? They always talk. 'I'm the best fighter in the world,'" added Alvarez, who improved to 62-2-2 (39 KOs) and retained his World Boxing Association, World Boxing Council and

World Boxing Organization belts.

Alvarez was stripped of his International Boxing Federation belt in July when he opted to take on Berlanga rather than IBF mandatory challenger William Skull. That was immaterial to the partisan crowd of more than 20,000 at T-Mobile Arena, where Alvarez claimed another victory on Mexican Independence Day weekend -- a holiday he's made his own along with Cinco de Mayo.

"It means a lot," Alvarez said. "It's an honor for me to represent my country on this day. I feel proud about it." Berlanga, 27, fell to 22-1. As the final bell sounded the fighters embraced in an extended hug. "I was telling him that

he's my idol," Berlanga said. "Since I was a kid I looked up to him."

It was the fifth straight points victory for Alvarez, whose last win inside the distance was an 11th-round knockout of Caleb Plant in November 2021. But it was the fourth consecutive fight in which Alvarez scored a knockdown.

The four-division champion, who has been accused of ducking rising star David Benavidez, said he'd take some time to ponder what's next for him. "I'm going to rest with my family now and then I'm going to decide," he said. On the undercard, Erislandy Lara retained his WBA middleweight world title with a ninth-round stoppage of Danny Garcia. The slow pace of the bout drew boos from the crowd, but 41-year-old Cuban-born southpaw Erislandy connected with a straight left that dropped Garcia to a knee late in the ninth. When the round ended, Garcia's father and coach Angel called for the bout to be halted.

"I took him to school," said Lara, who improved to 31-3-3 with 19 knockouts. Garcia, fighting for the first time since July 2022, fell to 37-4 with 21 wins inside the distance.





## In brief

### Child reunited with his family

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police Sabzi Mandi police station team reunited the missing child with his family. According an ICT public relation officer, the Sabzi Mandi police station team received a report from a citizen Muhammad Asghir in which he stated that his son namely Asim had been missing and could not be traced despite hectic efforts by family members. Upon receiving the report, the Sabzi Mandi police station team used technical and human resources and successfully traced the missing child and reunited him safely with his family, he said. The family appreciated the police team's efforts for immediate assistance, he added. Citizens are urged to dial the emergency helpline "Pucar-15" or report via the "ICT-15 app" regarding any suspicious person or activity.

### 237,300 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 237,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 176,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1546.49 feet and was 148.49 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 96,100 cusecs and 140,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1228.05 feet, which was 180.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 23,300 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 164,500, 109,500, 113,300 and 66,700 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 29,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Police arrested 12 gamblers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 12 gamblers in two separate raids and recovered stake money Rs 89,750, 11 mobile phones from their possessions here on Sunday. According to police spokesman, Ganjmandi police apprehended seven gamblers identified as Rehman, Javed, Zafar, Abrar, Azam, Ahmed Ali, and Tanveer. The police seized Rs 57,700, six mobile phones from their custody. In another operation, Taxila police arrested five more gamblers named Nasir, Shaikat Hayyat, Bilal, Shaikat Mehmood, and Tanveer and recovered Rs 32,050, five mobile phones from them. SSP Operations appreciated the performance of police team stated that gambling leads to other social evils, and strict action against gamblers will be continued to maintain law and order.

### Stolen vehicle recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Highways and Motorways Police recovered a stolen vehicle, just a day after it was reported as missing from the Waris Shah police station area in Rawalpindi the other day. According to Motorway Police spokesman, the vehicle, a Suzuki Mehran, was found abandoned on the side of the road near the M1 Motorway Chhach Interchange. Upon suspicion, the Motorway Police sent out inquiries to surrounding areas, including Islamabad and Rawalpindi, which confirmed that the vehicle was stolen.



RAWALPINDI: Roadside areas along Murree Road beautifully decorated for the celebration of Eid Milad ul Nabi. — APP Photo

## Punjab all set for Eid Milad-un-Nabi celebrations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Punjab Industries and Commerce Minister Chaudhry Shafay Hussain on Sunday assured that the provincial government is taking all necessary measures to celebrate the birthday of the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) with the dignity and reverence.

Talking to a private news channel, Shafay Hussain confirmed that the provincial government is

committed to providing a secure environment for the processions and celebrations of Eid Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH) through robust security arrangements.

Minister Shafay Hussain added that the district administration is giving the final touches to the comprehensive security plan and ensuring the safety and security of devotees during the celebrations.

Shafay also appealed to Ulema and religious schol-

ars from all sects to play a constructive role in maintaining law and order during the Eid Milad-un-Nabi celebrations, ensuring a peaceful and harmonious environment for all.

To bolster security measures, the district administration has set up a dedicated control room to closely monitor the processions and gatherings during Eid Milad-un-Nabi, he mentioned. He said that on the instructions of Punjab

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, he was personally visiting the entire province to review the security arrangements.

### Police finalize foolproof security

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have finalized foolproof security arrangements for Eid Milad un Nabi (PBUH), which will be observed with religious fervor and reverence on September 17. lice have finalized foolproof security arrangements for Eid Milad un Nabi (PBUH), which will be observed with religious fervor and reverence on September 17.

More than 5,000 police officers and jawans will be deployed for security duties across the city. Additionally, over 450 officers and traffic wardens will manage traffic flow effectively.

According to City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani, "Security arrangements have been made for 108 processions, including the central main procession. For the central procession, more than 2,400 officers will be on duty, while over 2,600 officers will be assigned to guard the other 107 processions."

"Walk-through gates will be installed at the entry points of the processions, and all participants will undergo thorough body searches before entering."

"Snipers will be deployed on rooftops to monitor the situation closely. To further ensure safety, streets, roads, and routes leading to the procession will be sealed," he informed.

"All police stations will be actively involved in providing security and patrolling during the processions," the CPO emphasized. "All available resources are being utilized to ensure foolproof security for Eid Milad-un-Nabi," he added.

## Democracy solution to all challenges: Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani on Sunday said that democracy and a robust democratic system are the key solutions to the challenges facing the nation.

He highlighted that democracy plays a crucial role in empowering the

people and driving socio-economic development.

In his special message on the occasion of International Day of Democracy Gilani stressed the importance of maintaining continuity in the democratic process to ensure the country's progress.

Addressing the current

political situation, he called on all political parties to unite and foster harmony within their ranks.

Gilani reiterated that only a strong and united democratic system can guarantee the nation's prosperity, urging for collective efforts to strengthen democratic institutions further.

## Police nab two dacoits with fake ID

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Shalimar Police Station team has successfully arrested two members of a dacoit gang that was committing robberies and fraud while posing as employees of a sensitive organization.

According to an Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police

spokesperson, the operation followed special directives from Inspector General (IG) Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, who had called for an intensified crackdown on criminal elements in the city.

Following on these directions, the Shalimar

police team leveraged both technical and human resources to apprehend the two wanted members of a dacoits gang, he said.

He said the arrested individuals, identified as Abdul Waheed and Shahzad Muhammad. He said that the two accused had been involved in acts of robbery and fraud by pretending to be employees of a sensitive organization for an extended period.

He said they recovered a significant quantity of items, including mobile phones worth lakhs of rupees, cash, wireless sets, and weapons used in the

crimes. The accused have revealed that they were involved in several incidents, he added DIG Syed Ali Raza, commended the police team for their efforts and assured that all legal procedures would be followed to ensure that the accused are duly punished, he added.

DIG also highlighted ongoing large-scale operations against organized and active gangs, he said. Citizens are encouraged to report any suspicious activity or individuals through the emergency helpline "Pucar-15" or via the "ICT-15" app.

## Iqbal calls for unity on Democracy Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): On Democracy Day, a senior leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Iqbal Zafar

Jhagra Sunday called on the nation to unite in their commitment to democratic

norms and the rule of law, emphasizing the importance of following the Quid-e-Azam's principles for a prosperous and progressive Pakistan.

Talking to PTV news channel, Jhagra stressed

that institutions are the backbone of democracy and their respect is vital for the smooth functioning of the government.

He urged all political parties to respect institutions and work together to build a stronger more democratic country.

The PML-N leader stressed that civilized language and respectful discourse are essential components of a healthy democracy.

He urged Pakistanis to engage in constructive debate, tolerating differing opinions and promoting national unity.

Jhagra appealed to the nation to safeguard Pakistan's democratic heritage, warning that any compromise on democratic values would jeopardize the country's future.

He emphasized the need for collective responsibility in preserving democratic traditions.

## RDA conducts grand operation

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of Divisional Intelligence Committee has conducted a grand operation against seven illegal housing schemes.

According to RDA spokesman, the RDA Enforcement Squad conducted operations against

Pak PWD Housing Scheme, Agro Park Housing Scheme, Green Lake City, Riser Marketing, Attar Farms, GB Valley and Organic Meadows, located in Mouzas Bagga Sheikhhan, Ralla Gujran, Kuri Khuda Bakhsh, Banian, Jajja to Budhial Road, Natha Dolal and Basanta, Tehsil and District Rawalpindi.

The enforcement squad sealed and demolished the

main gates, site offices, boundary walls and other infrastructures of the illegal housing schemes as despite warnings to stop illegal advertisements, booking of the plots and development activities, the management of the illegal housing schemes continued to violate the law.

The joint operation team including Shiza Tanveer, Assistant Director Planning RDA, along with RDA Scheme/Building Inspectors, and officials from Rawat, Mandra and Kallar Syedan Police Stations took part in the operations.

The operations were conducted under the supervision of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Engineer Aamir Khatta,

Director General (DG) RDA, Kinza Murtaza, Additional DG RDA, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi, and the City Police Officer Rawalpindi.

The spokesman said that the authority on the directives of the Commissioner and DG RDA would continue crackdown on illegal housing societies. Strict action in accordance with the law would be taken against the rules violators, he added.

The RDA had advised the citizens not to invest in illegal housing schemes, the spokesman said adding, the citizens should visit RDA website [www.rda.gop.pk](http://www.rda.gop.pk) to get information about legal and illegal housing societies.

## DIG emphasizes zero tolerance for crime

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police Syed Ali Raza on Sunday emphasized a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption and abuse of authority, stressing that the protection of life, property, and citizens' dignity was of paramount importance.

He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting at his office, attended by all Station House Officers (SHOs), and beat officers.

He said that he formed crime control teams to prevent the incidents of robbery, snatching and theft.

DIG directed all SHOs to form dedicated teams and work closely with them to effectively combat crime.

Raza highlighted the importance of officers remaining vigilant against criminal activities. Ali Raza instructed all officers to increase patrolling in their respective areas to control crime and ensure a visible

police presence.

Additionally, DIG directed them to compile lists of absconders, proclaimed offenders, and individuals involved in serious crimes, and to locate and apprehend them.

"Any kind of negligence will be dealt with strictly against the officers," DIG said. "Safety of life and property of the citizens is the first priority and any kind of violence is unacceptable," Raza concluded.

## 18.39% households undernourished

ISLAMABAD (APP): Head of Policy and Advocacy, The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Faiz Rasool has said that the increasing population of undernourished households is driving the nutritional and health crises in the country amid policy gaps and the absence of proactive legislation in line with rapidly changing environment.

He was addressing a media session jointly organised by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and GAIN to explore critical aspects around communicating food security, healthy diet and food system and its impact on public health and sustaining the food systems.

Faiz Rasool said almost of the country's population is persistently facing a threat to their health due to poor access to healthy diet, whereas 18.5% of them were undernourished.

"Malnourishment and obesity as health risks are simultaneously existing in the country, as Pakistan is facing a double burden of malnutrition resulting into aggravated disease burden due to unhealthy diet. Moreover, 6/10 of population diseases are related to

food-related problems and poor quality diet," he said.

Since the country is facing nutrition and food safety challenges there is no nutrition policy in the country as there has been no focus of the quarters concerned on establishing such document, he added.

The GAIN official underscored that there are serious policy gaps and no guidance available to address nutrition challenges in the National Food Security Policy approved in 2018. Globally, he said 3.1 billion people almost 42% of the total world population are unable to afford healthy diet.

He pointed out that there were food authorities in all the four provinces of the country, whereas food safety was the most serious issue after nutrition in the country. "Food security policy lacks gender aspect to counter food safety challenges faced by women, whereas no youth the largest part of the country's population is addressed in the policy which is contributing in almost every sector," he said.

Faiz Rasool mentioned that food security is a provincial subject after devolution whereas the input of the provinces on

National Food Security Policy is questionable.

"Our children will face 20% obesity alongwith malnutrition and stunting risks as 125,000 children are getting impacted from unsafe food," he said. Pakistan's food system transformation pathway document has been prepared and submitted as per its global commitment under international conventions but no progress has been made so far, he added.

"Pakistan only country in the world having current Secretary Ministry of Food Security as 11th convener but in many regional countries only one convener has been serving throughout but we have repeatedly changed the focal persons in the last three years. Countries like Africa have better progress in that regard due to consistent working of officials designated on this position," he said. He also mentioned that the climate change and food security nexus is also missing in the Food Security Policy which the media should extensively highlight as growing economic and ecological vulnerability due to environmental degradation is taking a heavy toll on the food security of the country.

## NCRC appoints Sarwat Gilani as Brand Ambassador to CCR

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) has announced the appointment of renowned actress, social activist, and dedicated mother, Sarwat Gilani, as its Brand Ambassador.

Sarwat Gilani, recognized for her commitment to child rights and advocacy for social justice, will collaborate with NCRC to raise awareness and drive meaningful action toward the protection and promotion of child rights across Pakistan, said a news release.

Sarwat Gilani known for her versatile acting skills has graced Pakistani screens for almost two decades working in numerous television plays, web series and feature films. As an activist Sarwat advocates Women's Rights, Law Awareness and has spoken against child abuse on various platforms globally. She is an Ambassador for Special Olympics Pakistan & Indus Hospital health network and Search for Justice to name a few.

At an event held in Islamabad, the NCRC formally welcomed Sarwat Gilani into her new role, highlighting the alignment of her personal values with the Commission's mission to safeguard every child's rights.

Speaking at the event, the NCRC Chairperson Ayesha Raza Farooq said: "We are honored to have Sarwat Gilani join the NCRC family. Her commitment to advocating for the rights of children has inspired millions, and her

influence will undoubtedly bring much-needed attention to the critical issues facing Pakistan's children. With Sarwat as our Brand Ambassador, we aim to broaden our reach, foster greater public engagement, and create a more child-friendly society."

Sarwat Gilani has been a prominent advocate for social justice, consistently using her agency to speak out on issues affecting women and children. As a mother of three, she understands the challenges children face and is deeply committed to using her influence to ensure their rights are upheld.

Sarwat Gilani expressed her gratitude and commitment, stating:

"I am truly honored to take on this role with NCRC. The rights of children should be at the center of our national discourse, and I believe that through this partnership, we can bring lasting change. Every child deserves to live in a safe and nurturing environment, free from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. I look forward to working with NCRC to raise awareness about the vital importance of protecting our children."

Children from the Pakistan Girls Guide Association had the opportunity to interact directly with Sarwat Gilani. The girl guides openly shared their concerns, recommendations, and expectations from the newly appointed Brand Ambassador, shedding light on the critical child rights issues they face in their communities. Their voice-

es echoed the urgency of addressing pressing challenges such as child abuse, lack of access to education, child labor, malnutrition, street children, child marriage and issues being faced by minority children.

These young advocates expressed the need for safe spaces for children, better enforcement of laws against child labor and abuse, and enhanced efforts to ensure that every child in Pakistan has the opportunity to pursue an education, free from fear and discrimination. They also stressed the importance of engaging more children in decision-making processes that affect their lives, highlighting their expectation that Sarwat Gilani would be a strong advocate for their concerns in her new role.

Sarwat Gilani, in response, praised the courage and determination of the children, reassuring them of her commitment to raising their voices at every platform. "Listening to these brave young girls today was a powerful reminder that the future of our nation lies in the hands of children who are aware, vocal, and determined to create a better world. I am here to ensure that their concerns are heard and acted upon," said Sarwat.

"We are committed to ensuring that children's voices are central to our work. The insights shared by the members of Pakistan Girls Guide today will undoubtedly inform our strategies going forward," said the Chairperson.



20m AFN allocated for school

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Education has officially launched reconstruction projects for 25 educational institutions in Herat, with a total budget of 20.164 million Afghanis. According to a statement, these projects will focus on the renovation and restoration of schools and religious institutions across the provincial capital and various districts of Herat. The funding for the initiative comes directly from the Ministry of Education's budget.

Works on 114 shelters started

SAR-E-PUL (BNA): The construction of 114 shelters, with an allocated budget of nearly 40 million Afghanis, has commenced in Sar-e-Pul province, facilitated by UNHCR. During the official groundbreaking ceremony, Mawlawi Abdul Rahman Rashid, Deputy Minister for Technical Affairs at the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, highlighted that each shelter will cost 350,000 Afghanis and is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

Afghanistan center of various civilizations

KABUL (TOLOnews): Khairullah Khairkhwa, at the Union of Cultures meeting held in St. Petersburg, Russia, attended by the Ministers of Culture from 40 countries, has referred to Afghanistan as a center of various civilizations. Khairkhwa also said at this meeting that under the renewed rule of the Islamic Emirate, serious attention has been given to the stability and security of cultural heritage and historical sites, and that illegal trafficking and excavations have been entirely prevented. Khabib Ghuffran, the spokesperson for the ministry, said that the acting minister considers the holding of such meetings, like the one in St. Petersburg, beneficial for establishing

relations between the countries of the world and the region and for the development of cultural diplomacy. Regarding this matter, Ghaffran said: "The acting Minister of Information and Culture, in his remarks, described Afghanistan as the cradle of various civilizations and mentioned that Afghanistan shares diverse cultures and has historical, cultural, and religious commonalities with various countries, especially its neighbors." The acting Minister of Information and Culture, during a meeting with the Minister of Culture of Uzbekistan, discussed various topics, including the expansion and strengthening of cultural relations, the development of tourism,

the organization of exhibitions in Kabul and Tashkent aimed at familiarizing the two countries with each other's cultures, and the growth of handicrafts. Habib Ghaffran, the Uzbek Minister of Culture, said at this meeting that there is currently a good opportunity to strengthen relations between the two countries. The spokesperson of the Ministry of Information and Culture, regarding this meeting, said: "They discussed and exchanged views on strengthening cultural relations, the growth of the tourism industry, and handicrafts. The Minister of Information and Culture also recalled the historical and religious commonalities between the two countries, mentioning Samarkand and Bukhara as the birthplaces of prominent Islamic figures such as Imam al-Bukhari and Imam al-Tirmidhi."

At the same time, some cultural and economic experts believe that the development of the tourism industry can impact Afghanistan's cultural relations with regional countries. Mohammad Anwar Faiz, a scientific member of the Archaeological Research Center of the Academy of Sciences, said: "The tourism industry is one of the important economic resources of the Ministry of Information and Culture and Uzbekistan can provide opportunities for domestic and foreign tourists."

Meanwhile, the acting Minister of Information and Culture also met with the Russian Minister of Culture and called for the establishment of joint exhibitions to promote familiarity with the cultures of Russia and Afghanistan.

Ministry convened review session



KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce convened a consultative session with representatives of Chamber of Commerce to discuss the potential increase in tariffs on imported fruits.

According to the Ministry's press release, the meeting, chaired by Acting Minister Haji Nooruddin Azizi, addressed key issues related to trade and transit between Afghanistan and neighboring countries. The discussions focused on several topics, including the 2% tariff imposed on Afghanistan's exports through the Islamic Republic of

Pakistan to India, the pivotal role of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Chamber in improving trade relations, and the establishment of a joint committee to devise long-term solutions.

The formation of a private sector committee to engage with tribes across the Torkham border on the 2% tariff issue was also deliberated.

Participants offered their technical insights and suggestions to the Ministry's leadership, including recommendations on the proposed tariff increase for imported fruits.

Education vital to economic stability: Minister



KABUL (Pajhwok): Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai has emphasised the critical role of education in fostering an economy and independent politics.

Stanikzai made the remarks at a meeting organised by the Mohammad Qais Arghandiwal Charity Foundation in Kabul.

"Education is crucial for a stable and strong economy, a disciplined and effective military and a robust and independent political system," he commented.

The deputy minister added that countries advancing in education and science also excelled in other areas. Stanikzai highlighted the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's (IEA) commitment to the education sector, noting that a nation's progress was intertwined with its progress on the knowledge front.

He recalled before IEA's rule, the country experienced a daily loss of life due to conflict. However, he asserted the enforcement of comprehensive security throughout Afghanistan.

The official urged citizens to unite and contribute to the nation's develop-

ment, stressing that Afghanistan was in urgent need of progress after decades of conflict. Stanikzai called on the international community, institutions and the United Nations to support the country's reconstruction efforts.

Additionally, he cited IEA's efforts to create a favorable environment for charitable organizations to operate across Afghanistan.

Stanikzai reassured that a general amnesty had been declared, inviting Afghans living abroad to return home without fear.

Meanwhile, Khalil-ur-Rahman Haqqani, minister of refugees and repatriation, discussed the impact of prolonged wars on the education sector.

He lamented that global tendencies seem to be leaving Afghanistan in ignorance and stressed support for returning migrants, including access to schools, health centers and other essential services.

The Mohammad Qais Arghandiwal Charity Foundation collaborates with relevant ministries in agriculture, education, and health sectors, aiming to address these critical needs.

Uruzganis struggle with limited telecom services

TIRINKOT (Pajhwok): In central Uruzgan province, some residents are struggling to access basic telecommunication services. Many of them have to walk for hours just to make a phone call due to inadequate coverage in their areas.

Uruzgan's six districts, including Khas Uruzgan, Chinartu, Gizab and Chora, are over 100 kilometers from the provincial capital, Tirinkot. Residents of the remote areas complain that telecommunication services are either non-existent or extremely limited.

Ehsanullah, a resident of the Dara area of Gizab district, shared his experience: "Whenever we need to make a call, we either travel to Nikabad, the district center, climb a high mountain or walk for an hour to catch signals."

M. Rafiq from the Siro area of Khas Uruzgan district, described a similar struggle: "We have only a few antennas installed in the district center, which cover a very limited area. We use auxiliary antennas on our rooftops to pick up signals, but they are unreliable and often don't work."

Residents of Chora and Chinartu also underlined significant issues with telecommunication services, causing delays and disruptions in their daily activities.

Nadim warns of efforts to undermine unity, trust

KABUL (TOLOnews): The acting Minister of Higher Education during the graduation ceremony of more than 470 students from Kabul Education University, stated that some countries are attempting to undermine Islamic values and create distrust among the country's citizens.

Neda Mohammad Nadim, who called on the youth at this ceremony to utilize their potential for the advancement of Afghanistan and not to leave the country, said: "There are several important things that the enemy is very focused on. They are determined to destroy unity, they are determined to destroy trust, they are determined to destroy leadership, and they are also determined to undermine religion."

Anwarul Haq Anwar, head of the Office of Administrative Affairs, who was also present at the ceremony, said that foreign countries' interference in the country's internal affairs has now been curtailed. Anwar added that the Islamic Emirate is committed to employing and supporting the capabilities of the younger generation.

The head of the Office of Administrative Affairs con-



tinued: "There is not a single person in the entire system who has been appointed under foreign pressure or orders. There is not a single person here who is unaware of the thoughts and concerns of his fellow citizens, or who lacks this sense. There is not a single person here who would prioritize the goals of foreigners over his own."

Abdul Baqi Haqqani, the acting Head of the National Examination Authority, was another speaker at the graduation ceremony. He also emphasized the devel-

opment of modern sciences in the country, stating that there is a need to pay special attention to contemporary sciences.

Abdul Baqi Haqqani said: "For the self-sufficiency of the country and to bring it in line with other countries, the academic community has a responsibility, especially those in the fields of education and contemporary sciences."

Sayed Bashir Agha Hashemi, Chancellor of the Kabul Education University, regarding the graduation of students,

said: "I urge the senior officials to provide more resources to the Kabul Education University because it is the only university that trains professional teachers, and these teachers later teach in schools and madrasas, shaping the future of the students."

According to the officials, more than 470 students from various departments of Kabul Education University, including Computer Science, Languages, Psychology, and Physical Education, received graduation certificates.

Global reactions to recent armed attack on civilians in Daikundi and Ghor provinces

KABUL (TOLOnews): Last Thursday's armed attack on civilians in the area between the provinces of Daikundi and Ghor has sparked global reactions.

Stéphane Dujarric, the Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, stated that António Guterres,

while condemning this attack, has emphasized the call for the protection of civilians.

Dujarric added: "I want to tell you that the Secretary-General condemns yesterday's heinous attack on members of the Shia Hazara community that took place in the central region of Afghanistan.

Mr. [António] Guterres conveys his condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a quick recovery to those who were injured. The Secretary-General reiterates his call to protect civilians at all times."

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the US Charge d'Affaires for Afghanistan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, and the Embassy of Japan in Kabul have also expressed their condolences to the families of the victims of this tragedy and have called for an end to such attacks.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and Karen Decker, the US Charge d'Affaires for Afghanistan, have called for an investigation and accountability regarding this attack.

A statement from UNAMA reads: "United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) condemns yesterday's attack in central Afghanistan which resulted in numerous deaths and injuries to members of the Shia community. We express our condolences to the families of those killed and call for an investigation

to hold those responsible to account."

The Japanese Embassy in Kabul wrote about this attack: "We condemn the heinous terrorist attack in the area between Daykundi and Ghor provinces yesterday, which resulted in multiple people killed and wounded. We express condolences to the victims and the families of those who have been affected. We reiterate these kind of attacks of terror must cease immediately."

Sayed Akbar Sial Wardak, a political analyst, told TOLOnews: "As an Islamic state, the responsibility lies with

the military sector. They must take steps to prevent such incidents so that, God forbid, no such attack occurs again in Afghanistan."

Fazl Rahman Oria, another political analyst, said: "The solution to preventing such mass killings is to create a regional consensus against the conspiracies organized by Pakistan and the United States."

In the armed attack in the area between Daikundi and Ghor, at least fourteen people were killed and six others were injured. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.

14,000 Afghan children suffer from congenital heart defects: ARCS

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) reported that there are 14,000 children suffering from congenital heart defects in the country.

Officials from this organization, in their presentation of their annual performance report, said that out of this number, seven thousand children have complex heart conditions that cannot be treated in domestic hospitals.

According to the officials, another seven thousand children with congenital heart defects are currently receiving treatment in eleven domestic hospitals, based on a waiting list.

Abdul Latif Sabet, Abdul Latif Sabet, an official of the Afghanistan ARCS, said: "14,000 children with congenital heart defects have been registered with this ministry, of which 7,000 cases are com-

plex and cannot be treated inside the country. They need to be sent to India or Germany."

The Deputy Operational Secretary of the ARCS called on domestic and international organizations, businessmen, industrialists, and those with means to continue their support for the organization.

He said, "Our compatriots, national traders, enterprises, and various associations active in Afghanistan can cooperate with us to the extent they can. The more cooperation there is, the better we can perform."

Meanwhile, the spokesperson of the ARCS announced that the organization has taken various actions in different areas, including collecting beggars across the country, providing humanitarian and cash assistance to victims of natural and non-natural disasters, supporting destitute families, wid-



ows, orphaned children, and other humanitarian activities.

Mudassir Hamraz, the spokesperson of ARCS, said: "Across the country, 116,259 beggars have been collected, of which 5,300

families, comprising 30,543 individuals, have been identified as eligible and receive a monthly cash aid of 53,875,812 Afghanis from the Afghan Red Crescent Society."

According to officials,

ARCS was established 94 years ago and was recognized 70 years ago by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Currently, this organization has 4,605 employees across Afghanistan.

Obstetrics and gynecology ward reopens at Badakhshan Provincial Hospital

B A D A K H S H A N (TOLOnews): The 60-bed obstetrics and gynecology ward of the Badakhshan Provincial Hospital, which had been financially supported by the World Health Organization, has resumed operations under the Ministry of Public Health after nearly three months of being closed.

The Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) said that CT scan and blood dialysis machines have also been installed and are now operational in this hospital.

He added that the costs for these two machines and the salaries of the hospital staff will now be covered by the interim government.

The Deputy of MoPH said: "Today, we inaugurated the 60-bed obstetrics and gynecology ward, as well as the CT scan and hemodialysis machines at the Badakhshan Provincial Hospital." Atiqullah Fayzi, Head of Public Health in Badakhshan, mentioned: "We will hire 59 specialized staff, and if some of our colleagues remain unemployed, we have vacant

positions to recruit them."

The head of the Badakhshan Provincial Hospital said that with the reactivation of the 60-bed obstetrics and gynecology ward and the CT scan and hemodialysis machines, more facilities will be provided in this hospital.

Shafiq Hamdard, the Head of Badakhshan Provincial Hospital, said: "With the arrival of high-capacity machines today in Badakhshan, we are now able to treat the majority of patients who were previously referred to Kunduz

and Kabul."

Some residents of Badakhshan expressed that due to the suspension of the obstetrics and gynecology ward's operations and the lack of diagnostic machines, they were compelled to take their patients to neighboring provinces or Kabul for treatment.

Abdul Basir Haqjo, a resident of Badakhshan, said: "With the establishment of advanced systems, health problems will be solved, and our sisters will be relieved of their suffering."

Shahpoor, another resident of Badakhshan, added: "When the 60-bed ward was closed, it caused significant problems for us, and we had to take our patients to neighboring provinces."

Nearly three months ago, the operations of the 60-bed obstetrics and gynecology ward of Badakhshan Provincial Hospital were halted due to the suspension of aid by the World Health Organization, which resulted in nearly 70 doctors, midwives, and hospital staff becoming unemployed.



# Issue of environmental polution in KP to be redressed: Gandapur

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The second meeting of Environmental Protection Council, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur here the other day. Besides, acting Chief Secretary, Muhammad Abid Majeed, administrative secretaries of relevant departments, officials of the Environment Department and private members of the Council attended the meeting.

The meeting deliberated on various matters to effectively address the issue of environmental pollution, and took a number of important decisions to this end. It was decided to strictly implement the provincial government's decision to ban the use of polythene bags across the province especially in the tourist areas of the province, and a timeline of three months was set for a complete ban on the use and sale of polythene bags in the province. It was further decided that after the expiry of the given timeline, strict actions would be taken against those violating the ban.

The forum decided in principle to shift brick kilns across the province to Zigzag technology further deciding to start a project so that the brick kiln owners could be facilitated with soft loans to shift their kilns to zigzag technology. The meeting also nodded to the proposed Rules of Procedures

of the Environmental Protection Council. One of the important agenda point of the meeting i.e., declaring the tourist areas of the province as environmentally sensitive areas, was discussed threadbare, and the Environment Department was directed to workout the issue with all relevant stakeholders, and table final proposals to the provincial cabinet for consideration. These tourist spots include Naran, Kaghan, Shogran, Galiyat, Kumrat and Kalam.

The meeting also deliberated on the establishment of Climate Change Center and Climate Change Authority in the province, and the concerned authorities were directed to consult the relevant experts and partners to come up with feasible proposal for implementation. As an important steps with regard to educate the young lots of the province about climate change, the forum decided in principle to harmonize the content related to climate change in the curriculum of schools and colleges with the modern requirements, and it was decided to form a committee consisting of relevant officials and experts for the purpose. Similarly, matters related to regulating BTS towers in the province were also discussed in the meeting and the concerned authorities were directed to finalize the proposed guidelines in consultation with the partners and submit them to the next meeting of the

Council for approval.

The forum directed the health department to submit a report about the waste management of hospitals in the province within a month time. The forum also agreed to the proposal of capacity building of the Environment Department to enable to deal with the challenges of climate change effectively, and the high ups of the department were tasked to submit feasible proposals for the approval of the relevant forum in this regard.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur termed the issue of environmental pollution as a challenge and said that there is a dire need for timely and coordinated efforts to deal with this challenge in an effective manner.

Stressing the need of coordinated efforts under a well devised strategy to deal with the emerging challenges of climate change, Mr. Gandapur directed all the concerned departments and entities to sit together to devise a comprehensive strategy in this regard, identifying the issues, and suggesting viable solutions to those issues. The Chief Minister directed the concerned authorities to start a special plantation campaign to plant fruit trees across the province and said that special attention should be paid to plantation in the premises of schools, hospitals and other government buildings.



KARACHI: Senior Minister for Information, Transport, Excise Taxation and Narcotics Control Sharjeel Inam Memon presenting shield to KP journalists at Archives Complex Clifton.

## New Delhi's chief minister announces resignation

NEW DELHI (AP): One of India's main opposition figures and New Delhi's chief minister said he would resign from office Sunday, two days after he was granted bail in a bribery case. Arvind Kejriwal, a fierce critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was arrested nearly six months ago ahead of national elections on charges of receiving bribes from a liquor distributor. India's top court released him on bail.

Kejriwal has consistently denied the accusations and called them a political conspiracy. "Today I have come to ask the public whether you consider Kejriwal honest or a criminal," he said in a public address Sunday at the headquarters of his Aam Aadmi Party, which governs New Delhi. "I will resign from the post of chief minister two days from today."

Kejriwal said his party — a part of a broad alliance of opposition parties called INDIA and was the main challenger to Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party in June's elections — will hold a meeting later to decide who will take over his position. He also demanded the New Delhi elections, scheduled for February next year, be held in November instead.

Opposition parties widely condemned Kejriwal's arrest. They accused Modi's government of misusing federal investigation agencies to harass and weaken its political opponents. They pointed to several raids, arrests, and corruption investigations of key opposition figures in the months before the elections. Kejriwal's supporters celebrated his release by lighting firecrackers and dancing in the rain outside his New Delhi residence, with many carrying placards with photos of the popular politician.

## 8 dead after attempting to cross English Channel

LONDON: At least eight people have died overnight while attempting to cross the English Channel from France to the United Kingdom, according to French authorities. The regional prefect, Jacques Billant, said the incident happened at about 1am (23:00 GMT on Saturday) off the coast of the northern town of Ambleteuse.

"The toll was terrible, with eight people reported dead," he told the press near the site of the accident. Six survivors were hospitalised, including a 10-month-old baby with hypothermia, he added. The boat had set off from the Slack River that flows into the sea between the towns of Wimereux and Ambleteuse. Billant said 59 people from Eritrea, Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt, and Iran were on board.

"It quickly got into difficulty and ran aground ... The boat was torn apart on the rocks," he said. The announcement comes less than two weeks after 12 people were killed after a boat they were travelling in, capsized during an attempted crossing of the Channel. It was the deadliest such disaster this year and brought the number of migrant and refugee deaths in the Channel to 37, up from 12 in 2023. — Aljazeera

## Israeli leaflets tell Lebanon residents to evacuate

BEIRUT (AFP): Israel dropped leaflets over a Lebanon border village Sunday urging residents to leave, state-run media said, but Israel's military told AFP a brigade had taken the initiative without approval.

It was the first time Israelis had told residents of south Lebanon to evacuate in 11 months of cross-border fire between Hezbollah and Israel over the Gaza war, triggered by Hezbollah ally Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel. "The Israeli enemy dropped leaflets over Wazzani calling on those in the area and its surroundings to evacuate," the official National News Agency said, referring to a southern border village.

Wazzani mayor Ahmed Al-Mohammed shared with AFP a picture of the leaflets that showed a map of the region with the areas marked for evacuation marked in red. The leaflet read in Arabic: "To all residents and refugees living in the area of the camps, Hezbollah is firing from your region. You must immediately leave your homes and head north of the Khiam region before 04:00 p.m. (1300 GMT). Do not return to this area until the end of the war."

It added: "Anyone present in this area after this time will be considered a terrorist." Wazzani is an agricultural region where Syrians are often hired to work the land. Asked about the incident, an Israeli military spokeswoman said the leaflets had been dropped by drone in an area from which rockets had been fired into northern Israel. "This was an initiative of the 769 Brigade, it was not approved by the Northern Command. An investigation has been opened," she added.

In the Gaza Strip, Israeli aircraft regularly drop leaflets urging residents to evacuate before an attack. On Saturday, Hezbollah's second-in-command Naim Qassem warned that an all-out war by Israel aimed at returning 100,000 displaced people to their homes in areas near the Lebanon border would displace "hundreds of thousands" more Israelis. The cross-border violence since early October has killed 623 people in Lebanon, mostly fighters but also including at least 141

civilians, according to an AFP tally.

On the Israeli side, including in the annexed Golan Heights, authorities have announced the deaths of at least 24 soldiers and 26 civilians. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday warned Yemen's Houthis of retaliation after the militia claimed a missile attack on central Israel. "This morning, the Houthis launched a surface-to-surface missile from Yemen into our territory. They should have known by now that we charge a heavy price for any attempt to harm us," Netanyahu said at the start of a cabinet meeting, according to a statement from his office.

"Those who need a reminder in this matter are invited to visit the port of Hodeida," he added, referring to Yemen's Red Sea city that Israeli warplanes bombed in July after the Houthis claimed a drone strike that killed a civilian in Tel Aviv. The Houthis are among the Iran-backed groups in the Middle East that have been drawn into the conflict triggered by Hamas's October 7 attack on southern Israel.

On Israel's northern flank, Lebanon's Hezbollah movement has traded regular cross-border fire with Israeli forces in exchanges that threaten to spiral into all-out war. On Sunday morning about 40 projectiles were fired from Lebanon toward Israel's Upper Galilee region and the annexed Golan Heights, Israel's military said.

Tens of thousands of people have been displaced on both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border, and Netanyahu said on Sunday that the current situation was not sustainable. "The existing situation will not continue. We will do everything necessary to return our residents safely to their homes," he said. "We are in a multi-arena campaign against Iran's evil axis that strives to destroy us."

He described speaking with residents and authorities in the north, saying, "I hear the distress, I hear the cries. 'The status quo will not continue. This requires a change in the balance of power on our northern border.'"

## Floods claim more lives as torrential rain pounds Europe

LIPOVA-LAZNE/VISNOVA, Czech Republic (Reuters): One person drowned in southwestern Poland, a rescue worker was killed in Austria and thousands were evacuated in the Czech Republic after heavy rain continued to batter central Europe on Sunday, causing flooding in several parts of the region.

A low-pressure system named Boris has triggered days of downpours and rivers have burst their banks from Poland to Romania, where the death toll rose to five on Sunday. More rain and strong winds are forecast until at least Monday. Some parts of the Czech Republic and Poland faced the worst flooding in almost three decades, as towns evacuated thousands of residents. A quarter of a million Czech homes were without power.

The Austrian firefighter was killed as he tackled flooding in Lower Austria, Vice Chancellor Werner Kogler said, as authorities declared the province which surrounds the capital, Vienna, a disaster area. A bridge collapsed in the historic Polish town of Glucholazy near the Czech border. Local media said a house was swept away and a bridge collapsed in the mountain town of Stronie Slaskie, where a dam burst, according to the Polish weather institute.

Residents in some flooded areas were bracing for conditions to deteriorate. "It will probably get worse, because they reported (the water) is coming from the Jizera Mountains. When it rains there, it will arrive here in five or six hours," said Ferdinand Gaml, an 84-year-old resident of the Czech village of Visnova, 138 km (86 miles) north of

the capital, Prague. Czech police said they were looking for three people who were in a car that plunged into the river Staric on Saturday near Lipova-lazne, a village about 235 km (146 miles) east of Prague. Rainfall in the area has reached about 500 mm (19.7 inches) since Wednesday. Reuters footage showed flood waters gushing through Lipova-lazne and neighbouring Jesenik, damaging some houses and carrying debris. "We don't know what will be next," said Mirek Burianek, a resident of Jesenik. "The internet network isn't working, telephones don't work ... We are waiting for who will show up (to help)."

Lipova-lazne resident Pavel Bily told Reuters the floods were even worse than those seen in 1997. "My house is under water, and I don't know if I will even return to it," he said. Police and fire services used a helicopter to evacuate people stranded in the district. Overall, more than 10,000 people had been evacuated in the country, the head of the fire service told Czech television.

Just across the border in Poland, one person died in Klodzko county, which Prime Minister Donald Tusk said was the worst-hit area of the country after meeting officials in the main town. Klodzko town was partly under water as the local river surpassed record levels recorded in 1997, when floods killed 56 people in Poland.

Officials in nearby Glucholazy ordered evacuations early on Sunday although efforts to protect the town's infrastructure failed to prevent the bridge collapse. In the Hungarian

capital, Budapest, officials raised forecasts for the river Danube to rise in the second half of this week to more than 8.5 metres (27.9 feet), nearing a record of 8.91 metres (29.2 feet) in 2013. "According to forecasts, one of the biggest floods of the past years is approaching Budapest but we are prepared to tackle it," mayor Gergely Karacsony said.

At least four people died and thousands of homes were damaged by flooding in eastern Romania on Saturday, officials said, as surging river levels put authorities on alert in much of central and eastern Europe following days of torrential rain. Tens of thousands of households were left without power in Romania and the Czech Republic, where more rainfall is forecast in the coming days. Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, southern Germany and parts of Austria are also expected to see more heavy rain.

Residents of some towns along the Czech-Polish border were evacuated as rivers rose past alert levels while the Czech capital, Prague, which suffered catastrophic floods in 2002, put preventative anti-flood measures in place. In Romania, flooding affected eight counties, the country's emergency unit said, and Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu visited hard-hit Galati county, where the four people were found dead, about 5,000 homes were damaged and 25,000 were without power. Television images from the area showed streets flooded with muddy water, silt and debris as rescuers led residents to safety. "The priority is obviously to save lives."

## 34 Iran women prisoners go on hunger strike

TEHRAN (AFP): Thirty-four women prisoners went on hunger strike in an Iranian prison on Sunday to mark two years since protests erupted against clerical authorities, the foundation of Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi said.

"Today, on the 15th September 2024, 34 female political prisoners in Evin Prison have gone on a hunger strike in commemoration of the second anniversary of the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' movement and the killing of Mahsa (Jina) Amini," it said. Amini was a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd whose death in custody after her arrest for allegedly violating the strict dress code for women sparked the demonstrations.

The prisoners had abstained from food "in solidarity with the protesting people of Iran, against the government's oppressive policies," the foundation added. Mohammadi, who has campaigned against the compulsory wearing of the hijab and the death penalty in Iran, has been in Tehran's Evin prison since November 2021. She has spent much of the past decade in and out of jail and has staged repeated hunger strikes. "On the second anniversary of the 'Women, Life, Freedom' movement, we reaffirm our commitment to achieving democracy, freedom, and equality and to defeating theocratic despotism," Mohammadi said in a statement on her official X account. "Today, we raise our voices louder and strengthen our resolve."

Mohammadi's children received the Nobel Peace Prize on her behalf in 2023 while she was incarcerated. According to her family, she was on hunger strike at the time in solidarity with the Baha'i community, Iran's largest religious minority who say they are targeted by discrimination. UN experts last month accused Iran of denying Mohammadi proper healthcare. She "was reportedly subjected to physical violence" in Evin on August 6, during which she "allegedly lost consciousness, and sustained injuries to her ribcage and other parts of her body", the experts said.

Iranian authorities acknowledged a confrontation had taken place, but blamed Mohammadi for "provocation" and denied any prisoners had been beaten. Women-led protests erupted after Amini died in custody on September 16, 2022. The protests rattled Iran's leadership that autumn and winter, but authorities crushed them, with rights group Amnesty International saying security forces used assault rifles and shotguns in the crackdown. Human rights groups say at least 551 people were killed. Thousands more were arrested, according to the United Nations.

## NAB clears Dr. Shaukat of corruption allegations

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: Dr Shaukat Ali, former Director General of Health Services for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has faced an ordeal of continuous suspension from service and repeated inquiries despite being cleared of all accusations of corruption. Dr. Shaukat, a well-respected medical professional, has been subjected to a politically charged campaign aimed at tarnishing his reputation, causing immense personal and professional distress.

Dr. Shaukat Ali, who also served as the Project Director for Timergara Medical College, played a pivotal role in acquiring land for the institution. His efforts were widely recognized as being in the best interest of public health and education. However, despite his unwavering dedication, he became the target of individuals with personal vendettas, including bureaucrats and politicians, who filed complaints against him, alleging corrupt practices and misuse of authority.

These allegations led to multiple inquiries, including those by the Anti-

Corruption Establishment and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). For over a year, Dr. Shaukat's work and integrity were scrutinized under the weight of these investigations. In a significant development, the NAB has recently concluded its inquiry, determining that there was no evidence of corrupt practices or misuse of authority by Dr. Shaukat Ali. The closure of the NAB inquiry has been seen as a major vindication for Dr. Shaukat, putting an end to a prolonged investigation that yielded no proof of wrongdoing.

The decision by NAB to close the case against him is being hailed as a victory for truth and justice. For many, it serves as a blow to those who sought to malign his reputation for personal or political gain. Despite this exoneration, Dr. Shaukat remains suspended from service, having been kept in this state for several months in what many see as a politically motivated action.

Supporters of Dr. Shaukat are calling for his immediate reinstatement, condemning the suspension as unjust and without merit.

They argue that his continued suspension is a clear reflection of the personal and political agendas of certain influential figures who are bent on hindering his professional career.

The medical community, as well as civil society, has expressed concern over the treatment meted out to Dr. Shaukat, emphasizing that such practices not only damage the reputation of capable professionals but also harm public institutions. Many are urging the relevant authorities to take swift action to correct this injustice and restore Dr. Shaukat to his rightful position.

Dr. Shaukat Ali's case highlights the darker side of bureaucratic and political power plays in Pakistan, where individuals can be unfairly targeted despite years of service and dedication. While he has been vindicated by NAB's decision to close the inquiry, the road to justice and reinstatement remains fraught with challenges. Only time will tell if his suspension will be lifted and if he will be able to return to his career unscathed by the damage done to his reputation.



YANGON: Volunteers rescue people after widespread flooding in Myanmar.

## Volunteers rush to help as Myanmar flood toll surges

YANGON (AFP): Volunteers rushed to areas inundated by floods in Myanmar on Sunday as the country's death toll from the Typhoon Yagi deluge surged to 113 and remote areas reported increasing numbers of dead and missing.

Floods and landslides have killed more than 400 people in Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand in the wake of Typhoon Yagi, which hit the region last weekend, according to official figures. However, with roads and bridges damaged in Myanmar and phone and internet lines down, information has been limited. One man told AFP how he had tried to rescue people with ropes as floodwaters four metres high surged through the hill town of Kalaw in Shan state on September 10.

"The current was very

strong and even some buildings were destroyed," he said, describing pieces of furniture being washed through the streets. "I could see trapped families in the distance standing on the roofs of their houses," said the man, who works for a local non-governmental group. "I heard there were 40 bodies in the hospital," he said.

A businesswoman in Yangon who runs a company in Kalaw told AFP that her staff there had reported nearly 60 people had been killed in the town. The junta said on Sunday the death toll had jumped to 113 by Saturday night. The previous toll had been put at 74. It did not specify whether any of those confirmed dead had been killed in Kalaw. More than 320,000 people had been displaced and moved to "temporary relief camps", junta spokesman Zaw Min

Tun said.

At Inle Lake, a tourist hotspot about 30 kilometres from Kalaw, flood levels had risen on Saturday to the second storey of houses built on stilts above the water, according to one man there helping to evacuate his family. "Whole villages have been submerged" in some areas near the lake, he told AFP on Sunday, asking to remain anonymous. "The elders say this is the highest level of flooding they have seen," he said.

Cars and trucks carrying volunteers were streaming north from the commercial hub Yangon to reach affected areas in Taungoo in the Bago region and around the capital Naypyidaw, AFP reporters said. The vehicles were loaded with pallets of bottled water, bundles of clothes and dried food. Some had boats strapped to their roofs.