

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Speaker Babar Sattar Swati has pushed the CEC to allocate immediately the reserved seats to PTI following the Supreme Court orders. According to media reports, KP Speaker Swati wrote a comprehensive two-page letter to the CEC on Friday, urging the immediate allocation of reserved seats in the assembly.



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President approves SC Practice and Procedure Amend Ord

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Hours after the federal cabinet's approval, President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday approved the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Amendment Ordinance 2024. Earlier, the cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, okayed the much-debated ordinance.

The federal cabinet adopted the ordinance "through a circulation" after the Ministry of Law had sent it to the prime minister and cabinet Thursday night. The ordinance said the court bench would look at the cases keeping in view the fundamental human rights and public importance. As per the ordinance, each case will be heard on its turn otherwise reason will be furnished for its taking out of turn.

"Each case and appeal will be recorded and its transcript will be prepared, which will be available to the public," it also stated. According to the Practice and Procedure Act, a three-member committee constitutes the benches. The sources had apprised the publication that the law ministry had prepared the amendment ordinance and forwarded it to the cabinet for approval.

Sub-clause 1 of the Act's Section 2 has been incorporated in the law,

according to which the Practice and Procedure Act Committee will fix the cases for hearing. The body will comprise the chief justice, the most senior judge and the judge nominated by the chief justice. The ordinance also includes an amendment in Section 3 of the Act.

The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) passed the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act 2023, during the last days of its government to regulate the chief justice's powers. But they met a setback as even before the law was enacted on April 21, 2023, an eight-member bench constituted by then-CJP Umar Ata Bandial issued a stay order on it on April 13, 2023.

The law gave the power of taking sou motu notice to a three-member committee comprising senior judges including the chief justice. It further aimed to have transparent proceedings in the apex court and includes the right to appeal. Regarding the constitution of benches, the law stated that every cause, matter or appeal before the apex court would be heard and disposed of by a bench constituted by a committee comprising the CJP and the two senior-most judges.

It added that the decisions of the committee would be taken by a majority. Regarding exercising the

apex court's original jurisdiction, the Act stated that any matter invoking the use of Article 184(3) would first be placed before the committee. On matters where the interpretation of the Constitution is required, the Act stated the committee would compose a bench comprising no less than five apex court judges.

About appeals for any verdict by an apex court bench that exercised Article 184(3)'s jurisdiction, the Act said that the appeal would lie within 30 days of the bench's order to a larger SC bench. It added that the appeal would be fixed for hearing within a period not exceeding 14 days. The Act additionally said that a party would have the right to appoint its counsel of choice for filing a review application under Article 188 of the Constitution.

Furthermore, it stated that an application pleading urgency or seeking interim relief, filed in a cause, appeal, or matter, shall be fixed for hearing within 14 days from the date of its filing. However, the law had the provision that this right of appeal would also extend retrospectively to those aggrieved persons against whom an order was made under Article 184(3) prior to the commencement of the Act, but the court has struck it down.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting on transformation plan of Federal Board of Revenue.

CJ displeased over misuse of media for personal attacks

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa on Friday expressed displeasure over misuse of media for personal attacks. "It's the easiest job to hurl abuses at the chief justice," he observed while presiding over a three-member SC bench which heard a case pertaining to the appointments of vice chancellors in public sector universities.

The court criticized the misuse of media and remarked that journalists were tasked to attack the public figures and spread negativity. The CJP commented on the trend of personal attacks through media especially targeting the judiciary. He observed that whether the court should start initiating contempt of court cases to stop the practice.

The bench expressed concern over the absence of Rector International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) Mrs Samina Malik in the court proceedings and university meetings, citing the health issues. The court expressed doubts over the credibility of medical certificate presented by Malik's lawyer, noting that the name on the certificate was Samian Rashid which was different from that mentioned in her official documents.

Malik's lawyer Rehanuddin Golra argued that the medical report was genuine, adding that his client had been unable to attend meetings due to health problems. The CJP questioned that why she had repeatedly failed to appear in person or attend meetings via video link. Important decisions in the university were getting delayed due to her absence. He questioned whether she should remain in office and asked the government to take a decision in that regard. On the court's directives, Samina Malik appeared before the court on a wheelchair.

FBR's digitisation vital for economic reforms: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said the digitisation of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and its improved enforcement mechanism were the need of the hour to bring about economic reforms in the country.

The prime minister chairing a meeting to review the matters related to the FBR, directed the authorities concerned to formulate a comprehensive strategy to improve FBR's enforcement, according to a PM Office press release. Calling the FBR the backbone of the national economy and appreciating its transformation plan, he said enhanced tax receipts would upgrade service delivery and the social sector.

He called for consulting the prominent taxpayers and all stakeholders on the FBR transformation plan and seeking approval of amendments in coordination with the relevant government departments for their effective implementation. The prime minister said the promotion of the private sector was among government priorities calling it inevitable for a strong economy.

He instructed the third-

party audit of FBR's projects and expedited efforts to curb smuggling. During the briefing, Prime Minister Shehbaz was told that the FBR transformation plan featured effective utilisation of technology, awarding efficient officers to improve tax receipts, and improving enforcement of taxation laws.

Formulated by FBR officers and experts within the last 40 days, the program would ensure tax collection without impeding economic development besides facilitating the honest taxpayers. It also provides for strict action or restrictions on transactions against those failing to pay full tax on time or those involved in fraud, to prevent tax evasion.

It was told that such measures would be enforced after consultation with the good taxpayers. The meeting approved the FBR's Home Grown Transformation Plan which has been formulated on the prime minister's directives in consultation with economic and technological experts after analysing the tax receipts during the last 25 years.

In the first phase, the efficient and competent officers would be posted in Karachi, the large taxpayer

unit contributing 32% of receipts, who would be assisted by the auditors and experts. The plan also features the reward for best-performing officers, and a mandatory professional degree from the best universities for the officers, after their common and specialised training programs.

The participants were told that in order to curb custom duties theft, an appraisal and enforcement mechanism had been devised to assign the task to appraisers and inspectors without their prior knowledge, who would also be monitored through cameras. A carrot and stick policy would be enforced for customs inspectors and new check posts would be set up in collaboration with the FWO to curb smuggling.

Federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Azam Nazeer Tarar, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Abdul Aleem Khan, and Dr Musaddik Malik, Minister of State Ali Pervaiz Malik, Coordinator to PM Rana Ehsan Afzal, Attorney General Mansoor Awan, State Bank Governor Jameel Ahmed, FBR Chairman Rashid Mehmood Langrial and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.

NA Sectt deprives PTI of seats

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Secretariat on Friday annihilated the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) when it issued party position on the basis of Election Amendment Act.

According to a National Assembly Secretariat notification, "All 80 members of the PTI are members of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC)." Earlier, on the orders of the Supreme Court, 39 parliamentarians have been declared as members of the PTI and 41 of the SIC. It may be noted that a day ago, the National Assembly speaker wrote a letter to the Election Commission (ECP) giving reference to the Election Amendment Act. The assembly secretariat acted in a haste without waiting for the ECP reply and issued a new party position.

According to the notification, the PML-N has 110 seats, the PPP 69 seats, the MQM 22 seats, the Q-League five and the IPP four. The Muslim League-Zia, the BAP and the National Party have one member each in the National Assembly. The assembly secretariat mentioned that 80 members belonged to the SIC, eight to the JUI-F while the number of independent members is also 8.

Ordinance to improve transparency: Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Friday that the promulgation of Ordinance on Practice and Procedures Act will further improve transparency in the judicial process.

Talking to the media here, he said an ordinance for amendment in the Practice and Procedures Act has been promulgated by the President after approval from the federal cabinet. He said that from now on, the case that comes first would be taken up first by the court and the cases coming after would be fixed on their number.

He said that in a case under section 184(3), it will have to be written why it was a matter of public importance. A formal order will be issued that if a case under Section 184(3) was taken up, whether it was a case of public importance, or human rights issue. He said under the ordinance, on 184 (3) any order passed by the Supreme Court, the right of appeal had been granted.

According to this ordinance, a transcript will be prepared of the proceedings

including judges' remarks and observations during the case and this text will also be available to the public. This step had been taken to make the judicial process more transparent, he opined.

He said that in the proposed constitutional package, there is mention of providing convenience to the people. He said a committee had been set up under the Practice and Procedure Act headed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the puisne judge and the third Senior Judge were its members. He said under the ordinance, now the Chief Justice will head the committee whereas the puisne judge will be a member and a third judge of the Supreme Court will be its member.

The Chief Justice will nominate one of the judges of the Supreme Court as a member of this committee from time to time, the minister added. He said cases were delayed due to the non-availability of the third member of the committee in Islamabad. Tarar said that a petition regarding the review of 63-A was pending till date. He remarked that some decision should have come regarding the revision of 63-A as it was an important matter.

"All these reforms and amendments have been made keeping in mind the interests of the common people," he said. The minister informed the media that a leading Chinese investment group would invest \$ 7 billion for setting up textile parks in Pakistan. He said there was good news for the nation as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has held a meeting with the Chairman of Rui Group of China.

He said that a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Government of Pakistan and Rui Group which will establish textile parks in Pakistan. He said that Rui Group had already completed the Sahiwal Coal Project under China Pakistan Economic Corridor which was completed in the record time of 21 months. He said that these textile parks will be established in Sindh and Punjab provinces.

The Chinese conglomerate, he said will invite more than 100 Chinese companies to set up textile units in those textile parks. He said in the first phase, \$2 billion will be invested whereas \$ 5 billion will be invested in the second phase by the group which meant a total of \$ 7 billion investment.

17 terrorists killed, 6 troops martyred in operations

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Two fierce encounters took place between own troops and the terrorists in North and South Waziristan Districts, resulting in killing of twelve Khwarij.

On 19 September, movement of group of seven terrorists, trying to infiltrate Pakistan-Afghanistan border, was detected by security forces in general area Spinwam, North Waziristan District. The

infiltrators were surrounded, effectively engaged and after an intense fire exchange, all seven khwarij were sent to hell. A large quantity of weapons, ammunition and explosives was also recovered.

In a second incident in general area Ladha, South Waziristan District, a group of khwarij attacked a security forces' post. Own troops fought bravely, foiling the attempts of intrusion and killed five

Khwarij. However, during intense exchange of fire, six brave sons of soil, having fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced shahadat.

Sanitization operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Kharij present in the area, as security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthens our resolve.

kpese.gov.pk

KPESD

سکول داخلہ مہم 2024

01 ستمبر سے 15 اکتوبر

آئیں مل کر خیبر پختونخوا کی سکول داخلہ مہم کو کامیاب بنائیں

محکمہ ابتدائی و ثانوی تعلیم حکومت خیبر پختونخوا



پہلے مرحلے میں 12 لاکھ داخلے

دوسرے مرحلے میں 3 لاکھ داخلوں کا ہدف

کل داخلوں کا ہدف 1,500,000

تعلیم سب کیلئے



Bilawal, architect of new thinking in the new era: Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's 36th birthday is being celebrated today. Like his grandfather, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and his mother, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, he has also attained a prominent position among world leaders at a young age. Through his wisdom and vision, he has proven himself to be the true heir of the political dynasty of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and he has the full capacity to lead the Pakistan People's Party forward in line with the demands of the modern era.

The Pakistan People's Party is the only political party that serves as the voice and hope of the people of Pakistan. It has long struggled and made immense sacrifices for the establishment of a democratic, just, pluralistic, and egalitarian society in the country.

After the tragic martyrdom of his mother, Benazir Bhutto, on December 27, 2007, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had to assume the position of Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party at just 19 years old. It was a responsibility laden with risk and uncertainty. Those who claim that the Pakistan People's Party has merely inherited politics fail to recognize that managing such a political legacy is a task that often feels like walking with

the burden of the departed.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's father, President Asif Ali Zardari, is himself a seasoned politician, widely acknowledged even by his opponents for his political insight. A few days after Bilawal was appointed Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party, President Asif Ali Zardari remarked in a television interview that Bilawal, his only son, must understand the weight of being entrusted with this legacy of martyrdom. He explained, "We have done this solely to continue the mission of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto."

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was born into a political family that was continuously beset by hardships, suffering, and tragedies. Even before his birth, his mother, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, was engaged in a long and difficult struggle against General Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorship and for the restoration of democracy. This struggle persisted even after Bilawal's birth.

From a young age, Bilawal witnessed his mother's political engagements and the false cases she had to face. He also saw his father, Asif Ali Zardari, endure the hardships of prolonged imprisonment. During his childhood, he even experienced exile alongside his mother. These challenges shaped him into

a mature and broad-minded politician early in life. So, when circumstances thrust upon him the leadership of a democratic political party in a politically volatile country like Pakistan, he fully understood the weight and responsibility of the role.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari earned the distinction of becoming the youngest Foreign Minister of Pakistan, a position he achieved through his political wisdom and prudence. When he assumed this role in 2022, he was only 34 years and 3 months old. Before him, this honor was held by Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who became Foreign Minister of Pakistan in 1963 at the age of 35.

Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the architect of Pakistan's independent and non-aligned foreign policy. This policy was later upheld by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and has since been carried forward by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Building on this legacy, Bilawal made several breakthroughs, showcasing his leadership on the global stage.

When Bilawal Bhutto Zardari took on the critical role of Foreign Minister, Pakistan was grappling with the severe impacts of climate change. He was the first to make the world realize that developing countries like Pakistan, which have contributed little to climate change, are disproportionately

suffering its devastating consequences—caused primarily by industrialized nations. He successfully persuaded the developed world to allocate more resources to help vulnerable developing countries mitigate and adapt to climate disasters.

In this regard, he secured a significant fund for Pakistan, including the fund introduced at COP 27, along with loans and carbon credits at concessional rates. Like his maternal grandfather and his mother before him, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari practiced revolutionary diplomacy to restore and uphold Pakistan's independent and impartial foreign policy.

It was Bilawal Bhutto Zardari who challenged the traditional politics of confrontation and opposition for the sake of opposition, making the country's political leadership realize that the new generation can no longer afford such divisive politics. This generation is grappling with serious challenges, and if these issues are not addressed, political parties will become irrelevant, and democracy itself will be at risk.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari conveyed the message that if the Pakistan People's Party's politics of reconciliation is not embraced and the old politics of confrontation continues, all stakeholders will face irreparable losses. He accurately identified the issues facing the people

of Pakistan and, on that basis, announced his 10-point actionable program for the 2024 general elections, promoting the slogan "Choose New Thinking." The 2024 revolutionary election manifesto of the Pakistan People's Party was developed based on these 10 points. This program and manifesto are considered the documented political strategies to address Pakistan's crises and challenges.

The first point of this 10-point program is to double the income of wage earners within five years and eliminate unemployment. The second point focuses on resolving the energy crisis and providing affordable electricity to the public through green energy. Under this program,

Pak-Indonesia friendly business ties termed beneficial

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Acting Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan Rahmat Hindiarta has said that trade relations between Pakistan and Indonesia can have very positive effects at the global level.

He said that Pakistani food products will play a key role in global food security in the future. There is ample opportunity to absorb Pakistani rice, meats, medicines, cosmetics, and other commodities in the Indonesian market. Indonesia is a big country with huge population and untapped potentials, as the country puts high priority in the food security and health sectors for the people.

He expressed these views in a meeting with the delegation of businessmen headed by Pakistan Development Foundation (PDF) Chairman, Muhammad Bilal Sethi here at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia the other day.

JW Holdings Chief Executive Officer, Hsnain Waheed, Yasir Kamran Khattak and Malik Mubasher Khan were also present on this occasion. Indonesian embassy officials briefed the delegation on the Indonesia-South and Central Asia (INASCA) Business Forum and Trade Expo Indonesia (TEI) to be held in Jakarta in October and invited them to participate in the largest expo in Indonesia.

Bilal Sethi said on the occasion that he will play a role in promoting trade between Pakistan and Indonesia. He emphasized on enhancing youth business relations between the two countries. Bilal Sethi said that the youth of Pakistan and Indonesia should cooperate with each other in digital marketing to improve the economy of their respective countries.

He added that youth bulge at both the Pakistan and Indonesia was a great resource which was supposed to be utilized and engaged in trade. Sethi remarked that Pakistani youth is promising and will impact business ties between the two states.

Gadget Bombs and Tech Warfare



Raza Haider

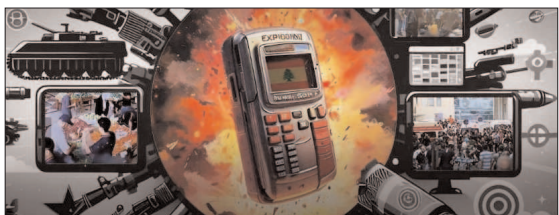
The recent attack in Lebanon involving a 'Pager' and 'Walkie Talkie' as a delivery mechanism for an explosive device has sent shockwaves across the globe. This incident brings into sharper focus a worrisome new twist to technological warfare and also makes one think about the integrity of such modest electronic gadgets. As geopolitics intertwines with the race for technological supremacy; this article examines the potential threats posed by these seemingly harmless gadgets, their vulnerabilities, and the broader implications on global security and self-reliance.

The attack in Lebanon shows that even though gadgets like pagers and walkie talkies are basic, they can be weaponised through different techniques. Recent advances in explosive miniaturisation have enabled the creation of devices as small as 50 grams, compact enough to resemble everyday items like a pager, yet capable of causing significant harm. Moreover, the pager's electronics, particularly a 'battery', can also be activated or exploded with different methods such as an automatic timer, a remote control or a facial recognition system.

From a geopolitical perspective, weaponising electronic devices such as pagers and walkie-talkies has a major implication on

supply chain security. In the event that some of the components or devices within the production line get exploited, the likelihood of exploitation is possible. According to a World Economic Forum's report, 30% of electronics manufacturers have endured some form of interference or tampering with their product supply chain, which can cause a threat to cybersecurity or physical risk. As China and the United States (US) continue to battle for supremacy in the hi-tech manufacturing sector, many developing countries find themselves at the receiving end, mainly as customers of strategic technologies or components. Thus, 'self-reliance' has turned into one of the defining strategic goals for any country.

Consumer gadgets, such as pagers, have also been repurposed as weapons in the realm of 5th Generation Warfare (SGW). Unlike traditional kinetic warfare, SGW leverages new technologies and information warfare to achieve strategic objectives without direct armed conflict. This evolving battlefield extends beyond altered communication devices and cyberattacks, as it now includes the ability of cyber attackers to transform seemingly harmless gadgets into lethal weapons. It is estimated that more than 43% of small and medium electronic devices are currently connected to the Internet; therefore, can be easily hacked. Compounding this situation, there has been a development of sophisticated Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning which has made it easier for hackers to take advantage of software loopholes in regular-use gadgets and transform them into mini bombs or spying machines.



These recent explosions of gadgets highlight global challenges linked to technological dominance notably by the West and US maintaining a large lead in emerging technologies fostering dependency in developing countries. This dependency disrupts local economies and limits technological growth and innovation. Additionally, the covert use of consumer technologies, such as pagers, highlights the risks of these dependencies, as they can be exploited for espionage or military purposes, creating further security concerns for vulnerable nations. After this incident, the use of consumer goods as weapons would become an increasingly serious worldwide issue, especially when everyday technologies such as smartphones or smart devices can be repurposed for surveillance, espionage, or cyberattacks. This dilemma also puts pressure on global supply chains, as countries become wary of importing technology that could be used for malicious purposes. This highlights the need for a shift towards self-reliance in technological innovations, to avoid the recurrence of similar nature in any country.

As a way forward, Pakistan ought to secure its global supply chain sources to prevent consumer goods from being weaponised. Secondly, technological sources need to be diversified to avoid single-point dependency. Lastly and most importantly as a long-term solution, Pakistan must

increase its investment in Research and Development (R&D) for emerging technologies and enhance local manufacturing to reduce reliance on global supply chains and achieve technological sovereignty. This approach will help mitigate risks associated with external dependencies and strengthen the nation's innovation ecosystem. In this way, the country can protect its domestic production lines and technological structure from infiltration and compromise.

In today's world, impact of the chip war and SGW on global politics has made technological sovereignty more crucial than ever. The 'war of gadgets' is no longer a futuristic concept but a present-day reality capable of threatening global peace. This is clearly seen in cases like Lebanon, where the next form of warfare did not take place on land, sea, or air, but within pockets and homes.

Key words : Technological Warfare, Self-reliance, 5th Gen Warfare, Technological Sovereignty

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اطلاع عام

تمام عوام الناس ضلع باجوڑ خصوصاً تحصیل برگ کو بذریعہ اشتہار ہذا اطلاع دی جاتی ہے کہ حکومت کو برائے تعمیر رہسکیو - 1122 میول برگ تحصیل برگ ضلع باجوڑ کیلئے 02 کنال اور 15.8 مرل اراضی از روئے خیر بہ بخونخوا لینڈ ایکویزیشن ریٹن 2020 کے تحت درکار ہیں۔ اگر کسی کو اس ملکیت اراضی پر کوئی اعتراض ہو تو اشتہار ہذا کے پندرہ دنوں کے اندر اندر اپنے اعتراضات دفتر ڈپٹی کمشنر باجوڑ ضلع باجوڑ میں جمع کروائیں۔

ضلع	تحصیل	مقام	ملکیت	رقبہ	ٹوٹل رقبہ	حدودات اراضی
باجوڑ	برگ	میول	مسی سبحان اللہ ولد محمود مرحوم سکند میول	13138 مربع فٹ	02 کنال اور 15.8 مرل	شمال: برساتی نالہ۔ جنوب: برگ چلک سکول۔ مشرق: برگ مین روڈ (میول ٹو خاروڈ) مغرب: اراضی مسی شیر وغیرہ
			مسی قمر ولد شیر سکند میول	1133 مربع فٹ		

ڈپٹی کمشنر/ڈسٹرکٹ کلیکٹر

ضلع باجوڑ

INF(P)2467/24

HORSE RIDING SCHOOL

PAF ACADEMY, ASGHAR KHAN

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders are invited for supply of the following Stores:

S No	NOUN	Qty	REMARKS
1	Procurement of Sand	As Req	For detailed specifications / scope of work, any other query please contact No
2	Tifton Grass	As Req	Ext - 813-7813
3	Mud	As Req	Mobile No- 03215820808
4	Paint	As Req	
5	Cement	As Req	
6	Crush	As Req	

Terms and Conditions:

1. The firm interested must submit quotes on their letterhead.

2. The firm must be General Sales Tax (GST) registered.

3. Quotation should be valid for minimum of 90 days, and the envelope should be marked with the tender opening time and date.

4. Last Date of Submission of tender is **07 OCT, 2024** at 1000 Hrs and will be opened on the same day at 1100 Hrs. Bidders' authorized reps are required to be present at the time of tender opening.

5. The Officer Commanding reserves the right to accept or reject any part or the entire tender, on technical grounds.

6. Payment will be made through cheque after deduction of 5.5% Income Tax, receipt inspection and acceptance of stores in accordance with the ordered specifications.

7. All terms & Conditions for Defense - purchases are applicable.

Note: - For additional query or information please contact Officer In Charge, Horse Riding School PAF Academy, Asghar Khan Risalpur TEL: (0923-631391-7 EXT - 813-7813, Mobile No: 0321-5820808.

Gajju Khan Medical College, Swabi

MEDICAL TEACHING INSTITUTION

TENDER NOTICE

(Single Stage Two Envelope)

Gajju Khan Medical College-MTI Swabi invites sealed bids for Procurement of following item from Manufacturere, Importer and authorized Distributor. Tender should reach to the office of the undersigned on or before Date: 15-10-2024 at Time 11:00 AM which will be opened on the same day at 11:30 Am in presence of bidders or their representatives. Bid security 2% of the total bid value is required to be submitted in favor of Dean/CEO, Gajju Khan Medical College-MTI, Swabi.

S.No.	Description	Bid Security	Procurement Method
01	All in One Computer Systems along with 01 KVA online UPS.	2% of the Total Bid Value	Single Stage Two Envelop

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: -

1. Only typed tender on original prescribing letter pad, sealed & signed (Every Page) should be submitted, hand written tender would not be acceptable. The tenders must be according to hospital specification; alternate rates will not be acceptable.

2. The tender must be submitted along with the bid security as mentioned above, otherwise, the tender will not be accepted.

3. The Income Tax stamp duty, General Sale Tax (GST) or any other Government taxes will be charged as per rules.

4. The bid security in the shape of Pay order (PO) will not be accepted.

5. The successful bidder will be bound to execute agreement on a stamp paper, with 1st order received.

6. A detailed list of specification / BSDs of required items can be obtained from Bacha Khan Medical Complex-MTI, Swabi web-site www.gkmcs.edu.pk

7. If the successful bidder supplies substandard items and not matching with specification issued from this office will be cancelled automatically and the order will be issued to next bidder.

8. A Pre-Bid Meeting will be held on 03-10-2024 at 11:00 AM in the office of the Manager Materials Management-BKMC/GKMC-MTI, Swabi.

9. All the bidders are informing that no additional documents will be entertained after tender opening.

10. The Hospital have rights to increase or decrease in quantity.

11. The Gajju Khan Medical College (GKMC-MTI, Swabi) reserves the right to cancel any or all bids by assigning cogent reason under Rule 47 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa public procurement regulatory Authority.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR LOCAL

GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

TEHSIL BADAHBER DISTRICT PESHAWAR

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING

Sealed tenders based on MRS - 2024 (1st Bi-Annual) / Non MRS-items for the below mentioned works are hereby invited on the basis of Single Stage Single Envelope Procedure From the government contractors registered with PEC and enlisted with C&W Department as per Centralized Enlistment Policy of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for current financial year as per following schedule:

SEHEMES OUT OF " REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF TRANSFORMERS" AS AGREED BY THE PROVINCIAL CABINET

S.No.	Work Name	Estimated Cost (M)	Bid Security@2%(Rs)
1.	Repair and Maintenance of Transformers in Constituency PK-75, District	10.00	200,000/-
2.	Repair and Maintenance of Transformers in Constituency PK-76, District	10.00	200,000/-
3.	Repair and Maintenance of Transformers in Constituency PK-84, District	10.00	200,000/-

(1). The financial bidding will be online through E-bidding system. Tender form and BOQ can be filled online and downloaded from the official website of LG&RDD (www.lgkp.gov.pk) after one day of publishing NIT. The last date and time of submission of electronic tender form is 14th October, 2024 at 11:30 AM, while the date and time of opening of electronic bids is 14th October, 2024 at 01:00 PM. (2). Estimate in the shape of original call deposits for the schemes in the name of Assistant Director, Local Government & Rural Development Department, Tehsil Badahber, submit hard copy of the same printed electronic bid form to the Office of the Assistant Director, Local Government & Rural Development, Department, Chamkani Mur Budhai Road, Peshawar. For any query kindly contact this office during office timing on 091-2621055 / 2621022 or email at aelgrddbadaahber@gmail.com. (3). Only PESCO registered Contractors / Firms / Workshop are eligible to apply. (4). The eligible contractors/firms must have; (a). Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), codes EE04 & EE05. (b). Inspectorate of Electricity, Energy & Power Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa License in Category "C" or "E". (5). The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 20% below on Engineers' Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineer's Estimated cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security, then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. (6). Similarly, a contractor, quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer's Estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineers' Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. (7). In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof. (8). The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidders after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh. (9). Printed Electronic bid (both Original & Duplicate copies) may be delivered through courier service. (10). The call deposits i.e. bid security for the work / contract must be prepared after publishing of NIT. (11). The time for completion of scheme shall be as per work order. The contractor or his representative can be present at time of opening of electronic bids opening. (12). In case of tie / draw amongst the responsive bidders, the bid may be decided through free toss which shall be considered as final. (13). Any electronic bidder who provides false, or materially inaccurate or incomplete or do not send information in hard form will be disqualified as per KPRA Act Section 29 (1) read with KPRA Rule (43). Furthermore, the Procuring Entity/Executing Agency will recommend and sent cases for debarring/Blacklisting and will initiate / take action in light of approved procedure / mechanism as per KPRA Act section 29 (2) read with KPRA Rule (44). (14). Bids will remain valid for 180 days from the closing date of bids. (15). The firms/contractors who wants to participate in tendering process may approach Directorate General LG&RDD Peshawar within two days before closing time of electronic apply for uploading their names on the official website i.e. (www.lgkp.gov.pk) (16). All bidders are required to be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act 2013. (17). The PEC and KPRA registration (Active Tax Payer) must be valid for current Financial Year and attached with the Electronic Bids. (18). Any addition made in the terms & conditions in NIT advertised shall be implemented as per KPRA Act & Rules.

Assistant Director (LG&RDD Tehsil Badahber)

Assistant Engineer (LG&RDD Tehsil Badahber)

INF(P)2471/2024

Take special care of special persons

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محکمہ محکمہ محکمہ

CEO WSSP inspects operational sites in Zone-C

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: CEO Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP), Yasir Ali Khan, conducted an inspection of operational sites in Zone C, reviewing sanitation, water supply operations, and the clearance of drainage channels. He also checked staff attendance, interacted with employees, and engaged with local residents. General Manager Operations, Muhammad Ijaz, and other officials accompanied him during the visit.

Khan visited several areas, including University Town, Union Councils 31, 32, and 34, Bara Road, Ring Road, Kohat Road, Parking Yard, and Transfer Station. During his visit, he observed street cleaning, container management, waste collection, and the operation of tube wells.

He inspected vehicles and machinery and issued necessary instructions to the staff.

During his interactions with the staff and local residents, he listened to their feedback and concerns. Later, at the Zone C office, Zonal Manager Anwarul Haq briefed the CEO on routine operations and other activities in the zone.

Yasir Ali Khan directed the staff to perform their duties diligently and ensure timely service delivery. He emphasized the importance of promptly collecting waste from collection points and managing containers effectively to prevent litter from spreading. Public complaints should be addressed swiftly, and stronger engagement with customers should be established to ensure high-quality service and resolution of their issues.

He also instructed measures to prevent the dumping of waste at unauthorized locations and to make collection points easily accessible to the public.

General Manager Operations, Muhammad Ijaz, also provided a detailed briefing on daily operations.

He added that efforts are being made to encourage people to cooperate with the staff and to pay their water and sanitation bills on time. Regular sessions are held with elected representatives, traders, and other organizations to enhance public cooperation.

BERC UET Peshawar’ 15-day training concludes



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Buildings Energy Research Center (BERC) and Centre for Intelligent Systems and Networks Research, University of Engineering and Technology, Peshawar successfully concluded a 15-day training program on implementation tools for Energy Conservation Building Code 2023 (ECBC-2023) tools at the Bara Gali University of Peshawar Summer Campus.

The ECBC-2023 developed by the NEECA applies to all new buildings and new sections of existing buildings across Pakistan which will reduce energy consumption based on sustainability, low cost of housing sector and renewable energy sources. The training was a part of the project "Transformation of the Construction Sector in Pakistan: A Pathway towards Clean, Green, and Sustainable Buildings," supported by GIZ Pakistan and funded the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Agency (NEECA), Islamabad as the lead executing authority.

Dr. Naveed Ahmed, Director BERC, said that participants of the training gained practical knowledge in creating climate-resilient and energy-efficient buildings.

Aimed at the Pakistan's growing energy crisis and climate vulnerability, the training focused on easy to use software tools to assess the impact of building design on its electricity/energy bills, he added.

The participants from various organizations engaged in three hands-on training modules including Introduction to the Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC 2023) and its implementation framework, Life Cycle Analysis in Buildings and the Embodied Carbon Calculation Tool, Building Energy Certification System and Building Load Calculation Tool developed by the BERC team.

The representatives from PDA, FDA, Local Government bodies, PEECA, KPPHA, CDA, Energy & Power Department, NESPAK, C&W Punjab, GDA, MDA, IAP, PCBDDA, P&D Peshawar, FGEHA, LUMS, PCATP, C&W KP, LDA, P&D Sindh, NED University, PHA Federal, and SBICA participated in the training.

Govt takes major initiatives to empower youth: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Saif, Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information and Public Relations has said that the provincial government is actively working on both policy and ground levels to provide better opportunities to prepare the youth for future challenges.

Addressing the Young Leaders Parliament Conference, he emphasized that the youth should not merely focus on acquiring degrees, but also strive to become responsible citizens and better individuals, equipped with modern education and skills.

Barrister Dr. Saif urged young people to prioritize entrepreneurship over relying on government jobs. He stated, "We need to move beyond nepotism and corruption, and it is essential for the youth to contribute to this change."

The three-day entrepreneurship conference, organized by the Young Leaders Parliament in collaboration with the Directorate of Youth Affairs, saw participation from over 70 young leaders across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The event featured extensive sessions on entrepreneurship, e-commerce, technical education, and online businesses.

Dr. Saif praised the efforts of the young leaders involved in organizing such activities, stating that these initiatives are crucial for preparing the youth to take on the responsibilities of tomorrow. He encouraged the youth to learn from the experiences of their elders, understand modern-day requirements, and plan effectively for the future.

He also stressed the importance of identifying issues and corruption within various departments and bringing them to the attention of the authorities or highlighting them on social media. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has launched several social media applications and portals for this purpose.

Additionally, the Directorate of Youth Affairs has introduced various skill-building programs to aid youth development.

Furthermore, the Department of Information is going to initiate a project to provide young social media experts with the opportunity to enhance their skills while gaining financial benefits.

KPCVE holds seminar on drug abuse and youth delinquency

PESHAWAR (APP): In pursuance to the approval of the "Strategy on Prevention Drug Abuse and Youth Delinquency in Higher Education Institutions" and in line with the directions of the Secretary Higher Education, Kamran Ahmed Afridi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Centre of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism (KPCVE) holds seminar on Drug Abuse and youth delinquency at Institute of Management Sciences (IMSciences) here today.

The seminar aimed at raising awareness among students, faculty, and the community about the growing threat of drug abuse and its detrimental effects, especially on the youth.

The seminar gathered experts, faculty members, students and KPCVE representatives discuss strategies for combating drug abuse and its connection to violent extremism. The seminar was started with the opening remarks from Dr. Qasim Khan, Director General, KPCVE on the aims and objectives of the activity.

He highlighted the causes of drug abuse and the explained the steps involved in the drive. Dr. Ayaz Khan, Chief Coordination Officer of KPCVE, underscored the significance of treating drug abuse as a national priority. He emphasized that the youth, being the high-risk group, require targeted interventions to shield them from the dual threats of substance abuse and radicalization. "Drug abuse is not merely a health concern; it is a societal challenge that erodes our social fabric and is often linked to criminal activities, including violent extremism, which further destabilizes communities," Dr. Ayaz Khan stated.

Happy birthday hope of Pakistan

Qurban Hyder

21ST September 1988 is the birth date of one of the most charismatic and democratic leaders of our time. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, 'The Hope of Pakistan', is arguably the most important person in bringing about the introduction of a culture of tolerance and inclusive democratic process in Pakistan.

He was just 19, when his mother embraced the martyrdom in 2007. On the eve of martyrdom, he appeared in the media to give hope to his nation with his firm commitment, 'democracy is the best revenge'. And the entire country echoed with slogans, 'Step forward; we are with you, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.'

After his graduation from Oxford University in 2010, Bilawal started to play an active role in Pakistan's politics while making his political debut in December 2012 on the death anniversary of his mother's killing with an emotionally charged speech.

But his real political debut was a year later, in 2013, when the Sindh Cultural Festival was launched by PPP patron Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. It showcased the best that the province had to offer. It not only helped to promote tourism in Pakistan, but it also sent a message of peace and love to the international community. That was the first time in the history of Pakistan that any political party was going to host and organize such a festival to promote culture and protect the heritage of its land. It was much appreciated that the young leadership of the PPP took that landmark initiative, especially Bilawal and Aseefa.

That event boosted the inclusive approach of the young leadership of the PPP to covert the state of the country, which only seems to be concerned with banning entertainment, into a colorful, peaceful, dynamic, true democratic, and liberal Pakistan.

Pakistan People's Party has a strong profile to maintain a soft image of Pakistan in the international community. From Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the Pakistan Peoples Party never gave up trying to help marginalized sections of society. It was the Pakistan Peoples Party who empowered females in Pakistan and brought them into Parliament. Speaking of public health issues, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto administered OPV to her own child first to end stigmatization attached to the vaccine.

And when the entire Pakistan's minority population was under attack and churches and temples were being set on fire by mobs, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari nominated a Hindu female worker of the Pakistan People's Party for the Senate in 2018. And now again, the deputy speaker of the Sindh assembly is from the 1% population of the province of Sindh. Anthony Naveed was nominated by chairman PPP.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, when he became foreign minister in 2022, maintained his stance to build the image of Pakistan in the international community and countered the negative propaganda of enemy country India while visiting the major economies of the world, including Russia, China, Japan, the European Union, etc.

The electoral campaigns run by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for 2018 and 2024 general elections were highly impressive, most robust, coherent, and very organized. Even his opponents praised Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for conducting the most organized electoral campaigns.



PESHAWAR: Minister of Elementary & Secondary Education KP Faisal Khan Tarakai distributing computer tablets under Multi Year Resilience Program.

BRT service to operate additional buses for MDCAT exams

PESHAWAR (APP): TransPeshawar has announced the operation of additional buses on the City's BRT Service (Zu Peshawar) on Sunday September 22, to facilitate students appearing for the MDCAT exam.

According to Sadaf Kamil, spokesperson of TransPeshawar, this initiative is aimed at ensuring smooth and timely access to test centres, helping students avoid potential traffic jams and delays.

The spokesperson further added that route SR-08, which is usually suspended on Sundays, will remain operational as per its regular weekday schedule, offering an additional service for students traveling to their examination venues.

In addition, extra buses will be deployed on routes ER-01, SR-02, and ER-09. These buses will operate between 7:00 A.M to 9:30 A.M and from 1:00 P.M to 4:00 P.M to cater peak exam hours and ensure efficient transportation.

"TransPeshawar is dedicated to providing its commuters with the best possible service, and this special arrangement is a testament to our commitment to ensuring convenience for all," said the spokesperson.

The additional buses will provide much-needed support to MDCAT candidates, ensuring they reach their exam centres comfortably and on time.

PHC restrains posting on deputation in KPEEF

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court has restrained deployment of officers on deputation in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elementary Education Foundation (KPEEF) and sought a response from the government, on Friday.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice SM Attique Shah heard the writ petition filed through Amer Javed and Sangin Khan advocates.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Managing Director KPEEF, Secretary Education, Board of Directors KPEEF and others were made respondents in the writ.

During the hearing, the counsel stated that the petitioners are permanent employees of KPEEF. They were initially hired on contract as District Program Officers (Grade 17). Some petitioners were made permanent on March 15, 2017, following a Peshawar High Court decision, which was upheld by the Supreme Court.

The lawyer argued that KPEEF's Grade 18 and 19 posts should be filled through promotions or transfers. Despite having over 10 years of experience in Grade 17, they haven't been considered for promotion to Deputy Director (Grade 18) due to deployment of officers from other departments.

Similarly, finance officer posts remain vacant, but instead of promoting eligible employees, additional charges are given to District Program Officers. The petition claimed that this action violates their rights, contravenes Articles 4, 9, 18, and 25 of the Constitution.

The counsel requested the court to declare deployments from other departments illegal. Clanceal notifications issued since November 3, 2018 and issue show-cause notices to respondents explaining their lawful authority. PHC restrained deployment of new officers and sought a response from the government.

Tarakai distributes tablets, bags under MYRP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister of Elementary & Secondary Education KP Faisal Khan Tarakai distributed computer tablets, bags and other educational materials among the male and female teachers and students of state-run schools under the Multi Year Resilience Program (MYRP) funded by ECW here the other day. 1596 computer tablets will be distributed among teachers of government primary schools with the support of UNHCR.

Minister said that with the cooperation of ECW, VSO, PRDS, UN agencies and other partner organizations, the department of E&SE is trying to adopt technology driven education approaches to visibly improve the education sector with the support of key stakeholders and donor organizations. Enrollment of out-of-school children is their top priority, so that to provide basic education to each and every child. He shared these views while addressing a ceremony held by Participatory Rural Development Society with the support of Education Cannot Wait, VSO, Education Department of KP and MYRP Consortium partners. District Education Officers from Peshawar, Nowshera and Charsadda, Country Representative VSO Seher Afsheen, MYRP KP program head Tariq Hayat Yousafzai, PRDS CEO Arjumand Shah, Coordinator ESGW Ehsanullah, representatives from federal education department, UN agencies, INGOs and other partner organizations were also present in the ceremony.

VSO representative Seher Afsheen briefed the participants on MYRP activities and said that basic aim of the program was to bring the children to each and every child. He shared these views while addressing a ceremony held by Participatory Rural Development Society with the support of Education Cannot Wait, VSO, Education Department of KP and MYRP Consortium partners. District Education Officers from Peshawar, Nowshera and Charsadda, Country Representative VSO Seher Afsheen, MYRP KP program head Tariq Hayat Yousafzai, PRDS CEO Arjumand Shah, Coordinator ESGW Ehsanullah, representatives from federal education department, UN agencies, INGOs and other partner organizations were also present in the ceremony.

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Kudos to Bilawal Bhutto Zardari!

Political foresightedness, wisdom and shrewdness of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is not only endorsed by sitting Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif but all parliamentarians and stakeholders of

democracy in Pakistan. His mother introduced Charter of democracy back in 2006 and now Bilawal has introduced Charter of Parliament to strengthen Parliament and democracy in Pakistan.

Since the rise of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on the stage of Pakistan's politics, we, the youth, are not being misled into non-issues; we are not being pushed into the useless politics of dharnas, and we do not like activists of some other parties-use abusive language for our opponents. Bilawal, you are a truly proud son of Pakistan, and we are really proud of you. You are Pakistan's only hope. Happy Birthday, Hope of Pakistan!

Writer can be reached on X @qurbanhyderm



In brief

Anti-dengue steps reviewed

SARGOGHA (INP): Deputy Commissioner Mianwali Khalid Javed visited various areas of the city to monitor the ongoing anti-dengue campaign initiated by the health department on Friday. According to a press release issued, the deputy commissioner reviewed the activities of anti-dengue teams by visiting home to home in various streets and bazaars of the city. He directed the dengue surveillance teams to ensure that anti-dengue awareness was provided to the people and to give information regarding all the points of the anti-dengue. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to them. DC Khalid Javed Goraya also reviewed the anti-dengue spray process conducted by the teams at various houses in the city to combat the dengue mosquito. He directed the CEO of the Health Authority to conduct training for the teams assigned to spray duty. On the occasion, ADCG Salman Ahmad Loon, CEO Health Dr. Muhammad Rafique Khan, District Health Officer Dr. Kashif Ali, and other officers of the health department were present.

Man hammers father to death

SHAKARGARH (INP): A man killed his father with a hammer blow for property in Landra area within the limits of Sadar police station in Shakargarh, police said on Friday. Accused Ghulam Mustafa escaped from the crime scene after killing his father. Police registered a case against the accused on the complaint of sister of the deceased. However, the police shifted the dead body of the deceased to Tehsil Hospital Shakargarh for post-mortem and started searching the accused.

PFA discards adulterated milk

MULTAN (INP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) discarded 1700 litres of adulterated milk and 260 sachets of banned gutka here on Friday. Food safety teams checked two milk supply vehicles at Vehari Chowk. The inspection revealed a lack of fat and water adulteration in the milk. The quality was checked using a modern lactose scan machine. Upon confirming adulteration, hundreds of liters of adulterated milk was destroyed and the suppliers were fined Rs35,000. Similarly, during an inspection of a paan shop at Super Chowk in Lodhran, hundreds of sachets of banned gutka were recovered. The shop owners were fined Rs30,000 and gutka was destroyed on the spot. The PFA DG stated that adulterated milk was intended for distribution to shops in the city. The crackdown against the adulteration mafia has been intensified. He urged citizens to contact the PFA helpline 1223 in case of any complaint.

One killed in mishap

MULTAN: A high-speed bus travelling from Iran to Kohat collided with the Sher Shah Interchange toll plaza on the motorway near Multan, resulting in the death of a toll plaza employee and injuries to 13 pilgrims. The accident occurred when the bus, travelling via Sadiqabad, struck the toll plaza due to high speed. The high-speed bus of pilgrims ramped into the toll plaza and crushed the man sitting in the cabin to collect the toll tickets. Rescue 1122 personnel confirmed that the injured have been transferred to Nishtar-2 Hospital for medical treatment.

18 hours load shedding flayed

Fazal Haq

MARDAN: Chairman Tehsil Council Takht Bhai, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, expressed severe disappointment and frustration over the 18-hour load shedding in Takht Bhai Tehsil during a meeting with WAPDA XEN at their office. According to details, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed apprised the WAPDA XEN of the difficulties faced by the public due to power outages. He strongly condemned the extension of load shedding to 18 hours and emphasized that obstacles in power supply should be removed immediately, ensuring uninterrupted electricity to the public.

Due to load shedding, water scarcity has hit homes and mosques, bringing life to a standstill. WAPDA XEN briefed Hafiz Muhammad Saeed on the load shedding schedule and issues like power shorts. Hafiz Muhammad Saeed acknowledged the shorts issue but stated that the unbearable load shedding exceeds the scheduled duration. He warned that the public's patience has worn thin, and they are unwilling to compromise further. If WAPDA fails to control unannounced load shedding, the public will be forced to launch a protest movement, taking to the streets. Hafiz Muhammad Saeed held WAPDA authorities responsible for any consequences arising from such protests.

Meanwhile, Dr. Aimal Khan Mohmand, the founder of Saath Sab Ka Development Organization, has reiterated his commitment to serving humanity, particularly the underprivileged, orphans, and widows. In a recent statement, he highlighted the various welfare activities carried out by his organization, including the distribution of Ramadan food packages, Eid gifts, and providing livestock for Qurbani every year.

Additionally, the organization is involved in building mosques, installing hand pumps for clean drinking water, and supporting unemployed individuals by providing jobs. Hundreds of orphaned children receive financial aid for education and daily expenses. Saath Sab Ka also actively assists disaster victims and supports numerous families with medical and educational expenses.

Dr. Mohmand emphasized that serving humanity is at the core of their mission and urged other organizations to step forward in similar efforts, ensuring that no needy person is left behind. With a strong dedication to helping those in distress, his efforts are a beacon of hope for many struggling families across Pakistan. However, with the growing number of underprivileged people, can one organization truly bring about the change that's needed.

Children are our future: Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Saeedullah Jan has said that children are our future and it is the responsibility of the gov-

ernment and the society to take measures for their welfare and protect them from oppression and abuse.

The Khyber Pukhtunkhwa government is also aware of its responsibilities in this regard and our province is at the forefront in making laws regarding the protection of children. He was addressing a meeting of the District Child Protection Committee in the conference room of the Deputy Commissioner's office. DEO Female Samina Ghani, District Social Welfare Officer Jamal Shah, Municipalities, Police and Jail officers, Mardan Press Club President Bashir Adil and Chief Child Protection Officer Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Ijaz Khan specially participated in the meeting.

The Chief Child Protection Officer while giving a briefing regarding the Provincial Child Protection Commission and the Child Protection Act said that the welfare of children comes first in every case under this Act. He said that a Child Protection Commission has been established in the province under the chairmanship of the Provincial Minister of Social Welfare, while at the district level, Child Protection Committees have been formed in 19 districts and two FRs, while they have been formed in other districts including Dera Ismail and Tank.

The stay is being worked on. The function of district committees is to spread awareness about child rights, identify abused children, provide psychosocial support to them and establish child protection committees at village and neighborhood council levels. Addressing the meeting, ADC Saeedullah Jan urged the officials of the Child Protection Office to go to the field to ensure the safety of children and bring any problem to the notice of the administration. Similarly, the police should provide data on crimes against children to the District Child Protection Officer.

Meanwhile, Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Annual Elections for President, Senior Vice President and Vice President, 2024-26 were conducted as per schedule.

According to the final decision of the Election Commission, President Abbas Saleem-ur-Rehman, Senior Vice-President Noman Faqir and Haji Wahidgul were declared the successful Vice-Presidents. Further, all the members on all the vacant seats of the Executive Body were elected unopposed. On the occasion, Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Zahir Shah congratulated the successful officials and executive members and expressed hope that the new cabinet would devote its energies to the development of the chamber and the welfare of businessmen and industrialists.

Murder of woman: Two arrested in Bajaur

Abdullah Tayeb

KHAR: A brutal murder of a woman in the Kasai area of Bajaur Tehsil Salarzai has sparked panic among residents. On September 12, police received a report that a woman's decapitated body had been brought to the tehsil hospital in Pasht, prompting an immediate investigation.

Using modern technology, police arrested the victim's daughter-in-law, identified as "S," on suspicion. During interrogation, she revealed that her alleged accomplice, a taxi driver,

had stabbed her mother-in-law to death. Following her statement, police also apprehended the taxi driver, who continued to deny the charges, and no substantial evidence has been presented by the police.

Local residents are demanding a transparent inquiry and are actively campaigning on social media regarding the incident. They express that this tragedy has instilled fear in their hearts, leading to ongoing discussions in every household.

Initial police investigations suggest that the

motive for the murder could be personal animosity, and further evidence is being gathered. In light of public concern, authorities have promised to unveil the facts soon.

However, the community remains dissatisfied, accusing local police of attempting to alter the case's narrative, which they find unacceptable. This incident raises questions about the justice delivery system in the Bajaur community and highlights the need for effective measures to prevent such heinous crimes.

Admn, Youth affairs hold Mushaira in Landi Kotal

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Administration in collaboration with the Youth Affairs department organized a Mushaira(poetry reciting) held at Hamza Baba cultural complex, Landi Kotal.

Assistant Commissioner, Landi Kotal Adnan Mumtaz who was the chief guest on the occasion said that the administration was making every possible effort to initiate such kinds of literary programs for the promotion of art and literature to promote Pashto language and culture.

Paying tribute to the Pashto Bab-e-Ghazal, Amir Hamza Khan Shinwari he said that Hamza Baba was a great poet, writer and a sufi who wrote almost 40 books both in Pashto and Urdu. People would continue to benefit from the thoughts and inspiring poetry of the poet and his services for the promotion of Pashto language will be remembered for centuries, he added.

He pledged that more literary gatherings would be



organized in the memories of prominent literary figures of the area besides problems being faced by the locals' poets and writers would be addressed on priority. Youth Affairs Officer Sajid Ali Afridi in addition with a large number of poetry lovers were among the participants.

The prominent poets including Prof. Tawab Masroor, Dr. Kaleem Shinwari, Abdul Ghafoor Afridi, Sajjad Shinwari,

Kohat Khan Zakir, Nisar Afghar, Sameen Pathang and others recited their pieces of poetry that received encouragement and amused the participants. The participants appreciated the administration for initiating the Mushaira and said it would certainly boost literary activities in the area in addition to delivering a positive and a message of peace to the world. At the end the chief guest distributed shields among the poets.

Injured robber arrested

F.P. Report

LARKANA: A face-to-face encounter between the police and criminals took place near the passport office of Waleed police sta-

tion in the suburbs of Larkana city, a injured robber Nader Makole arrested and from which the weapon was also recovered from him on the spit.

It's also clarified by

the Police that accused involved also involved in 13 serious cases/incidents like murder, robbery, drug selling, illegal weapons and police encounters.



QUETTA: Head of Balochistan Private Schools Association, Muhammad Nawaz addressing a press conference.

3 shot dead over property in Bara

F.P. Report

BARA: Three people were shot dead in Tirah Zakakhel area of Bara in Khyber District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during an armed clash between two tribal groups on Friday.

Well-placed sources from Mohmand Goz said that two groups who belonged to Zakakhel tribe started firing on each other over a property dispute in which three people died on the spot.

Later, the dead bodies of the three persons were shifted to Dogra Hospital. The dead persons were identified as Zurma Jan son of Piyao Khan, Miraj son of Zarmash and Akal Khan son of Ganam Shah.

Father, son killed in mosque

F.P. Report

SWABI: Rivals killed father and son in a mosque over a minor altercation in village Kalu Khan here on Friday, police said.

According to details, rivals started firing on their opponents in a mosque after an argument. Firing killed Fazal Raziq and his son on the spot. Attackers manage to escape from the crime scene. Reason behind the incident was stated to be an old enmity. Case has been registered and investigation in under-way.

DC visits Aghosh Al-Khidmat

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner, Abdul Akram Chitrali along with Additional Deputy Commissioner Relief Muhammad Waqas visited Aghosh Al-Khidmat here on the special invitation of President Al-Khidmat Foundation Kohat.

All staff members of Aghosh Al-Khidmat welcomed the distinguished guests and gave them a detailed briefing about Aghosh Al-Khidmat and Naseem Memorial Al-Khidmat Hospital Kohat.

Deputy Commissioner on this occasion visited various units, offices, hostels and kitchen of Aghosh Al-Khidmat Kohat and reviewed various facilities being provided to the children of Aghosh.

The Deputy Commissioner ate food with the children of Aghosh and promised a tour for them. He also approved 3-day special sports events for the children at Kohat Sports Complex. Abdul Akram appreciated the efforts of the administrators of Aghosh Al-Khidmat Kohat for providing the best support and training to the orphans and assured all kinds of support on part of the district administration.

Body found

KOTLI (INP): Body of a youth was found from an under construction house in suburban village of Khairatta in district Kotli of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

According to details, after being spotted by the local residences the police took body of youth into custody from under construction house in village Dargoti Bala (Amral). A pistol was also found near the dead body.

174,444 candidates to appear in MDCAT

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Khyber Medical University, Peshawar Dean of allied health sciences Prof Dr Haidar Darain has said that a total of 174,444 candidates are appearing in the Medical and Dental College Admission Test (MD-CAT) to be held on Sept 22 (Sunday) from Pakistan and abroad. Briefing participants of a meeting held at Timergara here the other day, he said that about 2500 candidates would appear in the test at the Medix College of Nursing Chakdara.

The meeting was chaired by deputy commissioner Muhammad Arif Khan and attended by additional deputy commissioner Bashir Khan, assistant commissioner Adenzai Suhail Khan, Dean of Khyber Medical University Haidar Darain, district police officer Saleem Abbas Kulachi, DSP Adenzai Fakhr e Alam, deputy district health officer Dr Wali Khan, in-charge Rescue 1122, district traffic in-charge Shad Muhammad Khan and other stakeholders. The KMU Dean briefed the meeting regarding the proposed MD-CAT and said that a total of 2500 candidates would appear in the test at the Medix College of Nursing Chakdara in the Lower Dir district.

He said the candidates had no need to bring rough paper, pen or clipboard. He said the KMU would provide all these things to the candidates. He said the candidates had to bring their admit cards, roll number slips with a passport size photo pasted on the card. He said that a water bottle, juice, biscuit and napkin would be provided to each candidate during the test.

The meeting announced that the district administration would extend its full support and cooperation to hold the test transparent, smooth and peaceful. It was decided that emergency teams of the health department and Rescue 1122 including doctors, nurses and paramedics would also be deployed at the center to cope with any emergency situation on the spot. The meeting decided that police and Dir Levis officials including lady constables would perform security duties. The meeting announced that there would be no power outage on the test day.

Deputy commissioner directed all the stakeholders to visit the test venue and

make a joint Whatsapp group. The DC directed the candidates to reach the center at 7:30 AM while using public transport as no parking was allowed near the center.

Meanwhile, the deputy commissioner imposed section 144 crpc banning the presence of books, guides, solved papers, mobile phones, relevant materials, digital diaries, weapons and other digital items within 100 meters during the MD-CAT. A notification issued in this regard said that anyone found violating the order would be proceeded against under section 188 crpc.

CCI differences: The internal differences in the Chamber of Commerce and Industries Lower Dir chapter were intensified when one group announced the election of an 11-member executive council. The election was supervised by CCI election commission member Javed Khan. According to a notification, Muhammad Irshad, Nisar Zada, Inayatullah, Junaid Iqbal, Muhammad Shuiab, Sharafat Bibi, Muhammad Ishaq, Haroon Khan, Asif Hussain, Bilal Ahmad and Murad Khan were elected as executive council members unopposed. The CCI Lower Dir chapter election for the slot of president, senior vice president and vice president will be held at Timergara on Sept 30 for which the candidates can submit their nomination papers till Sept. 21.

Meanwhile the CCI Lower Dir president Mian Noor Alam Bacha rejected the election of those eleven members and termed it illegal and unconstitutional. Addressing a meeting at Timergara he said that CCI Lower Dir secretary Gul Wahid had been denotified for his negligence in missing of laptop and office record from the CCI local office.

He was chairing a meeting in his office which was attended by SVP Khalid Iqbal, Haji Hussaiullah, Imran Nazir, Hikmatullah, Haji Rahim Dad, Sajjad Khan and Fazal Subhan. Speaking on the occasion the CCI district president rejected the election of the eleven-member executive council members and termed it illegal and unconstitutional. He said that some elements in the CCI wanted to create a parallel organization. He informed the meeting that CCI Lower Dir secretary had been denotified as he was found guilty in missing a laptop and record from the CCI local office.

Masses issues to be solved on permanent basis

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq has said that under open door policy of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, resolving of people's problems on permanent basis is top priority of the district administration while on the directions of the Chief Minister Punjab, officers of all departments are listening grievances of people and taking steps for resolving the issues from 10 am to 11/30 am at their offices on daily basis.

While listening problems of people at his office DC said that real relief was being provided to applicants and doors of all departments were open for every citizen to visit government offices without any recommendation or reference.

He listened problems of people at his office patiently and assured the applicants that their problems would be addressed on permanent basis on merit without any delay. He said that record of all applications

would be arranged and progress report would be sought from concerned officers so that fruits of open door and people friendly vision could be reached to the people.

Meanwhile, the Punjab government has released Rs. 50 million for upgrading to Rural Health Centre Jalalpur Bhattian on the request of former Federal Minister Saira Afzal Tarar and Parliamentary Secretary Punjab Mian Shahid Hussain Bhatti.

While laying foundation stone of construction of new building Rural Health Centre Jalalpur Bhattian Chairman Chief Minister's Special Initiative Saira Afzal Tarar said that Chief Minister Punjab taking keen interest in people welfare-oriented programmes including providing better treatment facilities to the people at their doorsteps. President Muslim League (N) Hafizabad Muhammad Bukhash Tarar, Secretary Information Muhammad Zaman Bhone, ex-District Naib Nazim Mian Zahid Hussain Bhatti, workers of PMLN and other prominent

people were also present on this occasion. Saira Afzal Tarar said that government of PMLN Punjab was fulfilling its electoral promises gradually.

Inspection team: An inspection team of Punjab Food Authority has caught a milk tanker loaded with 3000 liter substandard and hazardous milk in Ghorra Chowk on Pindi Bhattian Road and discarded hazardous milk on the spot. According to details, the tanker was engaged in supplying substandard milk in Gujranwala since long.

Meanwhile, ex-nazim Union Council Khan Muhammad Wala (Bherah) Sheikh Waqas was murdered in Pindi Bhattian area. According to details, Mumtaz Gondal was on its way to meet his relatives. When he reached in Pindi Bhattian, his rivals abducted him and carried in the sugarcane fields, where they shot to kill him for taking revenge of old enmity and fled away. Police have taken dead body in its custody and sent to hospital for post-mortem.

PHC grants bail to PTI leader till Oct 12

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Peshawar High Court (PHC) Abbottabad Bench on Friday granted bail to PTI, MNA Sheikh Waqas in two separate cases till October 12.

Sheikh Waqas is current-

ly facing allegations filed under sections 341, 186, and 16 MPO at the Kotwali Police Station in Jhang. Furthermore, additional charges have been registered against him under sections 468, 471, 409, 420, and 52/47 at the Anti-

Corruption Police Station in Faisalabad.

As part of the bail conditions, the court has ordered Sheikh Waqas to submit bail bonds of 50,000 each. The court also instructed him to appear before the relevant courts as required.



Storm Boris batters Italy after wreaking havoc in central Europe

ROME (BBC): Storm Boris is battering the north-east and central regions of Italy, days after causing widespread flooding in central Europe. More than 1,000 residents in the north-eastern region of Emilia Romagna have been evacuated, while towns in the central region of Marche reported serious flooding and disruption. Two people have been reported missing.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced 10bn (£8.4bn) of EU funding for affected countries. Von der Leyen made the announcement after meeting the leaders of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria to discuss aid for the flood-hit region.

The meeting was held in the Polish city of Wroclaw, in southwestern Poland, which has been threatened by high river levels for days. Speaking at a news briefing afterwards, Von der Leyen said: "Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures".

Her comments came as Italy became the latest country to suffer the fury of Storm Boris - a low pressure system which swept across Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania and Austria, killing at least 23 people.

Schools across Emilia Romagna have closed. Some roads were impacted by landslides and railway traffic has been severely disrupted. Authorities warned residents to stay out of their basements and to relocate to the upper floors of their homes.

Schools, libraries and parks were shut in Ravenna, and the University of Bologna cancelled exams and lessons. The city of Faenza has been the worst-affected, with the levels of the two rivers crossing it rising rapidly overnight. Residents quoted by local media said they had had to leave their homes in dinghies in the middle of the night. High river levels have also caused the sewage system to overflow.

But authorities in nearby Bologna said that river levels in the city were under control, although the weather alert is set to continue until Friday for most of the region. Red warnings for flooding and landslides have been issued for eastern Emilia Romagna. Falconara on the Adriatic coast has seen 204mm (8 inches) of rain, well over September's average of around 67mm. Over 300mm of rain were recorded over the Apennine mountain region. The rain will ease through Friday,

and the weekend is looking largely dry but as seen in other parts of central Europe, the flooding risk may continue.

For residents of Emilia-Romagna, Storm Boris echoes the severe - and deadly - flooding the region faced just over a year ago. In May 2023, 13 people died after six months' rain-fall fell in a day and a half, leading to more than 20 rivers bursting their banks. Tens of thousands of people had to flee their homes and the flooding caused billions of euros of damage. Although the worst of Storm Boris appears to be over across much of the region, the levels of the Danube River are still rising in Hungary.

Prime Minister Victor Orban said the water level in Budapest was expected to peak on Saturday afternoon or evening, but that it would be lower than record levels seen in 2013. The recent events in central Europe fit with expectations of more extreme rainfall in a warming world, although it is not yet possible to quantify exactly how much of a role climate change has played. However, climate scientists have been warning for years about extreme rainfall events like these occurring as the planet warms.

Ousted president quits Gabon politics

GABON (BBC): Gabon's deposed President Ali Bongo has announced he will quit politics a year after he was toppled from power by a military coup. "I wish to reaffirm my withdrawal from political life and the definitive renunciation of any national ambition," Mr Bongo said in a letter addressed to the Gabonese people.

The 65-year-old also called for the release of his wife and son who are in detention awaiting trial on corruption allegations. It is not clear whether his statement follows any negotiations with the military rulers, or if he is hoping that by agreeing to quit politics, he will secure his family's freedom. Mr Bongo suffered a stroke in 2018 and his health was a major source of concern for many in the build-up to the 2023 presidential election.

The army seized power last August, shortly after Mr Bongo was declared the winner of the election, which was disputed by the opposition. He had led the oil-rich country since 2009 when he succeeded his father who had been in power for more than 40 years. The family had strong links to France, the former colonial power in Gabon. The coup, led by Gen Brice Oligui Nguema, was greeted by celebrations at home but was condemned by regional and continental bodies, as well as France. A week after the military takeover, the deposed president was released from house arrest but he has remained in the capital, Libreville.

Gen Nguema has so far taken a conciliatory approach towards the deposed president, saying he is free to go abroad. But in his letter Mr Bongo said his movements remained restricted and subject to daily surveillance. "My visits depend on the authorisation of the military. Isolated from the outside world without communications, without news of my family," he added. He also called for an end to the "violence and torture" committed against his French-born wife Sylvia and son Nouredin and said they should both be released. His wife and son are being held in pre-trial detention on allegations of embezzling public funds. Mrs Bongo is facing charges of money laundering, forgery and the falsification of documents. She has not made any public comment on the charges.

Her lawyer, Francois Zimeray, last year criticised her detention and was quoted as calling it arbitrary and illegal. Mr Bongo said both his wife and son were "helpless scapegoats", adding that his decision to quit active politics also applied to them. The military authorities have not commented on Mr Bongo's statement but have denied previous claims they were torturing members of his family. Mr Bongo and his family have been accused of enriching themselves at the expense of the nation during their decades in power - an allegation they deny. Gabon is an oil-rich country, but one third of its 2.4 million people live below the poverty line, according to the United Nations.

'We don't know if our phones are safe'

BEIRUT (BBC): Just as crowds had gathered to mourn some of those killed in wave of pager-bomb attacks, an explosion sparked chaos in Dahiyeh, Hezbollah's stronghold in southern Beirut. In the surrounding area there was bedlam as the sound of the explosion echoed through the streets. The chants stopped. Those gathered looked at each other, some incredulous.

As reports spread that this was part of a second wave of explosions now targeting walkie-talkies, no electronic equipment was considered safe. In Dahiyeh, Hezbollah supporters stopped our team several times, demanding we did not use our phones or our camera. One of our producers received a message from a friend, who said she had changed her Lebanese SIM card to an international number, concerned that her phone could explode, too.

Many people here, and across the country, are inevitably wondering what will come next. Some even say they do not know if it is safe to walk next to other people, and are changing their plans. "Everyone is just panicking... We don't know if we can stay next to our laptops, our phones. Everything seems like a danger at this point, and no one knows what to do," one woman, Ghida, said. The confusion was made worse by rumours that spread on social media. One of them suggested that even solar panels were blowing up. "A state of panic overwhelmed people," another woman said. "And frankly, this situation is very frightening".

attack, which killed 25 people, came as the country was still shocked and angered by what happened the day before, when thousands of pagers exploded in a synchronised attack, after users received a message they believed had come from Hezbollah. The devices detonated as people were in shops, or with their families at home, killing 12, including an eight-year-old girl who went to pick up the pager for her father, and an 11-year-old boy. Around 2,800 others were wounded, with hundreds needing sur-



gery. Treating some of the injured, Dr Elias Warrak said at least 60% of the people he had seen after blasts had lost at least one eye, with many also losing a finger or a whole hand. He described it as "the worst day of [his] life as a physician". "I believe the number of casualties and the type of damage that has been done is humongous," he said. "Unfortunately, we were not able to save a lot of eyes, and unfortunately the damage is not limited to the eyes - some of them have damage in the brain in addition to any facial damage."

The attacks are a humiliation for the Iranian-backed Hezbollah, and a possible indication that its entire communication network may have been infiltrated by Israel, the worst security breach in the group's history. Reports suggest a shipment of pagers may have been rigged with explosives, before being detonated remotely. Hezbollah had distributed the devices amid concerns that smartphones were being used by the Israeli military and intelligence agencies to track down and kill its members. It was still not clear how attacks might have been carried out.

"The pain is huge, physical and in the heart. But this is something we are used to, and we will continue with our resistance," said a young man in Dahiyeh. A woman said: "This will make us stronger, whoever has lost an

eye will fight with the other eye and we are all standing together." Hezbollah has vowed to respond, blaming Israel for the attacks. As usual, Israel has not commented. Fears are, again, rising that the current violence between the two rivals, which has led to the displacement of tens of thousands of residents on both sides of the border, could escalate into an all-out war.

Hezbollah says its attacks on Israel, which started almost a year ago, are in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, and that they will only stop with a ceasefire, an elusive possibility for now. Hours after the latest explosions, the Israeli defence minister, Yoav Gallant, said his country was "at the start of a new phase in the war", as the 98th division of the Israeli army relocated from Gaza to the north of Israel.

Up until now, Hezbollah has indicated that it is not interested in another major war with Israel, as Lebanon struggles to recover from a years-long economic crisis. Many here say a conflict is not in the country's interests. A damaged Hezbollah is not in Iran's interests either, as the group acts as part of the country's deterrence against Israel. But some will certainly demand a strong response. An indication of what Hezbollah might be planning to do could come, in the first public reaction by its powerful leader, Hassan Nasrallah.

MPs, teachers clash over upcoming Florida constitutional amendment

ORLANDO: A constitutional amendment on the ballot in November that would turn Florida's school board elections into partisan races is stirring controversy among Democrats and educators, some of whom view it as a power play by the US state's Republican Governor Ron DeSantis.

If the ballot question passes in the November general election, candidates for the school board would be required to list their political parties starting November 2026. Making candidates stand on party tickets will infuse "dirty" politics - and big political spending - into races that should be focused on how to better educate children, say opponents of the proposition.

On the other hand, Republican lawmakers who spearheaded Amendment 1 argue that voters need to know candidates' political affiliations to be properly informed. "School board elections are one of the few political arenas left where our elected officials can leave their political party affiliations at the door and come together for the sake of our students," said Florida public school teacher Grace Hayes when she joined educators in Tallahassee speaking out against partisan races last year.

"To force school board candidates to pick a partisan side in what is already such a hostile and complicated political climate is the worst thing we could do for our students, teachers and educational stakeholders," she added.

Florida House of Representatives member Spencer Roach, a Republican who sponsored a bill to put the constitutional amendment on the ballot, denied partisan races will help the Republican Party gain control of schools. "It's not about advancing the

causes of Republicans or Democrats," Roach said during the legislative debate. "It's simply about transparency. I simply think, as policymakers, that we have an obligation to furnish to the voters as much information about a candidate as possible." The majority of the country's school board races are nonpartisan, an effort to keep politics out of decisions on education and curriculum. But Florida's conservative policies and ongoing cultural wars have lately become a playbook for other red states to follow.

Florida is the third most populous US state, and DeSantis has made national headlines for his presidential ambitions and tight political control of the levers of power in Tallahassee, the state capital. Other politicians and education leaders across the United States are certainly paying close attention to Amendment 1's outcome in the November 5 general election, though its chances of success may be slim, as it would require a 60 percent majority to pass. Amendment 1 is on a packed ballot with a presidential race and other Florida ballot issues for legalising marijuana and abortion rights. The partisan school elections issue is easily overshadowed by them.

In recent times, Florida school boards have held sometimes-angry debates over politically loaded issues including book bans, bathroom policies for transgender students, the "Don't Say Gay" legislation, and so-called "critical race theory", an academic concept around the impact of the US's history of racism. During the pandemic, COVID-19 masking rules and school reopening were also heated topics. Both DeSantis and the Florida

Democratic Party are already jumping into the nonpartisan school races and have endorsed several candidates across the state in the recent primary elections. To say that school board races aren't already partisan is laughable, said Florida House of Representatives legislator Randy Fine, a Republican and one of the leaders of the state's conservative cultural cause.

"I feel like maybe people are living in the world of sunshine, rainbows, unicorns and pixie dust because the notion that our school board elections aren't partisan today is a sham," Fine said during the lawmakers' debate last year. "I hope people vote for it." Fine argued that a person's registered party affiliation is often already public information which is easy to find on the internet. "Just think how crazy it is that we have laws that say you cannot say something about yourself that someone can look up. It's nuts," Fine said. Opponents to Amendment 1 argue that voters might be inclined to do less research if the amendment passes, choosing instead to follow their party loyalty. Critics say that changing the school boards will also disenfranchise voters. Currently all voters - Democrats, Republicans and independents who opt to have no party affiliation - vote in the nonpartisan school board races. Under the amendment, voters who are independent would not be able to vote in the primaries, and those who want to run for school board elections and are not affiliated with a party might find themselves squeezed out. Educators from strong conservative counties said it's hard to recruit Democrats to run for local office. — Aljazeera

Volunteers dying as Russia's war dead tops 70,000

MOSCOW (BBC): More than 70,000 people fighting in Russia's military have now died in Ukraine, according to data analysed by the BBC. And for the first time, volunteers - civilians who joined the armed forces after the start of the war - now make up the highest number of people killed on the battlefield since Russia's full-scale invasion began in 2022.

Every day, the names of those killed in Ukraine, their obituaries and photographs from their funerals are published across Russia in the media and on social networks. BBC Russian and the independent website Mediazona have collated these names, along with names from other open sources, including official reports. We checked that the information had been shared by authorities or relatives of the deceased - and that they had been identified as dying in the war. New graves in cemeteries have also helped provide the names of soldiers killed in Ukraine - these are usually marked by flags and wreaths sent by the defence ministry.

We have identified the names of 70,112 Russian soldiers killed in Ukraine, but the actual number is believed to be considerably higher. Some families do not share details of their relatives' deaths publicly - and our analysis does not include names we were unable to check, or the deaths of militia in Russian-occupied

Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine. Among them, 13,781 were volunteers - about 20% - and fatalities among volunteers now exceed other categories. Former prisoners, who joined up in return for pardons for their crimes, were previously the highest but they now account for 19% of all confirmed deaths. Mobilised soldiers - citizens called up to fight - account for 13%. Since October last year, weekly fatalities of volunteers have not dipped below 100 - and, in some weeks, we have recorded more than 310 volunteer deaths.

As for Ukraine - it rarely comments on the scale of its deaths on the battlefield. In February, its president, Volodymyr Zelensky, said 31,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed, but estimates based on US intelligence suggest greater losses. The story of Rinat Khusniyarov is typical of many of the volunteer soldiers who died. He was from Ufa in Bashkortostan and had been working two jobs to make ends meet - at a tram depot and a plywood factory. He was 62 years old when he signed his contract with the Russian army in November last year. He survived less than three months of fighting and was killed on 27 February. His obituary, in a local online memorial website, simply called him "a hardworking, decent man". According to the data we analysed, most of the men signing

up come from small towns in parts of Russia where stable, well-paid work is hard to find.

Most appear to have joined up willingly, although some in the republic of Chechnya have told human rights activists and lawyers of coercion and threats. Some of the volunteers have said they did not understand the contracts they were signing had no end date, and have since approached pro-Kremlin journalists to, unsuccessfully, ask them for help ending their service. Salaries in the military can be five to seven times higher than average wages in less affluent parts of the country, plus soldiers get social benefits, including free childcare and tax breaks. One-off payments for people who sign up have also repeatedly risen in value in many parts of Russia. Most of the volunteers dying at the front are aged between 42 and 50. They number 4,100 men in our list of more than 13,000 volunteers. The oldest volunteer killed was 71 years old - a total of 250 volunteers above the age of 60 have died in the war. Soldiers have told the BBC that rising casualties among volunteers are, in part, down to their deployment to the most operationally challenging areas on the front line, notably in the Donetsk region in the east, where they form the backbone of reinforcements for depleted units, Russian soldiers told

the BBC.

Russia's "meat grinder" strategy continues unabated, according to Russian soldiers we have spoken to. The term has been used to describe the way Moscow sends waves of soldiers forward relentlessly to try to wear down Ukrainian forces and expose their locations to Russian artillery. Drone footage shared online shows Russian forces attacking Ukrainian positions with little or no equipment or support from artillery or military vehicles. Sometimes, hundreds of men have been killed on a single day. In recent weeks, the Russian military have made desperate, but unsuccessful, attempts to seize the eastern Ukrainian towns of Chasiv Yar and Pokrovsk with such tactics. An official study by the primary military medical directorate of the Russian defence ministry says that 39% of soldiers' deaths are a result of limb injuries and that mortality rates would be significantly improved if first aid and subsequent medical care were better. The Russian government's actions suggests it is keen to avoid forcing people to fight through a new, official wave of mobilisation - instead, it is ramping up calls for service volunteers, along with the incentives to do so.

Remarks by regional officials in local parliaments suggest they have been tasked from the top with trying to

recruit people from their local districts. They advertise on job vacancy websites, contact men who have debt and bailiff problems, and conduct recruitment campaigns in higher education establishments. Since 2022, convicted prisoners have also been encouraged to join up in return for their release, but now a new policy means people facing criminal prosecution can accept a deal to go to war instead of facing trial in court. In return, their cases are frozen and potentially dropped altogether. A small number of the volunteers killed have been from other countries. We have identified the names of 272 such men, many of whom were from Central Asia - 47 from Uzbekistan, 51 from Tajikistan, and 26 from Kyrgyzstan. Last year saw reports of Russia recruiting people in Cuba, Iraq, Yemen and Serbia. Foreigners already living in Russia without valid work permits or visas, who agree to "work for the state", are promised they will not be deported and are offered a simplified route to citizenship if they survive the war. Many have later complained that they did not understand the paperwork - as with Russian citizens, they have turned to the media for help.

The governments of India and Nepal have called on Moscow to stop sending their citizens to Ukraine and repatriate the bodies of the dead. So far, the calls have not been acted

upon. Many new recruits who have joined the military have criticised the training they have received. A man who signed a contract with the Russian army in November last year told the BBC he had been promised two weeks of training at a shooting range before deployment to the front.

"In reality, people were just thrown out onto the parade ground, and dished out some gear," he said, adding the equipment was poorly made. "We were loaded on to trains, then trucks, and sent to the front. About half of us were thrown into battle straight from the road. As a result, some people went from the recruitment office to the front line in just a week," he said. Samuel Cranny-Evans, an analyst at the Royal United Services Institute in the UK says: "Basic understanding of things like camouflage and concealment or how to move quietly at night, how to move without creating a profile for yourself during the day," should be taught as basic infantry skills.

Another soldier also told the BBC that equipment is a problem, saying it "varies, but most often it's some random set of uniforms, standard boots that wear out within a day, and a kit bag with a label showing it was made in the mid-20th Century". "A random bulletproof vest and a cheap helmet. It's impossible to fight in this. If you want to survive, you have to buy your own equipment."

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Why Ukraine still helping fuel Russia's war machine?

WOULD the USSR have allowed cargo from Hirohito's Japan or Hitler's Germany to pass through its lands during the Great Patriotic War? Obviously not, which makes it all the stranger that Kyiv is still allowing Russian fossil fuels to transit through Ukrainian territory.

In late August, an adviser to the head of the Ukrainian president's office, Mykhaylo Podolyak, announced that it would stop from Jan. 1 next year. But it soon turned out that his statement was premature when Prime Minister Denis Shmygal confirmed that the Ukrainian section of the Druzhba pipeline system would continue to carry Russian oil. Pro-government oil and gas analysts in Moscow have not hidden their satisfaction, saying that Podolyak's words were "for the sake of PR".

The Ukrainian authorities' position is perplexing even from the point of view of elementary arithmetic. According to the Ukrainians' own calculations, European purchases of oil and gas delivered through Ukraine bring Russia \$12 billion a year. Meanwhile, Kyiv only receives a poultry \$230 million in return for transit fees. Moreover, this scheme allows pro-Russian lobbies in Austria and Slovakia - who still purchase Russian oil and gas - to slow down European military support to Ukraine. European leaders like Slovakia's Robert Fico and Hungary's Viktor Orban use concerns over the economic impact on EU member states to justify their blatantly anti-Ukrainian stance on aid to Kyiv.

However, by stopping the transit of oil and gas from Russia to Europe, Kyiv would benefit hugely from choking off a huge source of revenue for Russia's war machine at a relatively low cost to its own budget. Second, the move would not result in legal issues for Russia's clients in Europe. Ukraine's decision would constitute a force majeure that would avoid the necessity of paying penalties for stopping purchases early.

Third, pro-Russian elements in Hungary, Austria, and Slovakia would lose their main argument against completely disconnecting Russian fossil fuels from the European market. And finally, Kyiv's leaders would no longer face the difficult question of why it is facilitating the enrichment of the same country that is committing war crimes on its own soil. There are forces in Kyiv that are in favor of stopping gas transit, but their opinion seems to have no influence on the decisions made. We can only wonder whether corruption is to blame, as there is no rational explanation for it, especially during wartime.

Gray's salary isn't problem

THE most remarkable feature of the Sue Gray saga is not how much the Downing Street chief of staff earns, but how little Britain's prime minister does. Keir Starmer gets just £166,786, which is about £3,000 less than Gray. But then she gets less than many permanent secretaries, not to mention the consultants and lawyers Whitehall is crawling with these days. Besides, as we are tired of hearing, Starmer gets dazzling benefits in kind.

A second feature of the saga is its mess. Just 12 weeks into the rosy dawn of a new Labour era, Downing Street is enmeshed in a spat more typical of a regime on its last legs. Starmer has spent his time in office telling Britons they face a shambles, requiring a clampdown on public spending. The new army of special advisers - approximately 70-strong - is duly being paid a relative pittance, but one that has been fixed by a boss who decided to take a thumping pay rise. To put it mildly, this suggests poor political judgment. As one insider joked, Gray is the only pensioner likely to do better under Labour.

Fixing the machinery of Downing Street is the first crucial job of a new prime minister. Starmer has hit the ground stumbling. It is customary for those closest to the leader's ear to be a circle of trusted friends ready to act as his alter ego. This was true back in the days of Thatcher and certainly of Tony Blair. When Blair came to power, his senior aide Jonathan Powell said to expect "a change from a feudal system of barons to a more Napoleonic system". What he meant was a downgrading of the traditional civil service hierarchy, one of permanent secretaries with the cabinet secretary at their head. Instead, government was conducted more informally, from "the sofa", as Kenneth Clarke dismissively described it.

This had benefits. Under Thatcher, the civil service acted initially as a brake on change, but she eventually gathered loyalists round her and bent the system to her will. Although she still listened to advice, as when in 1988 she did a U-turn on NHS privatisation. Under Blair, media management from the sofa overwhelmed policy. Foreign Office advice on Iraq was suppressed, and Blair made his greatest mistake with the invasion of that country. Since then, the balance in Downing Street between politicians and officials has become ever more informal and sometimes fractious. It reached its nadir under Boris Johnson and his maverick aide Dominic Cummings.

The most recent grit in this machine has come from the growth of the No 10 Policy Unit, staffed by special advisers. Its proclaimed purpose is to keep Whitehall to the manifesto straight and narrow. But it inevitably cuts across similar units in departments, also staffed by advisers. It was war between the two top units - and Cummings' reported desire to have Treasury advisers dismissed - that forced Johnson's chancellor Sajid Javid to resign. So critical is this relationship in the realm of economic policy, that Starmer's No 10 unit has apparently been downgraded. It will reportedly be just "a point of contact" on economic policy, "more like the nervous system than the brain". We await the outcome with interest.

It is easy to adapt Tolstoy and say that every unhappy Downing Street is unhappy in its own way. But unhappiness starts at the top. Starmer must now support Gray to the hilt. She must at least have her own colleagues loyal to her - and to her confidences. At the same time, prime ministers have clearly strayed too far in the direction of Blair's Napoleon. Second opinions must get through to a leader making decisions, even if the civil service must ultimately obey and deliver. Dissent should not take the current form of media leaks and disloyal gossip. There has to be virtue in a well-established architecture of public administration. So much of this has now broken down. That is why there must be a tilt back to the tradition of a formalised and articulate civil service, with the cabinet secretary at its apex. The satire Yes Minister portrayed civil servants as subjecting the ambition of ministers to pragmatic reality. It had its virtues, and the civil servants did not always win. It is worth a repeat.

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J.D. Vance wrong about Ukraine ... again

Elena Davlikanova

DURING an appearance on The Sean Ryan Show, Republican vice-presidential candidate J.D. Vance unveiled a "peace plan" to end Russia's war against Ukraine. Former President Donald Trump has already said he would resolve the conflict within 24 hours before he even swore the oath of office, should he win the 2024 US presidential election. The proposal shows how he thinks that would be possible.

But the outlined strategy seems to offer a simplistic approach to the complex issue ignoring the campaign's own "strong+smart" diplomacy formula. Vance's math was wrong when he opposed sending more aid to Ukraine. Now, he is wrong again. The discussed peace plan centers around a negotiated settlement, proposing that the current line of demarcation between Russia and Ukraine become a heavily fortified demilitarized zone to prevent further Russian aggression. In this scenario, Ukraine would retain its independence but adopt a neutral stance, refraining from joining NATO or other allied institutions.

It remains unclear who would oversee the demilitarized zone given Russia's supposed fear of NATO boots on the ground. Furthermore, the proposal does not consider whether Ukraine would really agree to forgo reclaiming nearly 20% of its territory currently held by Russia and 6 million of its citizens behind. Moreover, ensuring Ukraine's sovereignty under a neutrality agreement is close to impossible, particularly in light of the past experiences with the Budapest Memorandum. To evaluate the effectiveness of any strategy, we must first determine if it addresses the root cause of the problem. Vance's focus on purely economic interests and natural resources is misplaced. Russia holds 24.3% of global gas reserves, compared to Ukraine's 0.6%. Crediting Crimea's gas reserves of 165.3 billion cubic meters with Russia's interest in the peninsula is oversimplistic.

What is more critical is the strategic significance of control over the Black Sea and the effort to undermine Ukraine as a successful democratic project among post-Soviet republics. Returning Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea would be another contribution to European energy decoupling from Russia and ensuring security in the region. What truly motivated the invasion was Moscow's intolerance of Kyiv's efforts to determine Ukraine's own future and diminish Russia's influence in the country. Moscow has responded with genocidal aggression against a nation that refuses to accept its social contract on power transfer and governance. While Ukraine seeks alignment with Western values and democratic principles, Russia aims to establish a system that combines autocracy with elements of tsarism and import it to the formerly oppressed states.

Ukraine's success as a strong and prosperous democracy is directly linked to US strategic interests. If Ukraine falls, it could trigger a domino effect that shrinks the democratic world. Though it may seem unthinkable today, by the end of the century, the US may lose not the will but the capability to act as a global policeman in a world increasingly dominated by autocracies governed by force rather than rules. The unthinkable is already unfolding in the heart of Europe, driven by a series of mounting geopolitical mistakes. Thus, Vance's disregard for the "good versus evil" narrative is blindsided. Meanwhile, an attempt to justify or excuse an invasion of one state against the other by corruption is despicable. If corruption was a good reason to invade a country, the world would be a much more violent place.

Corruption costs the EU, the USA's closest ally, up to a trillion dollars per year. Moreover, Ukraine's problem with corruption pales in comparison to that of Russia. To fight corruption one needs stronger democratic institutions, not an army of looters, rapists and killers. In fact, over the last decade, Ukraine has made significant strides in strengthening its anti-corruption institutions, rising by 11 points in the Corruption Perception Index. Another claim that

does not hold up to fact-checking is the assertion that Europe has underfunded the war. While Washington has donated slightly more military aid, European government contributions surpass the US in total aid by more than 20 billion euros (\$22.5 billion). Moreover, according to the Department of Defense, US assistance to Ukraine has resulted in billions in industrial base impact, benefiting over half of the states across the country.

It is true that "American taxpayers have been very generous to the Ukrainians," and equally true that Ukrainians are deeply grateful for the invaluable support that has been crucial to the survival of 40 million people. However, those who have survived Russian aggression are concerned that decades of Russia's soft power have clouded the perception of some in the West, blurring the reality of the situation. Only a "fairytale mindset" could believe that it is possible to find common ground with a nuclear empire driven by revanchist ambitions. Given the claim that no current American political leader comprehends the situation in Ukraine and the region, it's striking that J.D. Vance appears to be at the forefront of the group he criticizes.

Those politicians and intellectuals imagining their ideal future as a return to a preferred past are a long way from reality. For some, this means a return to the pre-2014 status quo - a period they view as before recent disruptions. In contrast, Putin and his allies are looking to the status quo before 1991, when Ukraine gained independence and the Soviet Union fell. Vance's suggestion that aligning with Stalin as an example of US diplomacy with "bad people" to maintain global peace is highly inappropriate. Stalin orchestrated the genocidal Holodomor famine in Ukraine. But Vance also forgets that the USSR, fighting for survival in WWII, chose to cooperate with the US out of necessity for its own survival.

Currently, Russia has been encouraged by Washington's desire to avoid direct confrontation with Russia at almost any cost. As it is supported by China, North Korea, and Iran, Moscow has little incentive to change its geopolitical stance. Diplomatic efforts with Russia have repeatedly failed. Since 2014, there have been over 200 rounds of negotiations under the Minsk agreements, facilitated by the West. Putin's true red line is an independent Ukraine, particularly one that is democratic. His demands are clear: Ukraine's capitulation, demilitarization, russification, and gradual re-colonization. Delusional thinking from people like Vance that territorial concessions, lifting sanctions, or keeping Ukraine perpetually at the NATO doorsteps will solve the issue is likely to exacerbate it instead.

This is despite the fact that NATO enlargement had nothing to do with events in 2014. That aggression was sparked by Ukraine's attempt to sign a trade agreement with the EU and protests against a Russia-oriented president. Moreover, Russia's reaction to Finland and Sweden's NATO accession, which expanded the Russia-NATO border, was notably lethargic. Without NATO membership, Ukraine might have faced the erosion of its sovereignty by Russian aggression in the long run. However, this can easily be avoided with the real "strong+smart" strategy. Vance claimed that Ukrainians themselves admit they are incapable of victory. This deliberately disregards the message that Ukrainian decision-makers, diplomats, and civil society leaders have repeatedly conveyed: the war is winnable.

Recently, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pledged to present a comprehensive victory plan to the US presidential administration and candidates this September. The plan encompasses key military, economic, diplomatic, and security components, outlining Ukraine's strategy for securing peace and its long-term position in global security architecture. But as Zelenskyy acknowledged, his plan's success depends on who sits in the White House.

The Moscow Times

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The Moscow Times

Catherine Rappell

to-insure people can "choose" to land in another.

"Now, what that will also do is allow people with similar health situations to be in the same risk pools," he elaborated a few days later. "So that makes our health-care system work better, makes it work better for the people with chronic issues. It also makes it work better for everybody else." Allowing insurers to discriminate based on age or preexisting conditions has long been politically unpopular. But politics aside, the bigger problem with this design is that it would probably cause insurance markets to implode.

Higher-risk people require more medical care, which is expensive. Segregating these people into their own separate pool would drive up their premiums. This would lead to some less sick people in that pool dropping their cover-

age, while the very sick people would remain. This in turn would drive premiums even higher, prompting even more people to drop out. And so on, and so on, until the system falls apart. You can get this result even if you don't deliberately segment people into high- and low-risk pools. It can happen if you simply allow insurers to discriminate based on patient risk and then allow consumers to sort themselves into more or less comprehensive plans based on pricing (or to skip insurance coverage altogether). When all the self-sorting is done, the insurance products left would probably look pretty cheap, but they'd cover basically nothing, and for no one. Anything that's more comprehensive would become prohibitively expensive.

The technical term for this phenomenon is an "adverse selection death spiral." This Goth-sounding

Von der Leyen has tightened her grip on EU's steering wheel

Paul Taylor

WITH six executive vice-presidents balancing political families, geography and gender, Ursula von der Leyen has cemented her personal power in her second term as European Commission president while subtly tilting the EU executive to the right politically and to the east geographically.

The new 27-member commission unveiled on Tuesday illustrates her commitment to making the European economy greener, more competitive and more secure, and her ruthlessness in wielding power to crush critics, reward loyalty and punish those who do not cooperate with her. Her eviction of the powerful French industry commissioner Thierry Breton, who had criticised her personal governance style, and the demotion of Hungary's Olivér Várhelyi to the health and animal welfare job in a snub to the nationalist Hungarian prime minister, Viktor Orbán, illustrate her determination to show who is the boss.

Assuming that the European parliament broadly endorses her appointments, the former German defence minister has created a structure with an array of overlapping portfolios, ensuring that she will be the ultimate arbiter on all key issues - the budget, defence, climate legislation and economic regulation.

The matrix is meant to promote joined-up thinking and help implement the ambitious proposals for an investment-led European industrial renaissance outlined by the former European Central Bank president Mario Draghi in a report unveiled last week, which she mentioned repeatedly in detailed mission letters to each team member. But whether weak and tight-fisted EU governments will be willing to generate the massive funds required to finance those ideas is far from certain.

Von der Leyen's centre-right European People's party (EPP), the largest force in the parliament and among member governments, will dominate the college with 14 of the 27 posts, in charge of major beats from economic policy to the EU budget, agriculture, defence and migration. However, she has appeased the Socialists by giving them two vice-presidencies with a big number two slot for the Spanish former deputy premier Teresa Ribera, in overall charge of the green transition, and the leading role in social and employment policy for Roxana Minzatu of Romania. She has also pacified the weakened liberal Renew Europe group with two vice-presidencies including the foreign policy slot for the former Estonian prime minister Kaja Kallas, and a major industrial policy and single market job for Stéphane Séjourné, the outgoing French foreign minister.

She also sought to appease the far-right Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni (who voted against von der Leyen's reappointment), by giving Italy's nominee, Raffaele Fitto, a vice-president position with the relatively low-key responsibility for regional cohesion. This is despite Meloni's government recently passing a law that threatens Italy's cohesion by allowing richer regions to keep taxes instead of distributing them to the poorer south.

Von der Leyen flexed her muscles to strongarm some countries into withdrawing male nominees and putting forward a woman instead. As a result, the gender balance in the incoming team went from 22% women among the initial candidates to 40% - still short of her objective of parity but a significant improvement. She rewarded countries that nominated women by giving them bigger portfolios, such as Finland's Henna Virkkunen, who gets a vice-presidency and the crucial digital and security files plus a lead role in coordinating support for Ukraine. Slovenia's Marta Cos will be in charge of the EU's eastward enlargement. Von der Leyen downgraded nominees from countries that rebuffed her pressure for more women, such as Malta, whose nominee gets the largely powerless youth, sport and culture portfolio.

Her team is structured so that the socialist and liberal vice-presidents will have EPP watchdogs around them to ensure that policy does not stray from her line, while key functions such as trade, the budget and fiscal policy report directly to her.

Significantly, many of the key portfolios, including those directly related to handling Russia, will be held by commissioners from the EU's eastern flank - countries that joined the bloc 20 years ago but are still regarded by some western governments as "new member states". A duo of former Baltic premiers, Kallas from Estonia and Andrius Kubilius of Lithuania, will be in charge of foreign and defence policy. Poland's Piotr Serafin will handle the EU budget, with the ultrasensitive task of drafting the next seven-year budget plan on which negotiations will start next year. Given the vast investments required by the green and digital transitions and in European defence, Serafin, who is the right-hand man of the Polish prime minister, Donald Tusk, will have to recommend whether to slash old spending programmes, such as agriculture and regional development - even though Poland is the largest recipient of EU cohesion funds - or to substantially raise revenue through European taxes, bigger national contributions or more joint borrowing, or a combination of all three.

The European parliament may yet force changes in von der Leyen's lineup. Some Socialists and Greens are eager to claim the scalps of Fitto and Várhelyi, especially since the latter branded MEPs "idiots" in his first term. But as ever, the hearings will be a game of chicken in which the right will retaliate against Socialist nominees if its own champions are blocked. The result is usually a couple of cosmetic changes.

All in all, the new commission looks a stronger, more united team with fewer obvious rivalries. Climate activists fear it will be less committed to achieving net zero emission targets and more lenient on polluting industries and agriculture. Yet von der Leyen vowed to stick to implementing the European green deal, for which the key regulations were set in the last legislature. The challenge for her new team is to make greening Europe an economic and technological boost for our ageing continent, while helping farmers, businesses and poorer households along on the journey. That's a big ask.

The Washington Post

Climate breakdown is a bigger threat than China and Russia

THE Irish sea captain who in 1751 discovered the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (Amoc) - closely connected with, though not identical to, the Gulf Stream - found a practical use for it: he used the frigid deeper water to cool his wine.

That may seem a rather frivolous response, but of course, Capt Henry Ellis had no idea that the oceanic pattern he had stumbled upon had been critical to the climate, the agriculture and indeed the entire development of western Europe. The same excuse can hardly be made for British and European governments today.

The latest scientific analysis based on evidence from the last ice age suggests that there is a possibility that, because of global heating and the resulting influx of fresh water from the melting Greenland ice cap, the Amoc could shut down with surprising speed, and as early as the middle of this century.

If that occurs, the consequences would be catastrophic. With the resulting hypothetical 10C to 15C fall in temperature, Britain's climate would change to that of Newfoundland's. Agriculture would collapse, and the entire landscape of the country would be transformed. Housing and infrastructure would have to be radically adapted to withstand the new climate. The result would be decades, and possibly generations, of economic hardship. And as temperatures fell in western Europe, they would rise in west Africa. The population of Britain would at least survive a collapse in local agriculture, albeit in straitened and rationed circumstances reminiscent of the second world war and its aftermath. People in Africa would not.

The result would be an immense increase in the migration and the political response that is already very visibly driving the decay of liberal democracy in Europe. Fortunately, such a rapid collapse

of Amoc remains, for the moment and on balance, improbable. It is not a negligible risk, however, and if the climate crisis continues to gather pace, the chance of it occurring will only increase with time.

This being so, an observer would expect that the entire external policy of the UK (and other western European states) would be devoted to fostering international cooperation and action to limit the climate breakdown and mitigate its consequences. However, nothing of the sort has occurred, despite repeated

None of this should be in the slightest bit complicated or mysterious. The inability of our security elites - and the political elites who gobble up their "analysis" - to perform their core duty of the objective assessment of risk is, however, not due to some particular intellectual failing. It stems from layer upon layer of ancient inherited culture and immensely powerful institutional and economic interests. It is not, of course, that the climate crisis is ignored altogether; but it is placed in a separate compartment

Tragically, most of the progressive left has also failed to put climate at the centre of its thinking, instead placing it in a compartment of its own, alongside issues of the day that are extremely unlikely to be seen by future generations as of remotely similar gravity.

statements that the climate crisis is an "existential" threat. Nor is anything of the sort to be expected from the new Labour government. Climate breakdown in general is visibly proceeding even faster than most models predicted, and some of its worst probable consequences are already clear. July marked the 14th consecutive month of record-high global temperatures. Arctic and Antarctic temperatures are rising much faster than global ones, increasing the risk of a disastrous tipping point. In south Asia, if this summer's record temperatures become the regular pattern and extend over several months, agricultural production will be severely damaged, threatening hundreds of millions with famine. In Europe, central Spain appears to be in the early stages of desertification, even as central Europe is devastated by floods caused in part by a collision of cool northern air with exceptionally warm air moving up from the Mediterranean.

from security - which means that it is continually being eclipsed by the latest "security threat", which is invariably talked up by a range of interested parties, as well as journalists simply looking for a good story.

It was all too miserably apparent that in the years-long run-up to the Ukraine war, no western government, security institution or indeed leading newspaper made the disastrous consequences of war for action against climate breakdown part of their calculations or saw this as a key reason to seek compromise with Russia. Tragically, most of the progressive left has also failed to put climate at the centre of its thinking, instead placing it in a compartment of its own, alongside issues of the day that are extremely unlikely to be seen by future generations as of remotely similar gravity.

To move to a different mindset, several recognitions are necessary. The first is that if we fail to adequately limit climate breakdown,

then very few of the other causes that progressives care about will survive in the world that will result. In a world of starvation and societal collapse, there would be little chance of human rights, let alone gender rights.

The second is that the climate crisis largely erases the distinction between democratic and authoritarian systems. That is true of action against climate breakdown today, and will be true of resilience against it in future. Today, apart from the super-wealthy oil-producing countries of the Gulf and elsewhere, three of the worst carbon emitters per capita are "Anglosphere" liberal democracies: the US, Canada and Australia. For the future, we have no idea which systems will best cope with the effects of global heating.

Finally, and most importantly, we need to realise that to concentrate on action against the climate crisis will mean making some hard and painful choices. At present, the mainstream left in Europe and North America appears to believe that it is possible to reshape economies to limit carbon emissions and to increase spending on health and social welfare and to radically increase military spending to confront Russia in Ukraine and elsewhere.

It isn't possible. The money simply isn't there. The result of pursuing all three goals simultaneously would be to fail at all of them; as demonstrated by the latest political developments in France and Germany, where a populist backlash is undermining support for Ukraine and climate action. A critical step in the struggle to limit the climate crisis therefore has to be the pursuit of detente with Russia and China, and disengagement from conflicts in the Middle East, including the war in Gaza. This will require some very difficult and painful changes in existing policy and attitudes - but then again, nobody ever said that tackling climate breakdown was going to be easy.

Meddling Eurocrats are dragging bloc back to Dark Ages

Andrew Griffith

WHEN consumers across Europe collect their eagerly awaited new iPhones this week, they'll notice that the widely anticipated "Apple Intelligence" AI features are conspicuously absent. While the UK, the US and other markets take the next step forward, the EU version of these products has been dumbed down as a consequence of regulation from Brussels, making every UK use of the Apple AI prompt a mini "Brexit dividend".

Governments the world over are often tempted to think of new technology through the lens of problems that need solving with additional laws. It's a form of policymaking that has long been entangled with those claiming to protect the interests of workers. Indeed, we saw the trade unions, who have donated more than £29m to the Labour Party under Sir Keir Starmer's leadership, predictably calling for prohibitive laws at last week's TUC conference. None of this anti-innovation approach is new, and none of it has ever made anybody better off.

When 19th-century Nottingham textile workers adopted "King Ludd" from a local myth, they may have thought they were safeguarding their livelihoods. Instead, had the Luddites been successful, they would have prevented the greatest revolution in productivity the world had ever seen - one which provided British families with high standards of living and built the basis of the modern economy we have today.

Today the Luddites live in Brussels, close to their French cousins who threw wooden clogs called "sabots" into the new machinery they so distrusted to equip their factories. In its zeal to regulate a technology that its own regulators seem barely to understand, the EU has crafted a behemoth it now cannot control, introducing onerous compliance requirements alongside uncertainty across the board as to whom they apply to.

The effects of this "regulate first, ask questions later" approach to AI by the EU have been almost instant. Meta has pulled its

most advanced AI models, designed for professional use, from the entire EU market. Daniel Ek, of Spotify, (an early business case for the power of predictive AI) said "the stark reality is that laws designed to increase European sovereignty and competitiveness are achieving the opposite" and that "many European chief executives, across a range of industries, cite a complex and incoherent regulatory environment as one reason for the continent's lack of competitiveness".

In the same vein, this week a group of leading AI labs felt it necessary to take out a full-page newspaper advert warning of the dangers of the EU's regulation of AI. The uncertainty created by both the regulation itself, and by its inconsistent application, risks doing huge damage to the sector. In the worst-case scenario, many labs will decide that even trying to comply is simply not commercially worthwhile, choosing instead to up sticks and flee to greener pastures outside of Brussels' choke-hold.

Whilst all new technologies suffer a certain amount of hype, we should be in no doubt that we are on the precipice of an AI-powered revolution that comes about once a generation: what Mustafa Suleyman, of UK-based AI unicorn DeepMind, calls "the coming wave". From easing the burden on the NHS from an ageing population, boosting sluggish productivity or solutions to a changing climate, artificial intelligence is a key part of the solution. Certainly, without its application there seems no prospect of ending the addition to low-wage, unskilled immigration or high public spending that cost us Conservatives dearly at the recent election.

A report titled "Selecting the Best", published this week by the Adam Smith Institute, lays out how making gains in automation across the economy is essential to being able to reduce our dependence on low-skilled migration and boost incomes. Forsaking that opportunity could leave us locked into a permanent cycle of higher numbers, lower wages, and the electoral consequences that will follow.

The vast amount of AI research being done in the UK today, and the models and products being developed, could see us holding an ownership stake in what will likely be the most valuable technology on the planet. And yet, under a fog of uncertainty from Labour, we are precariously close to the UK losing its position as one of the world's top three destinations for AI investment and research.

The EU has made its choice, with its EU AI Act creating chilling uncertainty that is seeing innovative companies bypass European capitals in the same way that trading routes once simply rerouted themselves around bandit country or silted harbours. That sense of just how uncompetitive Europe has become seems to have finally dawned even in Paris, explaining the hurried exit of Thierry Breton, arch EU integrationist and one of the commissioners responsible for the EU's AI Act, after his nomination was pulled last week by President Emmanuel Macron.

For the UK to emulate Brussels - as Labour suggested it would in the King's Speech - would be a disaster. In addition to mooted tax raids on wealth creators and interference with the freedoms of employers and employees to freely contract, it doesn't take the processing power of a supercomputer to predict an irreversible brain drain. We already have a world-leading framework for AI, created under the previous Conservative government, which enables some of the brightest minds in the industry to work for the British people and with the industry through the AI Safety Institute.

Giving it up would be a slap in the face to the many people, companies, and labs who cooperated with the previous Government to build it only to be cast aside at the first opportunity to ape what is already turning out to be a failed model. Labour would be wise not to throw this progress away purely to make a point about Brexit or to yield to its union paymasters. Britain would be immeasurably poorer if it is forced to look on, sabotaged by Westminster, as the next industrial revolution passes it by.

Nobody's ever talked way Trump does

Laurie Winer

OF all Donald Trump's rhetorical predilections, one that goes largely unmentioned is his addiction to superlatives. No one has ever seen anything like virtually everything he brings up. Why does he do this? And what does it reveal?

Much of the disinformation in Trump's nonstop perjuries comes in the form of gross, almost comic exaggeration: He has the largest crowds anyone has ever seen (while his opponent's are nonexistent, generated by artificial intelligence); the Democrats are not just pro-abortion-rights, they've made executing babies legal in six states; as well as whatever it was he said today.

A quick look at Trump's speech at the Republican National Convention in July shows that his dependence on superlatives has overtaken all his other oratorical habits. He used them to describe almost everything he discussed. The criminalization of political disagreement is "at a level that nobody has ever seen before." The "inflation crisis" is "crushing our people like never before. They've never seen anything like it." As for the "illegal immigration crisis," well, "Nobody's ever seen anything like it" either.

When discussing his own presidency, Trump said, "We had an economy the likes of which nobody, no nation had ever seen." Also under Trump, "We had the most secure border and the best economy in the history of our country, in the history of the world." That takes us halfway through the speech.

Trump's reliance on superlatives continued at last week's presidential debate. Between informing us that pets were on the menu in Springfield, Ohio, and that Kamala Harris wants to perform transgender operations on illegal aliens in prison, he told us that he has "the biggest rallies, the most incredible rallies in the histo-

ry of politics" and that "migrant crime" is "happening at levels no one thought possible."

This type of rhetoric is not new. Vesna Mikoli?, a Slovenian scholar of linguistics, analyzed the speeches of four of the original Italian fascists of the 1920s. She found that an increased intensity of their language, including hyperbole and superlatives, correlated with their detachment from reality, as well as with incitements to violence, and with actual violence. Mikoli? calls this kind of oratory - as when Trump promises to "lead America to new heights of greatness like the world has never seen before" - the "fascist imaginary." Once a leader commits to hyperbole, he stays committed. As Richard Evans reminds us in his book "Hitler's People: The Faces of the Third Reich," Adolf Hitler claimed that his invasion of France was the most "glorious victory of all time" and that he was the greatest military leader ever - greater than Napoleon or Caesar.

Federico Finchelstein, an Argentinian fascism expert, says such leaders "fantasize about creating new realities and ultimately transform reality to fit their fantasies." For example, Hitler claimed that Jews were disease-ridden subhumans and then created the conditions that made him prophetic. The fascist's aim, says Finchelstein, is "the destruction of any trace of demonstrable truth." And the philosopher Hannah Arendt says "the ideal subject of totalitarian rule is ... people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction and the distinction between true and false no longer exist."

Finchelstein also notes that fascism cannot ascend without existential enemies. Every fight is urgent, and every enemy is mortal. It's as if all the struggles between good and evil in our

omnipresent superhero movies feed Trump's delusion that he does not live by the rules governing mere mortals. (His new collection of NFT trading cards, \$99 each, depicts him as a superhero, the American flag serving as his cape.)

"We had no wars," the former president said in his convention speech. "I could stop wars with just a telephone call." According to this logic, if Trump is reelected, all war will cease due to his irresistible charm, with which he has befriended the "genius" Vladimir Putin, the "fantastic" Victor Orbán of Hungary and Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is "doing a spectacular job." These foreign despots are his comrades, while Trump's existential enemies come from within. Joe Biden is a destroyer of democracy; Harris is a communist, a Marxist and a radical-left lunatic. And both, of course, are liars.

Projection, according to Finchelstein, is another central characteristic of the wannabe dictator. "Fascists always deny who they are and attribute their own characteristics ... to their enemies." Trump's projection makes enemies of his own countrymen, whom he blames for his growing legal peril. As the forces of justice align against him, the superlatives escalate. He has framed this election as a battle between good and evil because for him, it is indeed a desperate and stark struggle to avoid accountability.

On their podcast "Shrinking Trump," the psychologists John Gartner and Harry Segal identify the increasing simplicity of Trump's vocabulary and worldview as a sign of cognitive decline, which it very well may be. But it is also a feature of fascism. Trump has always lied, but his fantasies have now reached a level that no one has ever seen before.

The Los Angeles Times

China-connected spamouflage impersonated Dutch cartoonist

Wenhao Ma

BASED on the posts of an X account that bears the name of Dutch cartoonist Bart van Leeuwen, a profile picture of his face and short professional bio, one would think the Amsterdam-based artist is a staunch supporter of China and fierce critic of the United States. In one post, the account blasts what it calls Washington's "fallacies against the Chinese economy," accompanied by a cartoon from the Global Times - a Beijing-controlled media outlet - showing Uncle Sam aiming but failing to hit a target emblazoned with the words "China's economy."

In another, the account reposts a Chinese propaganda video about the country's rubber-stamp legislature, writing "today's China is closely connected with the world, blending with each other, and achieving mutual success." But Van Leeuwen didn't make the posts. In fact, this account doesn't even belong to him.

It belongs to a China-connected network on X of "spamouflage" accounts, which pretend to be the work of real people but are in reality controlled by robots sending out messages designed to shape public opinion. China has repeatedly rejected reports that it seeks to influence US presidential elections, describing such claims as "fabricated."

VOA Mandarin and DoubleThink Lab (DTL), a Taiwanese social media analytics firm, uncovered the fake Van

Leeuwen account during a joint investigation into a network of spamouflage accounts working on behalf of the Chinese government. The network, consisting of at least nine accounts, propagated Beijing's talking points on issues including human rights abuses in China's western Xinjiang province, territorial disputes with countries in the South China Sea and US tariffs on Chinese goods. Van Leeuwen confirmed in an interview with VOA Mandarin that he had nothing to do with and was not aware of the fake account.

"It's ironic that my identity, being a political cartoonist, is being used for political propaganda," he told VOA in a written statement. The real Van Leeuwen is an award-winning cartoonist whose works have been published on news outlets around the world, such as the Las Vegas Review-Journal, the Korea Times, Sing Tao Daily in Hong Kong and Gulf Today in the United Arab Emirates. He specializes in editorial cartoons, whose main subjects include global politics, elections in the US and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Several of his past illustrations made fun of Chinese leader Xi Jinping's economic policies and the opacity of Beijing's inner political struggles. After being contacted by VOA Mandarin, a spokesman from X said the fake account has been suspended.

Other than finding irony in being impersonated by a Chinese

propaganda bot, Van Leeuwen said the incident also worries him. "This example once again highlights the need for far-reaching measures regarding the restriction of social media," Van Leeuwen wrote in his statement, "especially with irresponsible people like Elon Musk at the helm." After purchasing what was then called Twitter in 2022, the Tesla and SpaceX CEO vowed to reduce the prevalence of bots on the platform, but many users complain it has become even worse. Musk, the world's richest person, is a so-called "free speech absolutist," opposing almost all censorship of people voicing their views. Critics say his policy allows racist and false information to flourish on X.

Former President Donald Trump has praised Musk's business acumen and said he plans to have the man who may become the world's first trillionaire head a commission on government efficiency if he is reelected in November. Before its suspension, the X account that impersonated Van Leeuwen had close to 1,000 followers, more than Van Leeuwen's real X account. It was registered in 2013, but its first post came only last year. The account's early posts were mostly encouraging and inspiring words in Chinese. It also posted many dance videos. Gradually, the account started to mix in more and more political narratives, criticizing the US and defending China. It often reposted content from another

spamouflage account called "Grey World." "Grey World" used a photo of an attractive Asian woman as its profile picture. Most of its posts were supportive of Beijing's talking points. It regularly posted videos and cartoons from Chinese state media. It also posted several of Van Leeuwen's cartoons about American politics. VOA Mandarin and DTL's investigation identified "Grey World" as the main spamouflage account in a network of nine such accounts. Other accounts in the network, including the fake Van Leeuwen account, amplified "Grey World" by reposting its content.

But posts from "Grey World" had limited reach on X, despite having tens of thousands of followers. For example, between August 18 and September 1, its most popular post, a diatribe against Washington's Indo-Pacific strategy, was viewed a little over 10,000 times but only had 35 reposts and 65 likes. After the suspension of the fake Van Leeuwen account, X also shut down the "Grey World" account. The spamouflage network is not the first linked to China. In April, British researchers released a report saying Chinese nationalist trolls were posing as American supporters of Trump on X to try to exploit domestic divisions ahead of the US election. US federal prosecutors in 2023 accused China's Ministry of Public Security of having a covert social media propaganda campaign that also aimed to influence US elections.

VOA

Socialism means never having to say you're sorry

David Frost

WHEN the president does it, that means it's not illegal." So said ex-president Richard Nixon. Perhaps he has inspired Keir Starmer. "When Labour does it, it's not immoral." We know now the simple fact that Sir Keir has taken more gifts than any other MP. Still it's worth looking at the detail on Parliament's website. The expensive hospitality tickets at half the Premier League grounds in England. The free holiday.

The National Theatre tickets. The "Jingle Bell Ball", whatever that is. The specs that cost the same as a family's annual holiday. The "work clothing", as it is delicately described - perhaps he was hoping we would think they were overalls for this horny-handed son of a toiling toolmaker?

Clearly Sir Keir agrees with "Big Bill" Haywood, the American union leader and Soviet sympathiser, who said of his own lifestyle "Nothing's too good for the working class." It's true we didn't know quite what to expect from Labour in government, but one thing I did think we'd get was puritanism. A stern, moralising, we-know-best policy, that familiar sheer socialist oddness, veganism, anti-smoking, compulsory health checks in the office, all administered by the kind of people who actually enjoy sorting their rubbish and think everyone else should too.

That curious earnestness and detachment from ordinary pleasures, that belief that the right public policy can control human nature, which George Orwell mocked in the 1930s and John Betjeman parodied in his poem Huxley Hall in the 1950s, "the deep depression of this bright hygienic hell", the "free thinker" sitting in some bleak nameless new town waiting for his weekly lecture on "sex and civics".

Well it's true that most of us are going to get exactly that treatment. Wes "Savonarola" Streeting is clear we must all give up our pleasures and learn to live within the stern dictates of the NHS. Bridget Phillipson will force on us her new history-free, diversity-rich, socially conscious national curriculum. Cold Sir Keir's atheism is fine, but silently praying near an abortion clinic will land you in court.

But it doesn't look like the PM and his team are going to live like that. Sue Gray gets the highest ever salary for a special adviser. Labour donors and political cronies are shoehorned in on the public purse. Lord Alli gives Angela Rayner a holiday in New York. And for proud Sir Keir at the top of this merry band of brothers, let the free football and the Taylor Swift tickets roll. Some Labour ministers can see how all this comes across, to

judge by their gritted teeth and flashes of anger this week. I don't blame them. Perhaps they can see it doesn't look good when pensioners face the winter cold while a Niagara of public cash pours out to the brothers in Aslef. Perhaps they don't like it when haughty Sir Keir says he needs VIP treatment at the football to avoid mixing with the hoi polloi in the cheap(ish) seats? Maybe some still have some residual socialist conscience, some distant echo of Welsh valley non-conformism, some folk memory of Stafford Cripps and austerity under Attlee?

Or perhaps they remember Harold Wilson's comment that "the Labour Party is a moral crusade or it is nothing". Even Sir Keir quotes this from time to time, though perhaps less so recently. In 2021 he said, "Our own moral crusade must be to address the inequalities and injustices that this crisis has so brutally exposed." Is that the injustice in allocating the hospitality boxes at Arsenal? It's this self image that is the problem.

The truth is that Labour politicians think they are good people because their cause is just. So they can safely be exposed to temptations that would lead astray lesser, fragile, mortals such as members of the Conservative Party. How can you mere voters suspect such good people as us of having

The Telegraph



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif witnesses signing of an MoU between Board of Investment and RUYI Shangdong.

PSX continues with bullish trend

Gains 615 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Friday, gaining 615.16 more points, a positive change of 0.76 percent, closing at 82,074.45 points against 81,459.29 points on the last working day.

A total of 482,373,803 shares were traded during the day as compared to 459,037,985 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 30.188 billion against Rs 18.610 billion on the last

trading day.

As many as 453 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 195 of them recorded gains and 196 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 62 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were First Capital Securities with 31,588,613 shares at Rs2.76 per share, Oil and Gas Development with 29,408,063 shares at Rs 141.29 per share and Fauji Fertilizer Bin Qasim with 28,625,529 shares at Rs

44.36 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 107.92 per share price, closing at Rs 17,616.25, whereas the runner-up was Service Industries Limited with Rs 67.09 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,149.79.

Ismail Industries Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 31.79 per share closing at Rs 1,625.94 followed by ZIL Limited with Rs 23.53 decline to close at Rs 215.70.

Seeking to counter China, US awards \$3 billion for EV battery production in 14 states

WASHINGTON (AP): The Biden administration is awarding over \$3 billion to U.S. companies to boost domestic production of advanced batteries and other materials used for electric vehicles, part of a continuing push to reduce China's global dominance in battery production for EVs and other electronics.

The grants will fund a total of 25 projects in 14 states, including battleground states such as Michigan and North Carolina, as well as Ohio, Texas, South Carolina and Louisiana.

The grants announced Friday mark the second round of EV battery funding under the bipartisan infrastructure law approved in 2021. An earlier round allocated \$1.8 billion for 14 projects that are ongoing. The totals are down from amounts officials announced in October 2022 and reflect a number of projects that were withdrawn or rejected by U.S. officials during sometimes lengthy negotiations.

The money is part of a larger effort by President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris to boost production and sales of electric vehicles as a key element of their strategy to slow climate change and build up U.S. manufacturing. Companies receiving awards process lithium, graphite or other battery materials, or manufacture components used in EV batteries.

"Today's awards move us closer to achieving the administration's goal of building an end-to-end supply chain for batteries and critical minerals here in America, from mining to processing to manufacturing and recycling, which is vital to reduce China's dominance of this critical sector," White House economic adviser Lael Brainard said.

The Biden-Harris administration is "committed to making batteries in the United States that are going to be vital for powering our grid, our homes and businesses and America's iconic auto industry," Brainard told reporters Thursday during a White House call.

The awards announced Friday bring to nearly \$35 billion total U.S. investments to bolster domestic critical minerals and battery supply chains, Brainard said, citing projects from major lithium mines in Nevada and North Carolina to battery factories in Michigan and Ohio to production of rare earth elements and magnets in California and Texas.

"We're using every tool at our disposal, from grants and loans to allocated tax

points. The S&P 500 is set to buck the historical trend of September being weaker for U.S. equities on average.

Risk appetite got a boost earlier in the week after the Fed kicked off its easing cycle with a 50-basis-point cut and assured that more were on the way. The central bank also projected a period of steady economic growth and low unemployment and inflation.

"The Fed's over. The rest of the world decided to buy the U.S. market and also bid up their markets ... and now this is the fade," said Jay Hatfield, portfolio manager at InfraCap. "The most bullish thing that can happen after such a big run is a stall." Traders now see a 60.4 percent probability of a 25 bps cut in November, as per the CME Group's FedWatch tool, while a strong majority of economists in a Reuters poll said that the Fed will cut rates by 25 basis points in both November and December.

The Fed's media blackout period will be lifted with Governor Chris Waller scheduled for an interview at 11:30 a.m. ET.

Some market volatility is expected in the day, as options and futures linked to stock indexes and indi-

vidual stocks are set to expire simultaneously on the third Friday of the last month of the quarter, in an event called "triple witching".

FedEx (FDX.N), opens new tab plunged 14.4 percent after reporting a steep drop in quarterly profit and lowered its full-year revenue forecast, sending the Dow Jones Transport index (.DJT), opens new tab down 3.5%.

Nike (NKE.N), opens new tab jumped 7.5 percent after saying that former senior executive Elliott Hill will rejoin the company to succeed John Donahoe as president and CEO.

A rebalancing of the main indexes is also expected before the market opens on Sept. 23. Historically, equities have performed well in a rate-cutting cycle. However, the outlook appears bleak with the S&P 500's valuations high above its long-term average.

Declining issues outnumbered advancers by a 2.46-to-1 ratio on the NYSE and by a 2.12-to-1 ratio on the Nasdaq.

The S&P 500 posted 13 new 52-week highs and one new low, while the Nasdaq Composite recorded 37 new highs and 31 new lows.

PSI Pakistan appoints Bond Advertising as its agency partner of choice

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Population Services International, Pakistan (PSI), a leading not for profit organisation in quality healthcare have appointed Bond Advertising as their creative & media agency for Pakistan following a multi-agency competitive pitch. The partnership is aimed to drive impact for both the PSI & Viya brands.

The appointment addresses the need to break societal stigmas & encourage young people to engage in a healthy dialogue on reproductive health issues, debunk myths & misconceptions & encourage shared responsibility & decision making.

The partnership has seen the launch of the 'Dadi Knows Best' campaign, aimed to challenge stereotypes and foster open dialogue on sensitive issues as well as several youth-centric collaborations



Commenting on the partnership, PSI Pakistan's Country Director, Ayesha Leghari said "We are excited to have Bond Advertising on board as our digital marketing agency. This collaboration supports our mission to equip youth, men, and communities with the knowledge and confi-

dence to make informed decisions about reproductive health. Together, we aim to break barriers, spark meaningful conversations, and drive real change in how reproductive health is perceived and discussed."

Speaking on the win, Seema Jaffer, CEO Bond Advertising said "We are

delighted to be appointed as PSI's agency partner, a catalyst for its growing impact in the healthcare space. We are committed to bring outstanding creativity, insights and media expertise needed to drive much needed change. We look forward to a meaningful & collaborative relationship."

Karwan-e-Hayat achieves major milestone with SHCC license

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Karwan-e-Hayat, a leading mental health care facility in Pakistan, has been awarded the prestigious SHCC regular license to operate by the Sindh Health Care Commission (SHCC), making it one of the few hospitals and the only mental rehabilitation facility in the country to receive this prestigious license for its mental health services.

The SHCC license is a testament to Karwan-e-Hayat's commitment to delivering high-quality, compliant, and patient-centered care. It confirms that the institution has met all medical, operational, and compliance standards required by the regulatory authority, positioning Karwan-e-Hayat as a trusted provider of mental health care in the province of Sindh.

Karwan-e-Hayat's journey to obtaining this license began before the COVID-19 pandemic, during which it was initially granted a provisional license. Over the past few years, the organization has worked tirelessly to address operational gaps and meet regulatory standards, all while continuing



to provide vital mental health services to thousands of patients. The process intensified in March 2024, with a renewed focus on developing policies, frameworks, and operational enhancements to transition from a provisional license to a permanent one.

"This achievement is the result of years of dedication and collaboration among our staff, healthcare professionals, and leadership team," said Arshad Rahim Khan, CEO of Karwan-e-Hayat. "We are delighted to receive this license from the SHCC, which not only validates

our efforts but also strengthens our ability to serve the mental health needs of our community."

The SHCC Director, CEO, and lead auditors presented the license at a special event at the Karwan-e-Hayat head office in Keamari to celebrate this important milestone for the institution. For four decades Karwan-e-Hayat (KEH) has been one of the pioneering not-for-profit welfare organizations providing treatment and rehabilitation services for the mentally ill.

Aside from being pioneers in psychiatric care

and rehabilitation, Karwan-e-Hayat is also one of the few organizations who are Shariah compliant, ISO 9001-2015 certified and registered with the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP) for provision of quality psychiatric services.

Last year, KEH facilitated more than 243,000 patient visits with almost 96% of overall patients treated free of cost and provided with medications at highly subsidized rates at its Keamari and Korangi facilities and completely free of cost treatment and medication at its 22 community outreach camps.

Short term inflation eases by 0.52%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), decreased by 0.52 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on September 19, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 317.61 points as compared to 319.28 points during the past week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 12.72 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and

51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

Likewise, SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732 witnessed decrease of 0.42 percent and went down to 310.84 points from last week's 312.14 points.

The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,732 to 22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175, decreased by 0.45 percent, 0.44 percent, 0.48 percent and 0.58 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 17 year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 12.72 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and

diesel (5.00%), onions (4.45%), petrol (3.88%), tomatoes (1.93%), sugar (0.70%), potatoes & LPG (0.57%) each, cooking oil 5 litre (0.45%), pulse moong (0.44%), pulse masoor (0.30%), cigarettes (0.25%) and pulse mash (0.24%).

The commodities which recorded major increase in their average prices on week-on-week basis included chicken (1.49%), pulse gram (0.83%), cooked dal (0.81%), shirting (0.74%), cooked beef (0.72%), eggs (0.69%), garlic (0.65%), gur (0.59%), georgette (0.50%) and salt powder.

On-year basis, the commodities that witnessed decrease included wheat flour (38.14%), petrol (24.73%), diesel (24.06%), chilies powder (20.00%),

electricity charges for q1 (13.47%), sugar (11.42%), cooking oil 5 litre (11.13%), rice basmati broken (9.96%), pulse masoor (8.63%), gur (7.68%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (6.43%) and LPG (2.47%).

The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices on year-on-year basis included gas charges for q1 (570.00%), onions (74.62%), pulse gram (57.34%), powdered milk (25.45%), beef (25.31%), shirting (20.17%), tomatoes (17.98%), pulse moong (16.41%), cooked dal (15.65%), salt powder (15.38%), georgette (13.78%) and energy saver (12.87%).

Court Notice

In the Court of Assistant Commissioner Revenue Tehsil Domel District Bannu. Suit No. 080299 Next Hearing Date 24-09-2024 Farid Ullah Khan etc.Vs Muhammad Rasool Khan Notice to Muhammad Rasool Khan S/o Gul Shah Mir Khan R/o Kam Tarhoba Akbar Ali Khan Asperkey Taraf Awal Post of Domel District Bannu. In the above case titled the service of above defendant (s) is not possible through ordinary means, therefore, you defendant (s) is / are informed through this publication that on 24-09-2024 at 8.30 AM. You have to appear before this court either personally or through attorney or through counsel to pursue the suit noted above, otherwise, Ex-parte proceedings will be initiated against you. Seal of court.

Court Notice

In the court of sidra jalal civil judge-III/ judicial Magistrate-II matta Swat.Case #.4/1.institution 08/01/2024. Next Hearing date. 24/09/2024. Khan tooti VS Mst:- Musrafia, Defendant #.06 Shahid s/o Muhammad gul r/o Aaweshad chaparral ghari tehsil matta swat. In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 am dated 24/09/2024 exparte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this court.



XIAN (China): Federal Minister for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik addressing the China-Pakistan Economic and Trade Cooperation Conference.



In brief

Brest mark European debut with 2-1 win

G U I N G A M P (Reuters): Brest celebrated winning their first ever match in a European competition on Thursday after goals from Hugo Magnetti and Abdallah Sima secured a 2-1 victory over Sturm Graz in the Champions League. Magnetti scored Brest's maiden European goal in the 23rd minute, expertly controlling the ball on his chest before volleying into the bottom corner to break the deadlock. However, Sturm Graz equalised just before halftime when Brest midfielder Edimilson Fernandes inadvertently sent the ball into his own net. Brest adopted a more aggressive approach following the interval and they were rewarded when Sima restored the French side's advantage by skillfully evading his marker and scoring with his left foot in the 56th minute. As the match neared its end, Sturm Graz were reduced to 10 men when Dimitri Lavalee received his second booking after a tackle on Magnetti.

Goran appointed as Serbian tennis president

LONDON (AFP): Novak Djokovic's uncle Goran Djokovic was on Friday appointed president of the Serbian tennis federation with the ambition of building a national training centre. Previously federation vice-president, Goran Djokovic has also been involved in organising ATP tournaments in Belgrade and Sofia. "My tennis experience mainly comes from Novak, but I also spent seven years as director of the Serbia Open and Sofia Open," Djokovic said after his election. "My goal is to keep improving what we've started, with finances being the key. "We don't have our own facilities, we don't have a National Training Centre, and I want to resolve that. I wouldn't have even run for this position if we didn't have the full support of the president of Serbia." Former world number one Novak Djokovic has won 24 Grand Slam trophies. The 37-year-old, who won Olympic gold in Paris, is currently ranked fourth in the world.

Sri Lanka lead by 202 in first NZ Test

GALLE (AFP): Dinesh Chandimal and Dimuth Karunaratne forged a 147-run partnership to propel hosts Sri Lanka to a lead of 202 on day three of the first Test against New Zealand on Friday. Sri Lanka were 237-4 at stumps in Galle with Anura Kumara Dissanayake and Dhananjaya de Silva, both on 34, to resume in the morning. Karunaratne (83) was on song, punishing loose deliveries and forcing New Zealand to spread the field to protect the boundaries. Chandimal (61) was more conservative. "When you play in Galle there is a way I play, and I back that style," Karunaratne said. "Rather than trying to defend, the best way forward is sweeps and reverse sweeps on that wicket," he added. "The fourth innings, 300 or 350 is a tough target. That's what we want to get to feel safe." Ajaz Patel broke the deadlock after tea with a ball that spun sharply from outside the rough, catching off-guard the left-handed Karunaratne when the ball snuck past his attempted sweep. Chandimal was sent back in the next over by rookie William O'Rourke, who tempted him into a flick that went straight into the hands of Tom Latham at leg gully.

South Africa Women clinch the three-match T20I series 2-1

MULTAN (Monitoring Desk): South Africa women beat Pakistan women by eight wickets in the third T20I to win the three-match T20I series 2-1 at the Multan Cricket Stadium on Friday afternoon. The first T20I was won by South Africa by 10 runs, while Pakistan won the second T20I by 13 runs on Wednesday evening at the same venue.

Chasing 154 to win, South Africa lost their opening batter Tazmin Brits (0,1b) in the first over to Sadia Iqbal. At that stage of the game captain Laura Wolvaardt and Anneke Bosch got together in the middle and added a crucial 81-run partnership for the second wicket. Bosch after scoring a 37-ball 46, which included six fours and a six, got retired hurt.

Wolvaardt was dismissed for a 37-ball 45, hitting two fours and as many sixes. That the tourists were able to achieve the target with nine balls to spare was largely due to a quickfire unbeaten knock by Annerie Dercksen, who struck six fours and two sixes in a 23-ball 44. She was equally

supported by Sune Luus (14 not out, 13b, 2x4s) as the pair added an unbroken 51-run partnership for the third wicket.

For Pakistan, Sadia and Tuba Hassan bagged a wicket each.

Earlier, after being put into bat, Pakistan openers Muneeba Ali and Gull Feroza got off to a brisk start, adding 49 runs in the batting powerplay. Gull (18,18b, 3x4s) was the first batter to return back to the hut with 50 runs on the board in 6.3 overs. Left-handed batter Muneeba Ali after scoring a 26-ball 33, which included four boundaries run herself out in the 11th over.

Sidra Amin was joined by Nida Dar and the pair added 33 runs for the third wicket before Nida (12,7b,1x6) was bowled by Nonkululeko Mlaba. Captain Fatima Sana was the next batter to return back to the hut not before playing a cameo of 27 off 17 balls, smashing two fours and a six. She stitched a 46-run partnership with Sidra for the fourth wicket. Sidra was the top run-getter for the side, scoring 37 off

40 balls, hitting three fours. Aliya Riaz and Tuba Hassan returned undefeated on eight and six runs, respectively as the hosts scored 153 for five in their 20 overs.

Both sides will now travel to the UAE to feature in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024 commencing from 3 October. South Africa, who are in Group B alongside Bangladesh, England, Scotland and West Indies will fly from Lahore to Dubai tomorrow to participate in the mega event. Pakistan, who are in Group A alongside Australia, India, New Zealand and Sri Lanka will fly from Lahore on Monday morning.

Scores in brief South Africa beat Pakistan by eight wickets Pakistan 153-5, 20 overs (Sadia Amin 37, Muneeba Ali 33, Fatima Sana 27)

South Africa 154-2, 18.3 overs (Anneke Bosch 46 retired hurt, Laura Wolvaardt 45, Annerie Dercksen 44 not out, Sune Luus 14 not out)

Player of the match – Annerie Dercksen (South Africa)

Player of the series – Sune Luus (South Africa).



FAISALABAD: Irfan Khan made an unbeaten 100 off 56 balls, Lions vs Markhorns, Champions One-Day Cup.

Norris sets Singapore pace as struggling Verstappen 15th

SINGAPORE (AFP): McLaren's Lando Norris went fastest Friday to lead Ferrari pair Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz in second practice for the Singapore Grand Prix with world champion Max Verstappen struggling to 15th.

The session could not have panned out much better for Englishman Norris, who trails Verstappen by 59 points at the top of the drivers' standings.

The second practice in Singapore is pivotal for the teams as it is the only session which is run under the same night conditions as the race around the 4.94km Marina Bay Circuit.

"I felt like I got a lot out of Friday," said Norris. "A good start to the weekend and if we can keep it up I'll be happy."

Verstappen had 60 minutes to forget and was only 15th fastest in a skittish Red Bull that looked at times like it was on ice.

The Dutch three-time world champion was a massive 1.294 seconds adrift of Norris's fastest lap of 1min 30.727sec.

"Today was difficult. We didn't have the grip that we would have liked on the tyres, so I felt like we were sliding a lot more than usual," admitted

Verstappen, who had a bad day off the track too after earlier being reprimanded by stewards for swearing in the drivers' press conference.

Leclerc, who had been fastest in first practice, clocked 1:30.785, just 0.058sec slower than Norris, but Sainz, who won in Singapore 12 months ago, was almost six tenths behind his teammate.

"There's still some work ahead of us to get it to feel exactly as I want it to," said the Monegasque Leclerc.

"We have to find the right balance and put it all together in qualifying tomorrow."

Yuki Tsunoda in a much-improved RB was fourth ahead of the second McLaren of Oscar Piastri, fresh from his victory in the Azerbaijan Grand Prix in Baku last weekend.

The second RB driven by Daniel Ricciardo was sixth.

George Russell's Mercedes, Sergio Perez's Red Bull, Alex Albon's Williams and the Haas of Nico Hulkenberg completed the top 10 on the timesheets.

"Nothing seems to work" Russell crashed into a wall at turn eight near the end of the session, but man-

aged to limp back to the pits without his front wing which was embedded in the barrier.

His teammate Lewis Hamilton has won four times before in Singapore, but the seven-time world champion was a long way off the pace on Friday.

"At the moment, we won't be going into Q3," Hamilton said after coming 11th, 0.982 seconds behind Norris.

"We tried everything set-up wise and nothing seems to work."

Singapore was the only race Red Bull failed to win last year in a dominant season.

They returned 12 months later having lost their lead at the top of the constructors' standings to McLaren, who are 20 points ahead.

Verstappen has not won for seven grands prix as McLaren, Ferrari and Mercedes have all taken the chequered flag.

It looks odds-on that his fortunes will not improve around the unpredictable city centre track, where he has never won.

Meanwhile, McLaren said Friday they would modify their controversial rear wing after other teams, led by Red Bull, questioned its legality.



MULTAN: The South Africa Women's cricket team celebrates with the trophy after winning the series 2-1 against Pakistan Women at Multan Cricket Stadium. —APP Photo

Pak-England second Test to be played in Multan

MULTAN (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced a revised schedule of three ICC World Test Championship fixtures between Pakistan and England from October 7-28. The second Test, which was originally planned at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi from October 15-19, will now be played at the Multan Cricket Stadium. The remaining two Tests will be played as originally planned, i.e. 7-11 October in Multan and 24-28 October in Rawalpindi.

The match has been shifted from Karachi to Multan as the National Bank Stadium is undergoing a major facelift for next year's ICC Champions Trophy, which will also be played at the Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium and Rawalpindi's Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

The England men's cricket team will arrive in Multan on October 2. PCB Director Usman Wahla said, "The PCB is thrilled to welcome the England men's cricket team in Pakistan. Despite minor adjustments, we are committed to supporting fans and ensuring a memorable tour. We look forward to a fiercely competitive Test series and showcasing Pakistan's renowned hospitality", said a press release issued here.

Revised schedule:
7-11 Oct – First Test, Multan
15-19 Oct – Second Test, Multan
24-28 Oct – Third Test, Rawalpindi.

Germany to bid to host women's Euro 2029
BERLIN (AFP): Germany will bid to host the 2029 women's European Championships in football, the country's FA (DFB) announced on Friday.

DFB president Bernd Neuendorf said in a statement the bid was the organisation's "flagship project" which will give an "additional boost" to women's football in the country.

Germany hosted the men's Euros in 2024 and has previously hosted the women's event in 1989 (as West Germany) and in 2001.

Portugal, Denmark and Sweden also intend to bid on the project. UEFA will announce the successful candidate in December 2025.

DFB general secretary Heike Ulrich said Germany was a "good and reliable host" with "excellent stadium infrastructure and a great cooperation between host cities and local contacts".

The DFB had recently applied unsuccessfully to host the 2027 Women's World Cup, with Brazil announced in May as the successful candidate.

The next women's Euros, which takes place a year after the men's event in 2025, will be hosted by neighbouring Switzerland.

Germany are by far the most successful country in the competition, having won the women's Euros eight times since the first event in 1984.

England won the last edition in 2022 beating Germany 2-1 after extra time in the final in Wembley Stadium.

ICC delegation applauds preparations for cricket's CT25

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Cricket Council (ICC) delegation called on Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi here to discuss preparations for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025.

A detailed discussion on security arrangements for the tournament also took place in the meeting, said a press release.

The ICC delegation included ICC Senior Manager Events Sarah Edgar, Event Manager and Champions Trophy Event Lead Aun Muhammad Zaidi, General Manager Cricket, ICC, Wasim Khan, Security Manager David Musker and Broadcast consultant Mansoor Manj.

From the Pakistan Cricket Board, Director International Cricket Usman Wahla, Director Security Col. (R) Khalid Mehmood, and Head of Marketing Salman Mesud were also present at this occasion.

The ICC delegation expressed satisfaction with the preparations in Karachi and Rawalpindi for the prestigious tournament. They also deemed the security arrangements in Karachi, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad to be satisfactory.

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi assured the ICC delegation of world-class arrangements for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025.

He further said that the upgradation work of the stadiums will be completed

well before the tournament, and foolproof security arrangements will be made for all participating teams.

Hosting the ICC Champions Trophy in Pakistan is an honor, and preparations are being finalised to match the grandeur of the tournament.

All teams will enjoy playing in a peaceful and secure environment.

After the upgradation, the stadiums will be equipped with international-standard facilities, enhancing the spectators' experience.

The Pakistani nation has a deep love for cricket and will support all teams during the mega event in February and March next year.

Bumrah takes four as India bowl out Bangladesh for 149

CHENNAI (AFP/APP): Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah took four wickets as India bundled out Bangladesh for 149 to lead by 227 runs on day two of the first Test in Chennai on Friday.

Mushfiqui Rahim played out the hat-trick ball, but managed just eight runs before he became Bumrah's second wicket of the day. Shakib and wicket-keeper-batsman Litton Das, who scored 22, put on 51 runs but Jadeja dismissed them both in quick succession with his left-arm spin.

Bumrah kept up the charge with his bouncers and yorkers, and along with Mohammed Siraj helped wipe off the Bangladesh tail with Mehidy Hasan Miraz left unbeaten on 27.

Bangladesh fast bowler Hasan Mahmud finished with figures of 5-83 after rattling the Indian batting on day one, before Ashwin and Jadeja powered a fight-

back from the hosts. The pair resumed with India on 339-6 overnight but pace bowler Taskin Ahmed broke the stand early, with Jadeja caught behind without adding to his overnight score of 86.

Deep hit a quickfire 17 with four boundaries before being dismissed by Taskin, who soon got his third with the wicket of hometown hero Ashwin, caught by skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto. The 38-year-old Ashwin was given a standing ovation after his sixth Test ton, which included 10 fours and two sixes.

Hasan wrapped up the innings with his second five-wicket haul in just his fourth Test. India are looking to extend their lead at the top of the World Test Championship rankings as they begin a fresh Test season of 10 matches. Bangladesh have never beaten India in a Test.

Man City's rest 'Advantage' ahead of Arsenal clash: Guardiola

LONDON (AFP): Pep Guardiola admits Manchester City will have an "advantage" when they face Arsenal on an extra day's rest, but the champions are sweating on Kevin De Bruyne's fitness for the crucial clash with their title rivals.

Guardiola's side played at home in their Champions League draw with Inter Milan on Wednesday, while Arsenal had to wait until Thursday to travel to Italy for their goalless stalemate against Atalanta. Guardiola believes the additional 24 hours of recovery could play a role in deciding the first meeting this term between the clubs that have finished first and second for the last two seasons.

City won both of those title races to leave Arsenal still waiting for their first English crown since 2004.

A victory at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday would be a significant boost to City's hopes of an unprecedented fifth successive Premier League title, with Guardiola grateful for a rare piece of help from the fixture schedulers.

"It is an advantage but I am going to make a list in the last six years of how many times we faced a tough team with

an extra day of rest. It is a very long list," he said with a healthy dose of sarcasm.

City's recovery time advantage might be offset by the potential absence of Belgium midfielder De Bruyne after he limped off during the goalless draw against Inter. Asked if De Bruyne would be fit to face Arsenal, Guardiola said: "He feels a bit better today. Tomorrow we're training and we'll see. He could be involved." Fuelled by Erling Haaland's nine goals, City have already established themselves as the team to beat once again this season.

"Both years have been so close"

The champions, who boast a 100 percent record after four league games, sit two points ahead of Arsenal, who have won three and drawn one. But Guardiola has a healthy respect for the threat posed by Arsenal after the north Londoners took the title fight down to the final day last season.

"The set pieces are not easy because they are taller than us. They defend the space, they are incredible with the runners," he said. "It is always two against one with Gabriel (Magalhaes) and (William) Saliba

focused on Erling. That is why it is difficult to play them. I have to read well the way we have to do it."

Although they finished above them, City failed to beat Arsenal last term, losing 1-0 at the Emirates Stadium, drawing 0-0 in Manchester and suffering a penalty shoot-out defeat in the Community Shield. "It's always been a tight game in the last few years," Guardiola said. "They do many good things. They're a complete team, which is why they've been our biggest rivals in the last two seasons. "Every season they are better and better. Both years have been close, but we have been so strong and we are still strong."

City would move five points clear of Arsenal with a first victory over them since April 2023. But Guardiola insists it is far too early in the season for the result to be regarded as significant no matter who wins. "In this early stage of the season, nothing more than the mood over the next few games will be decided. In terms of the table it's not really important," he said. "I'll be more important when we go to London in the second half of the season."



In brief

ANF seizes 168 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 10 operations across the country during last 24 hours managed to recover 168 kg drugs worth Rs 25 million and arrested eight accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed that a total of 700 grams hashish was recovered from two accused rounded up near a university in H-1 Islamabad. 200 grams hashish, 200 grams ice and 150 grams intoxicated tablets were recovered from the possession of an accused going a motorcycle near a university in Sialkot. 8.4 kg hashish was recovered from a rickshaw intercepted near an educational institution in Sialkot and two suspects including a woman were arrested. On pointination of the accused, another 10.8 kg opium and 54 kg hashish were recovered from a house located in Sheikhpura. The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to students of educational institutions. In two separate operations at Peshawar Airport, 2.1 kg ice was recovered from two Bahrain and Doha bound passengers. 994 grams ice was recovered from the bag of a passenger going to Jeddah at Karachi Airport. In 9th operation, 4.7 kg hashish was recovered from a parcel sent from Peshawar at a courier office in Karachi. In 10th operation, 60 kg hashish was recovered near coastal line in Piski, Balochistan. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

IRSA releases 200,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 200,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 138,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1540.98 feet and was 142.98 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 77,500 cusecs and 110,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1224.45 feet, which was 176.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 15,300 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 115,300, 111,400, 86,300 and 37,400 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 20,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police issue challan slips to 5001 PSVs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police have issued challan slips to 5001 public service vehicles (PSVs) and impounded 658 during 26 days, said a police spokesman here on Friday. He informed that Rawalpindi district police launched a campaign on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi, Syed Khalid Hamdani against unfit PSVs. He said that during the campaign, police challaned 5001 and imposed fines amounting to over Rs 5.4 million on the rules violators. He said that Police were taking action in accordance with the law against unfit PSVs, checking route permits and licenses of the drivers. Legal action was taken against 434 drivers for driving vehicles without licenses, he added.

Ahsan stresses unity among Muslims to tackle challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday stressed the urgent need for greater unity among the Ummah to effectively address the challenges faced, particularly the killings of innocent Muslims in Palestine, Gaza and other regions.

"The unity of the Ummah is the need of the hour, as two billion Muslims in the world seem helpless in front of a country of 10 million that is shedding the blood of innocent people in Gaza, Palestine and Lebanon," he said.

The minister was addressing the opening session of a three-day International Seerat Conference at the National Skills University.

He emphasized the significance of following the

teachings of the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) to succeed in this world and the Hereafter, urging a way out of the existing crisis of 'knowledge and practice'.

Unfortunately, he said: "We (Muslims) are limited to only lip-service and are far behind in the practical world. Today's Muslims are suffering from a crisis of both knowledge and practice."

Ahsan Iqbal noted that Muslims were once ahead in multiple fields in Spain but now lagged behind, with no Muslim scientist close to winning a Nobel Prize.

He warned that some elements just wanted to fan hatred in society by misleading the public, especially the youth, in the name of religion and Namooos-e-Risalat (SAW) to achieve their nefarious

designs.

The minister mentioned that he was the son of a mother who first got the Namooos-e-Risalat (SAW) law approved in Parliament but was targeted by such elements.

He said Islam was a religion of peace, harmony and brotherhood that never allowed taking the lives of innocent people based on their faith, quoting examples from Islamic history.

He asserted that no one had the right to doubt any Muslim's faith or belief, as this would be determined by Allah Almighty on the Day of Judgment.

He stressed the importance of non-violent dialogue, particularly in the face of social media's challenges, adding that today's biggest challenge was social media, where truth could easily be turned into lies and lies into truth.

Twin cities administrations unite to combat dengue surge

ISLAMABAD (APP): The district administrations of Islamabad and Rawalpindi were taking coordinated prevention and enforcement actions to tackle the dengue outbreak.

Amid the alarming rise in dengue cases in the twin cities, a joint meeting of officials from both administrations outlined the next steps in controlling the spread of dengue.

The meeting co-chaired by the Commissioners of both cities while the Deputy Commissioners of Islamabad and Rawalpindi were also in attendance to discuss strategies aimed at curbing the dengue outbreak.

The numbers are concerning: so far, 537 dengue cases have been reported in Rawalpindi and 389 in Islamabad. In Islamabad alone, 41 patients have been admitted to various hospitals. The data also revealed that most of the cases (74%) occurred among men, while 26%

were women. The majority of the affected persons were from particularly between the ages of 20 and 39. In the last 24 hours, 48 new cases of dengue have emerged. Over the past week, 1,646 positive larvae cases were found across both cities. During the meeting, a briefing was given on the ongoing anti-dengue operations, especially at the borders between Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Joint efforts have identified several larvae breeding grounds, which the authorities were targeting for further action.

The administrations stressed the need to use all available resources to prevent the growth of dengue larvae. Officials also highlighted the importance of launching a public awareness campaign to inform citizens about dengue prevention and the standard operating procedures (SOPs) they should follow. In the fight against

dengue, the authorities are not only focusing on prevention but also enforcement. Three persons were arrested in the Industrial Area of Islamabad for failing to comply with anti-dengue SOPs. This action was taken under the supervision of the Assistant Commissioner, particularly in sectors G8 and G9.

In addition to the arrests in the Industrial Area, five more persons were detained in the Nellore area. These individuals were found to be involved in activities that contributed to the breeding of dengue larvae, further highlighting the need for vigilance. The Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad, Irfan Memon, directed officials to intensify the operations and ensure strict adherence to SOPs across all areas. He emphasized that crackdowns were underway against those responsible for environments that facilitate the breeding of dengue larvae.

Minister unveils game-changing tech for motorways, GT roads

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a landmark move, Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has initiated a step to upgrade Pakistan's motorway and GT road monitoring systems where introducing cutting-edge technology to significantly enhance passenger safety and streamline traffic flow.

Talking to a private news channel, minister in a bid to fortify Pakistan's motorways and GT roads has instructed the National High Authority to deploy state-of-the-art monitoring systems, adding, this strategic move will prioritize passenger safety, aiming to minimize risks and ensure seamless travel experiences.

Federal Minister has announced that a remarkable 92% of motorway users have adopted the M-Tag system, a significant milestone in the country's efforts to modernize its transportation infrastructure.

This achievement underscores the success of the government's initiative to promote cashless transactions and reduce congestion at toll plazas, he added. The M-Tag system, introduced by the National Highways

and Motorway Police (NHMP) will utilize radio frequency identification (RFID) technology to facilitate seamless travel on motorways, he mentioned.

With the M-Tag sticker on their vehicles users can pass through toll booths without stopping, as the toll amount is automatically deducted from their prepaid account, he mentioned. Minister also revealed that a state-of-the-art tracking system is now operational on all major roads in the province, enhancing safety and efficiency.

This advanced system enables real-time monitoring, swift incident response and data-driven decision-making to optimize traffic flow, he added. To further encourage adoption, he urged transporters to take advantage of the M-Tag facility without delay. By doing so, they will not only contribute to a smoother, more efficient transportation network but also benefit from reduced waiting times and increased convenience, he stressed.

The National Highway Authority (NHA) is teaming up with the Motorway Police to ensure the smooth

functioning of traffic on Pakistan's motorways, he highlighted.

The federal minister's also directive to adopt the latest cameras and technology is a significant step towards enhancing the National Highway Authority's (NHA) efficiency and revenue collection.

The minister's appreciation for NHA's efforts to boost revenue is well-deserved, as this will enable the institution to become more financially stable and self-sufficient.

By imposing fines on cash users, authorities hope to encourage more drivers to switch to E-tags, leading to a smoother and more efficient toll collection process, he said. This shift is expected to reduce revenue losses due to malpractices in manual cash collection and decrease queue lengths at toll plazas, he added.

He said that uniform laws should be adopted for those vehicles who wanted to use motorways. He said that all those officials who will bring reforms for betterment of NHA will be awarded honorary certificates.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Privatisation, Abdul Aleem Khan presiding Privatisation Commission Board Meeting. —APP Photo

Rise in Rare Indus Dolphin number propitious: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson, Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Friday hailed the increase in the number of Rare Indus Dolphin as a propitious development signifying thriving ecosystem in the Indus Delta.

The Senate Standing Committee Chair welcomed the increase in the number of Indus Dolphin (Bhulan), the world's rarest mammal in a press statement received here.

Senator Sherry Rehman said the concerned government agencies and private organizations had an important role in the conservation and breeding of the Indus dolphin.

"In 2001, the number of Indus dolphins was only 965, which has increased to 2,100 according to the 2021 survey. The increase in the number of Indus dolphins is a sign of the improvement of the Indus River's ecosystem. According to the 1879 survey, the number of Indus dolphins in the Indus River was 10,000," she said.

Unfortunately, she said due to the construction of barrages, human activities, river pollution and other reasons, their numbers had drastically decreased.

However, the positive change in the number of Bhulan in the Indus River was a good example of joint conservation efforts, she said, adding, "it is proved that together we can conserve our natural resources."

Sherry Rehman said that she had launched the Living Indus project in 2022, which included the enhancement and conservation of the Indus River ecosystem and watershed. "Serious steps are needed to protect the Indus dolphin."

Mushaal urges global action against HR abuses in Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of Jailed Kashmiri Hurriyat Leader Mohammad Yasin Malik Friday has issued a defiant call to action, pledging to uncover and condemn India's alleged human rights abuses and illicit strategies aimed at perpetuating its control over Kashmir.

Talking to a Private news channel, Mushaal Hussein Mullick urged the global community to take urgent action and highlighted that the excessive use of force by Indian security forces, resulting in unlawful killings and injuries of civilians, including the use of pellet-firing shotguns that had partially or completely

blinded many victims. Mushaal has also emphasized the need for accountability and an end to impunity for human rights violations.

"The human rights situation in Kashmir has been a concern for decades with reports of mass killings, enforced disappearances, torture and harassment," she highlighted.

"The Indian government has been accused of committing severe human rights abuses against Kashmiri civilians with militant groups also responsible for similar crimes," she mentioned.

The international community must prioritize justice and accountability in Kashmir, she urged.

Mushaal's call to action

serves as a reminder of the urgent need for collective action. "Upcoming elections in the occupied valley are a sham and that Kashmiris will not settle for anything less than freedom," she emphasized.

She strongly condemned the upcoming Kashmir elections, labeling them a 'farce' and a 'drama'.

"Elections are an attempt to legitimize India's occupation of Kashmir and undermine the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination," she believed.

"Indian government has altered the demographics of the region by granting domiciles to non-Kashmiris, which would influence the election's outcome," she argued.

DIG emphasizes zero tolerance for corruption

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

According to police spokesperson, under the special directives of the Inspector General (IG) Police Syed Ali Nasir Ali Rizvi, the DIG Syed Ali Raza said that the Islamabad Police is committed to resolve public issues on priority.

DIG said this while listening to the complaints and issues of the public as

well as police officials during the Khuli Kachehri held at his office, he said.

Senior police officers were also present on this occasion, he added.

He said during the Khuli Kachehri, Syed Ali Raza listened to the complaints of the citizens and marked their applications to the concerned officers for timely action on merit.

He also directed them to send reports to his offices in the given time frame, he added.

Ali Raza further said that strict action will be taken against officials involved in bribery or corruption and a zero-tolerance policy will be adopted

ed in this regard, he said.

Raza emphasized that Islamabad Police would not leave any stone unturned to secure the lives and property of the citizens.

"Such interaction would be continued in future to provide maximum relief to the citizens," DIG added.

Syed Ali Raza said that interaction during "Khuli Kachehri" would help to promote friendly policing and will also ensure self-accountability, immediate resolution of citizens' problems.

He said the protection of life, property and self-respect of citizens comes first, DIG maintained.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of youth participating in a cycle rally "Cycle for life" to promote environmental preservation, raise awareness about the dangers of drug use among youth organized by the PM's Youth Program.

Senate body reviews overbilling, data discrepancies

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate Standing Committee on Power Division on Friday reviewed overbilling, power theft and data discrepancies in power sector.

The Committee which met with Mohsin Aziz in the Chair discussed a point of public importance raised by Senator Palwasha Muhammad Zai Khan regarding the overbilling of electricity bills and the indifference of officers/officials to the plight of consumers.

Senator Palwasha expressed concern over incorrect meter readings, stating that her family had to visit the office 28 times in three months, where they were met with misbehavior.

Senator Palwasha con-

demned this conduct, labeling it as part of a mafia, and called for strict action. She suggested referring the matter to the FIA to dismantle this group and set an example.

She emphasized that if such treatment could happen to her family, the hardships faced by the common public would be unimaginable.

The Committee Chairman, acknowledging her concerns, agreed that the issue is of public importance and noted that the scale of suffering is likely far greater. A senior official from the Power Division informed the Committee that actions had already been taken. The individual responsible has been transferred, and the faulty

meter reading has been canceled. Action has been taken against miscreants, he added.

Minister of Power Division Sardar Awaiz Leghari said that what the Senator mentioned falls under customer care, which is not directly part of electricity distribution. He also noted that there is a complaint system, 118, and all calls made to this number are forwarded to the distribution companies. They are working on implementing a computerized system at the subdivision level and revamping it to ensure complaints are resolved with equal importance.

He emphasized that simply transferring people is not the solution; they are striving to make real changes. While

emphasizing the need to address electricity theft and overbilling, Senator Mohsin Aziz, also directed the Power Division to provide clarity in their reports, noting inconsistencies in their responses regarding the number of Bagasse-based IPPs operating in the country and their tariff determination.

He said that the Ministry cross-check Bagasse pricing and explain why this issue arose in 2013 and 2015. He further added that linking the price to the dollar and imported coal has created a depreciation advantage for local operators.

He recommended that the Ministry review the Bagasse pricing and submit a report accordingly. Subsequently, a

detailed report on load-shedding and feeder-wise electricity distribution was presented by PESCO and SEPCO.

Mohsin Aziz pointed out the insertion of two feeders in one area, which has caused significant data discrepancies and requires cross-verification.

He also highlighted discrepancies in feeder rates in the data provided by SEPCO, noting that line losses from one area seem to have been attributed to another.

In his closing remarks, Senator Mohsin Aziz recommended organizing the feeder-wise details more systematically by dividing the data into six-month periods and categorizing load-shedding under categories

2, 5, and 6 to provide a clearer picture. He also criticized the inappropriate behavior of PESCO and SEPCO towards the public, calling for an explanation for the widespread electricity theft. Based on the report, the committee will further investigate corruption within the responsible departments.

The meeting was attended by Senator Palwasha Muhammad Zai Khan, Senator Kazim Ali Shah, Senator Muhammad Aslam Abro, Senator Hidayatullah Khan, the Minister for Energy (Power Division), The Secretary of Power Division, Special Secretary (Power Division), and senior officials of all concerned departments.

Three workers killed in mine landslide

BADAKHSHAN (Amu TV): A landslide at a gold mine in Badakhshan's Warduj district has claimed the lives of three workers, according to local reports. The Taliban-run Bakhtar News Agency reported that the workers were trapped under debris while working on a hillside that is part of the gold mining area. The incident occurred in the villages of Khum Bahar and Do Dargi. The landslide took place on Thursday afternoon.

About 1000 females languish in jails

KABUL (Pajhwok): About 16,000 prisoners, including 1000 women, have been passing their days and nights in the country's jails, detention centers and correctional and training centers. Director General of Prisons Reform, Maulvi Mohammad Yusuf Mestri, in an exclusive interview told Pajhwok currently 11,000 convicted prisoners languished in the country's prisons and the remaining 4,000 were in custody pending court decisions.

Nazari: Enemies target Afghanistan with economic warfare



KABUL (TOLONews): Abdul Latif Nazari, the technical deputy of the Ministry of Economy, said at a program in Kabul that the enemies of Afghanistan are trying to bring the Afghan people to their knees through economic warfare.

The technical deputy of the Ministry of Economy added that the enemies of Afghanistan could not achieve their goals through political and military means.

Nazari said: "When the enemies of the Afghan people could not achieve their goals politically, and when they could not pursue their objectives militarily, they now want to bring our people to their knees through economic warfare."

Zar Mohammad

Haqqani, the Deputy Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs, said: "It is the responsibility of the government to create trade, industry, and jobs, and to provide ease of living for the people."

The Chamber of Commerce and Investment said that for Afghanistan to become self-sufficient in various sectors, the Islamic Emirate needs to provide more facilities for investment and economic growth in the country.

Khanjan Alokozay, a member of the board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment said: "The government should bring in facilities, formulate laws, create opportunities, provide elec-

tricity, and eliminate corruption."

Abdul Rahman Rahmani, Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat chief, said: "For this, we have many benefits in our country. First, less time and energy are used because each person can transfer money from any location without standing in bank queues."

Officials of a private company that organized this program to launch a new product, "Mobile Electronic Money Services," emphasized the importance of using modern technology for money transfers, stating that it would prevent the deterioration of Afghan currency in the country.

Ajmal Khan Momand, the CEO of the private company, said: "Your individual and commercial transactions will be conducted with transparency, speed, and accuracy. We manage the salaries of government and non-governmental agencies and their other payments via mobile."

The physical use of money has led to its deterioration, and recently, the Central Bank and several companies in Afghanistan have been trying to prevent this through the provision of electronic money services.

Six flogged in Sar-e-Pul for alleged offenses

SAR-E POL (Khaama press): The Supreme Court of the Taliban has announced that six individuals have been whipped in public for "illicit relations" and "adultery" in the province of Sar-e Pol.

On Thursday, September 19, the court released a statement indicating that this punishment was carried out in the "Balkhab" district of Sar-e Pol.

The statement mentioned that the individuals received between 29 and 39 lashes and were sentenced to one to three years of enforced imprisonment.

Details regarding the identities of these individuals have not been provided. Previously, the Supreme Court of the Taliban announced the implementation of corporal punishment on three individuals, including one woman, in Faryab province.

It is noteworthy that since the government regained control over Afghanistan, there have been multiple instances of public lashings of accused individuals. At the same time, the enforcement of retributive and corporal punishment has faced criticism from human rights organizations and the international community.

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is exacerbated by the oppressive policies of the current regime, which prioritize punitive measures over the well-being of citizens.

Avoid controversial discussions, religious scholars urged



KABUL (Pajhwok): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has called on religious scholars to refrain from engaging in controversial discussions and debates that could confuse the public.

Zabihullah Mujahid,

chief spokesman for the IEA, shared a statement from the Prime Minister's office regarding the prevention of such discussions on his X page.

The statement emphasized the IEA's responsibility to safeguard the

lives, property, and honor of the Muslim community, along with ensuring overall psychological stability and security.

The statement added that scholars should avoid addressing rare issues that may lead to sedition, espe-

cially those that the general public might not understand. Instead, they should focus on topics that benefit both this world and the hereafter, fostering unity and solidarity among the people.

Scholars were encouraged to provide guidance on religious beliefs, Islamic teachings, ethics, and practical matters relevant to daily life, drawing from the extensive knowledge within Islam.

Additionally, the Prime Minister's office advised against publishing academic or Sufi topics that are specialized and not suited for general audiences. Such discussions are considered appropriate only for their specific contexts and audiences.

The Prime Minister office reiterated its commitment to preventing discord, division, and conflict, and added that it would take serious measures against those who attempt to incite such issues.

Human Rights Watch:

Ban on girls's education in Afghanistan enters 4th year

KABUL (Khaama press): Human Rights Watch reports that the ban on education for Afghan girls has entered its fourth year, yet the international community has not taken meaningful action to lift this restriction.

On Thursday, September 19, Human Rights Watch noted in a post on X/Twitter that the ban has drawn significant global attention this week as it marks its fourth anniversary.

The organization states that the ban on girls' edu-

cation is a systematic and misogynistic attack by the Taliban on women's rights, entrenching gender inequality in Afghanistan's education system.

Human Rights Watch describes the prohibition of education for girls above the sixth grade as a systematic attack that institutionalizes gender inequality in Afghanistan's educational framework.

The organization emphasizes that this ban negatively impacts all areas of Afghan life, lead-

ing to severe social, developmental, and economic consequences for the country.

It further warns that Afghanistan will face a serious shortage of female doctors, nurses, teachers, and professionals as a result of this action.

Human Rights Watch stresses that the ban undermines women's roles in Afghan society, creating an unequal and impoverished community devoid of female participation.

The organization calls on the Taliban to immedi-

ately end the ban on girls' education and provide quality education for all. It insists that the international community must pressure the Taliban to fulfill its commitments and swiftly revoke the ban.

The ongoing restriction on girls' education represents a grave violation of human rights and hinders Afghanistan's progress. Urgent action is needed from the global community to restore educational opportunities for Afghan girls and support their fundamental rights.

Baghlan sees surge in tourist visits amid improved security

BAGHLAN (TOLONews): Izzat Mir Haqqani, the acting head of Baghlan's Department of Information and Culture, reported

that in the first four months of this solar year, more than 40,000 domestic and foreign tourists have visited the scenic spots of this province.

Haqqani told TOLONews that among these visitors, over one hundred were foreign tourists, and the rest were domestic.

The acting head of Baghlan's Department of Information and Culture stated: "In the past quarter, according to the sta-

tistics we have, more than 40,000 domestic tourists and one hundred foreign tourists have visited various sites in Baghlan."

According to Izzat Mir Haqqani, Baghlan is one of the provinces with many historical sites; however, due to insecurity in recent years, the number of tourists visiting has been low. He pledged that security has now been established throughout the province.

The acting head of Baghlan's Department of Information and Culture added: "Tourists from many countries, such as Germany, Japan, China,

the United States, France, and recently from other countries, have visited Baghlan."

At the same time, some military experts emphasize that to increase the number of tourists in the country, more attention should be paid to addressing security concerns.

Aziz Stanikzai, a military affairs expert, said: "Tourists who travel from one country to another are accompanied by specific individuals, both for security and health reasons, to ensure they don't encounter any problems. We expect the Islamic

Emirate to create these conditions for foreign tourists."

Kamran Aman, another military affairs expert, said: "The government should strive not to impose restrictions on domestic and foreign tourists, as any such restrictions will result in a decrease in the number of tourists."

Previously, officials from the Ministry of Information and Culture reported that over the past year, nearly 9,000 foreign tourists visited the country's historical sites, generating an income of 48 million afghani.

25-Year-old Afghan man sentenced to death in Iran

NIMROZ (TOLONews): A number of residents of Nimroz say that the Iranian government has sentenced some of their relatives to death on charges of drug trafficking.

Nematullah, a 25-year-old from Helmand, was recently sentenced to death in Iran on charges of drug trafficking. He was a ninth-semester medical student at a private university in Helmand and had traveled to Iran for leisure and to visit relatives.

Nematullah, the young man accused of drug trafficking, said: "I ask the government to try to secure my release. I have given hope to all the prisoners here that when I return to Afghanistan, I will try to help them as well. Regret after my execution will be of no use; don't let other young people be executed like my uncle, who was executed."

Nematullah's family is asking the caretaker government to address this issue.

Ahmad Shah, Nematullah's father, said, "My son Nematullah is 25 years old and has been accused of drug trafficking



in Iran and sentenced to death. He is a ninth-semester medical student at a private university in Helmand who wanted to travel to Iran for leisure and to visit his relatives. I ask the Islamic Emirate

government to try to secure my son's release or transfer him to the country and to speak with Iranian officials."

Shirin, Nematullah's mother, said: "I ask both governments to free my son; he is innocent. He is my eldest son, and living without him is difficult for me."

Shukria, Nematullah's wife, said: "I ask the

Afghan government to save my husband from the death sentence; he is innocent."

Nematullah's relatives said that last week his uncle was also executed by the Iranian government on charges of drug trafficking.

Ahmad Shah, a relative of Nematullah, said: "Nemat was a small boy who grew up with us, and I never saw any bad behavior or wrongdoing from him."

Meanwhile, Amir Khan Muttaqi, the acting foreign minister, said they have allocated a budget to address the situation of

prisoners in neighboring countries.

According to Muttaqi, in the past two years, more than two thousand prisoners have been transferred from Iran to Afghanistan for the purpose of addressing their cases.

The acting foreign minister said, "We have inquired about Afghan prisoners. Our ambassador and diplomats have visited embassies to ensure that if someone is injured, they receive care, and if someone has completed their sentence, they are transferred. We have even allocated a special budget for this, and it has happened that someone was kidnapped in another country, and with the help of that country, we managed to free them and bring them back to the country."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also said, regarding the migrants who have been deported from Germany on charges of criminal offenses, that those whose crimes have not been proven will be handed over to their families, and those who have committed crimes will be dealt with according to the country's laws.

Hard labor and life-threatening risks: The struggles of undocumented Afghan migrants

KABUL (Amu TV): A field study conducted by Amu reveals the dire circumstances faced by undocumented Afghan migrants working abroad, who endure "significant life-threatening risks" and "harsh, extremely difficult" working conditions. The research sheds light on the precarious lives of migrants who, in pursuit of better opportunities, find themselves trapped in dangerous jobs with little pay and constant fear of exploitation or arrest.

Seventy-five percent of participants in the study—comprising 40 individuals from eight Afghan provinces—reported working under "high levels of life-threatening risks" in foreign countries. The research included respondents from Farah, Bamian, Jowzjan, Paktia, Faryab, Kunduz, Daikundi, and Parwan, all of whom had undertaken illegal migration and faced immense challenges in their host countries.

Despite the perilous journey of illegal migration, the study found that the threats in the destination countries were no less daunting. Afghan migrants typically found themselves in back-breaking labor, from construction work on high-rise buildings to the physically demanding work in coal mines.

Grueling work, dangerous conditions

All participants in the study reported undertaking physically demanding labor. These jobs included construction work on tall buildings, mining—

especially in coal mines—agricultural work, shepherding, metalworking, waste collection, well-digging, tiling, iron foundry work, and service jobs in hotels. Many migrants noted that the work they performed was often what local citizens in the host countries were unwilling to do.

The study highlighted how these migrants worked under grueling conditions, often for low wages and in environments where their safety was routinely compromised. Seventeen and a half percent of respondents described their working conditions as "bad," while 5 percent said their work environment was "very bad." Additionally, 17.5 percent abelled their work as "extremely difficult," while 15 percent called it simply "difficult." A small minority—7.5 percent—reported having "good" working conditions, and 2.5 percent said their conditions were "very good."

Despite these varied responses, the overwhelming majority of Afghan migrants described their jobs as dangerous and physically taxing, with 75 percent reporting that they faced life-threatening risks at work. Seven and a half percent stated that they encountered threats to their safety, while 2.5 percent described their work environment as moderately dangerous. Another 2.5 percent claimed they did not face serious threats but focused solely on earning wages to support their families back home.

Exploitation and unpaid wages

The study also shed light on the exploitation that Afghan migrants face. Twenty-two and a half percent of respondents said they feared arrest by police while working, as many are undocumented and live in constant fear of deportation. Fifteen percent of the respondents identified unpaid wages as a significant threat, stating that many employers refused to pay them after work was completed. Ten percent mentioned enduring "humiliation and harassment" on the job as one of the primary threats they faced.

In addition to these challenges, 20 percent reported facing serious life-threatening risks, along with a lack of access to health insurance or medical care. Seven and a half percent mentioned both arrest threats and unpaid wages, while 15 percent listed other dangers, such as threats from wild animals, psychological illnesses, and a general sense of insecurity. Five percent of respondents said they did not face any direct threats, while 2.5 percent reported facing the risk of being fired without notice.

For some migrants, the fear of being arrested or detained by the police was so severe that it impacted their mental health and ability to sleep. Several respondents described how they stayed awake at night, fearful that authorities might detain them in the early morning hours.

Sarwar, a migrant who worked in

Iran, described the constant fear of arrest: "The police come at night and arrest people. You don't sleep, always fearing the knock on the door. Some escape, but if they catch you, they beat you and break your limbs."

Stories of struggle and survival

The study highlights individual stories of struggle and survival, providing a closer look at the hardships faced by Afghan migrants. Shuja, an undocumented migrant, described the exploitation faced by Afghan workers in Iran: "You work for ten employers, and if you're lucky, two of them will pay you. When the month ends and you go to collect your wages, they say 'come tomorrow,' and eventually they threaten to call the police. They don't pay, but they work you hard."

Javad, another migrant, recounted a similar experience in Pakistan, where he worked for years but returned to Afghanistan empty-handed. "We left Pakistan with nothing after years of hard work. All our earnings were left behind, and when we asked for our money, they told us to go away—that it wasn't ours."

Javad's story echoes the sentiments of many migrants, who often return home after years of hard labor without receiving their promised wages. His possessions, including his home and vehicle, were left behind in Pakistan, and he was forced to sell his belongings at a fraction of their value to survive.

Ahmad Shah, another migrant,

shared similar frustrations: "We thought there would be better job prospects, but we were wrong. We worked long hours for about 10,000 afghanis a month, and at the end of the month, they wouldn't even pay us."

The harsh realities of life abroad stand in stark contrast to the expectations of migrants, many of whom hoped for a better future and greater opportunities. Instead, they found themselves exploited, working long hours in dangerous conditions, often without any financial compensation.

Women and children in migration

The study also highlighted the experiences of women and children who accompany their families during illegal migration. Due to economic hardship, many women were forced to take on physically demanding labor, such as agricultural work. Setara, a female migrant, recounted her time working in Iran: "We harvested crops like potatoes and onions under the scorching sun. Iranian women working alongside us insulted us, saying we were taking their jobs."

Despite the hardships, these women and their families had little choice but to continue working in difficult conditions to provide for their loved ones.

Enduring exploitation

Thousands of undocumented Afghan migrants continue to work in neighboring countries such as Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, enduring grueling conditions and life-threatening

risks. Many undertake the most physically demanding jobs, often for minimal pay, while living under the constant threat of deportation or arrest.

Hamid, another migrant, described the situation: "Work is hard for Afghan migrants. We do the heaviest jobs, and employers don't pay us. They threaten to fire us if we complain. I had no choice but to migrate because of poverty."

Others, like Sarwar, explained how the fear of arrest often led them to take desperate measures to avoid being caught. "The police come at night to arrest people. Some escape, but those who don't are beaten, and their limbs are broken," he said.

Conclusion

The stories of these migrants paint a bleak picture of life for undocumented Afghans working abroad. While they undertake back-breaking labor to support their families, they face constant exploitation, threats, and danger. Many are left unpaid and live in fear of being arrested or deported, while their hopes for a better life remain unfulfilled.

For thousands of Afghan migrants, the pursuit of a better future continues to be fraught with hardship, as they work tirelessly in foreign lands, enduring life-threatening risks and often receiving little in return. Despite the challenges, many remain determined to support their families back home, no matter the cost.

Chinese firm to set up textile parks in Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Board of Investment and Chinese textile firm RUYI Shangdong on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under which the latter would establish textile parks of international standards in Pakistan to boost country's exports to \$5 billion and create around 0.5 million jobs.

The document was signed as a nine-member delegation of RUYI group led by Chairman QiuYafu called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here as a significant development regarding Chinese investment in Pakistan following the prime minister's recent China visit.

According to the MoU signed at a ceremony witnessed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Chinese company would establish textile parks in Sindh and Punjab provinces where around 100 Chinese textile firms would be invited to invest. The prime minister lauded the time-tested Pakistan-China friendship and observed that the bilateral economic ties were

strengthening with each passing day.

He welcomed the Chinese RUYI group to Pakistan and lauded its investment in Pakistan's textile sector, recalling that the firm had been the first investor of Sahiwal Coal Power Plant established under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Briefing the prime minister, the company head said that the textile parks aimed at boosting textile exports and making the country a hub of textiles and garments.

To be powered by solar energy, the textile parks would be developed as zero-carbon and automated facility to enhance the exports to \$2 billion in its first phase and \$5 billion in the second one besides creating from 0.3 million to 0.5 million jobs. The meeting was told that work on the textile parks to start by this year and would take another three years to complete. The Chinese company would also establish a whole sale commodity center in Karachi and Lahore.

The meeting decided to form working groups in Islamabad and Beijing to further pursue the under-

standing. Prime Minister Shehbaz also formed a special committee under Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar comprising federal ministers for commerce, investment and privatization, industries and production, foreign secretary, a representative of Special Investment Facilitation Council and Zafaruddin Mehmood.

The RUYI group chairman told the meeting that they had come to Pakistan, not as an investor but a friend. He also mentioned the Shehbaz Speed referring to the fast-paced execution of development projects during Shehbaz Sharif's stint as Punjab chief minister and also hoped for same pace in the textile parks project.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan, Industries and Production Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain, Privatisation Minister Abdul Aleem Khan, Power Minister Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari and other relevant senior officials attended the meeting.

IHC orders probe into illegal arrest of 3 citizens

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday issued directives for investigation of illegal arrest of three citizens by the Capital Police and sought a report till September 24.

Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, hearing the case, remarked that the court would not spare the police officers involved in the act as it was defaming the police and judiciary as well. He remarked that the magistrate used to give remand of an accused without understanding the charges against him. The chief justice observed that allegations sans evidence against the accused were not enough.

Addressing the Inspector General of Police Islamabad, he observed that he had to appear repeatedly before the court as head of the institution due to his officers' acts. The court said that as per the reports the three persons were lifted from the SSP Office on September 17, while the police stated that they were arrested on September 19, after registering a case and the same day their physical remand was taken.

Justice Aamer Farooq remarked that he would also write against the magistrate concerned that what material was presented before him to get the remand of three persons. The case was about the missing of an oil tanker and the accused had also no connection with it, he added. The chief justice remarked that the police had been involved in the real estate business and land grabbing. The case was then adjourned.

Fazl calls for institutional reforms

F.P. Report

MULTAN: JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has announced that the party has decided to focus on institutional reforms rather than targeting individuals. Speaking to the media in Multan on Friday, he stressed that constitutional amendments should be given importance.

He disclosed that the government initially hesitated to provide a draft of the proposed amendments but after persistent efforts, copies were shared with both JUI-F and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). However, discrepancies were found between the draft, which raised concerns.

He expressed his dissatisfaction with the chaotic situation in Islamabad, where the environment was tense. The JUI-F chief further stated that party's legal team was reviewing the draft and a final version would be prepared soon. Rehman lamented the government's attempt to pass incorrect laws through the parliament. He reaffirmed his stance on the judiciary and military's role within their boundaries. While concluding, he said the JUI-F had struck no alliance with the PTI and the party would focus on politics of ethics.

Meanwhile, Parliamentary Leader of Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (JUI) in Senate, Senator Maulana Atta-ur-Rehman has said that his party has reservations over the constitutional amendment bill and will not accept final decision without formal approval.

Talking to media persons here on Friday, he said that the JUI stands firm on its stance regarding constitutional amendment bill. Senator Maulana Atta-ur-Rehman ruled out any progress with Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) regarding constitutional amendment and said that no meeting was scheduled with PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in this regard.

He said that our legal experts have completed their homework regarding the Constitutional Court. However, the issue of Constitutional Court has not been yet discussed in the party meeting, he added. The JUI leader said that the Supreme Court was responsible for resolving the dispute about reserved seats as the reserved seats were distributed as per decision of the apex court. He said that change in decision of Supreme Court created a dispute. Whatever decision was made by the Election Commission, JUI will follow it, he concluded.



BEIRUT: Medical staff waiting for arrival of an ambulance outside of a hospital, after an Israeli strike in Lebanon.

Israeli forces deepen raid in Rafah, kill 27 across Gaza

CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli forces killed at least 27 Palestinians in tank and air strikes on north and central areas of the Gaza Strip on Friday, medics said, as tanks advanced further into northwest Rafah near the border with Egypt.

The unrelenting fighting between the Israelis and Hamas militants in the enclave carried on even as a parallel conflict in the Lebanon-Israel border area involving Hamas' allies Hezbollah intensified. Meanwhile, some Palestinians displaced by the Israeli assault on Gaza said they feared their temporary beachside camp would be inundated by high waves.

Palestinian health officials said shelling by Israeli tanks killed eight people and wounded several others in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central area of Gaza, and six others were killed in an airstrike on a house in Gaza City. In the northern town of Beit Hanoun, an Israeli strike on a car killed and wounded several Palestinians, medics said.

It was not clear how many of the casualties were combatants and how many were civilians. In the southern city of Rafah, where the Israeli army has been operating since May, tanks advanced further to the northwest

area backed by aircraft, residents said. They also reported heavy fire and explosions echoing in the eastern areas of the city, where Israeli forces blew up several houses, according to residents and Hamas media.

"Our fighters are engaged in fierce gunbattles against Israeli forces, who advanced into Tanour neighborhood in Rafah," Hamas armed wing said in a statement. The Israeli military has said that forces operating in Rafah had in past weeks killed hundreds of Palestinian militants, located tunnels and explosives and destroyed military infrastructure. Israel's demand to keep control of the southern border line between Rafah and Egypt has been the focus of an international effort to conclude a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas.

The United States and mediators Qatar and Egypt have for months attempted to secure a truce but have failed to bring Israel and Hamas to a final agreement. Two obstacles have been especially difficult — Israel's demand that it keep forces in the Philadelphia corridor between Gaza and Egypt, and the specifics of an exchange of Israeli hostages for

Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

In a new challenge to Palestinians displaced in the Al-Mawasi area in southern Gaza, many were concerned about the danger of high waves. Some tents put up close to the beach flooded last week. "Enough, enough, enough. We were pushed by the occupation (Israel) to the sea, where we believed it was safe, last week the sea flooded and washed away some tents, and that could happen again, where would we go?" said Shaban, 47, an electrical engineer displaced from Gaza City.

This latest war in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict was triggered last Oct. 7 when Hamas attacked Israel, killing 1,200 people and taking about 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's subsequent assault on the Hamas-governed enclave has killed more than 41,000 Palestinians, according to the local health ministry, while displacing nearly the entire population of 2.3 million, causing a hunger crisis and leading to genocide allegations at the World Court that Israel denies. Israel says it aims to eradicate the Iran-aligned Hamas, which it deems a threat to its own existence.

Top Hezbollah commander among 12 killed in Israel strike on Beirut

BEIRUT (AFP): A source close to Hezbollah in Lebanon said an Israel air strike Friday killed one of its top military leaders, with Israel confirming it had carried out a "targeted strike" in Beirut. Requesting anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, the source said the Israeli strike on Hezbollah's stronghold in south Beirut killed the head of the group's elite Radwan unit, Ibrahim Aqil.

At least 12 people were killed and 59 wounded, according to reports. Israel said it had conducted a "targeted strike" in Beirut, where a security official said an air strike had hit Hezbollah's stronghold in the south of the city. The air strike is the third to hit the southern suburbs of Beirut since the start of the Israel-Hamas war on Oct. 7, with the focus of the violence shifting dramatically this week from Gaza to Lebanon.

Strikes blamed on Israel killed a top commander of Hezbollah, Fuad Shukur, in July, and a leader of allied Palestinian militant group Hamas, Saleh Al-Aruri, in January. Earlier Friday, Israel said Hezbollah had fired dozens of rockets from Lebanon following air strikes which destroyed dozens of the militant group's launchers. On Thursday, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah vowed retribution for deadly sabotage attacks on its communications that he blamed on Israel.

Israel has not commented on the communications device explosions, but the intensifying violence comes after it announced it was shifting its

war objectives to its northern border with Lebanon. For nearly a year, Israeli firepower has focused on Palestinian militant group Hamas in Gaza, but its troops have also been engaged in near-daily exchanges with Hezbollah. The intensifying exchanges came as the UN Security Council prepared to discuss this week's attacks on Hezbollah papers and two-way radios, which killed 37 people and wounded thousands over two days.

Hezbollah said it targeted at least six Israeli military bases with salvos of rockets after overnight bombardment people in south Lebanon described as among the fiercest so far. "Some 140 rockets were fired from Lebanon within an hour," an Israeli military spokeswoman said. The military said that overnight its jets hit infrastructure and "approximately 100 launchers" ready to be fired.

Hezbollah said two of its fighters were killed, without elaborating. Residents of Marjayoun, a Lebanese town close to the border, said the overnight bombardment was among the heaviest since the border exchanges began last October. "We were very scared, especially for my grandchildren," said Nuha Abdo, 62. "We were moving them from one room to another." Clothing store owner Elie Rmeih, 45, counted more than 50 strikes.

"It was a terrifying scene and unlike anything we have experienced since the escalation began. "We live in fear

of a wider war, you don't know where to go." International mediators have repeatedly tried to avert a full-blown war between Israel and Hezbollah and staunch the regional fallout of the Gaza war started by Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel.

Speaking for the first time since the device blasts, Nasrallah warned Israel would face retribution for the communications device blasts. Describing the attacks as a "massacre" and a possible "act of war," Nasrallah said Israel would face "just punishment, where it expects it and where it does not." Cross-border exchanges between Israel and Hezbollah have killed hundreds in Lebanon, mostly fighters, and dozens in Israel.

Tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border have fled their homes. Speaking to troops on Wednesday, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said: "Hezbollah will pay an increasing price" as Israel tries to "ensure the safe return" of its citizens to border areas. "We are at the start of a new phase in the war," he said. Senior UN officials have expressed concern about the legality of the sabotage of Hezbollah's communication devices. UN human rights chief Volker Turk called the blasts "shocking," and said their impact on civilians was "unacceptable." US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who has been scrambling to salvage efforts for a Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal, called for restraint on all sides.

Bangladesh struggling to muster dollars to pay Indian power debts

DHAKA (Reuters): Bangladesh's efforts to clear debts of more than \$1 billion owed to Indian power companies are being hampered by its inability to access the dollars it requires to pay them, documents showed and sources familiar with the matter said.

The country has been struggling to pay its bills due to costly fuel and goods imports since the war in Ukraine began in 2022, while political turmoil which led to the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August has added to its troubles. Bangladesh is urgently seeking \$5bn in financial aid from international lenders to stabilise its dwindling foreign exchange reserves and its central bank has raised key interest rates to tame soaring inflation. Last year, it sought a \$4.7bn bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

"Efforts are on to clear the outstanding payments, but the current dollar crisis is complicating the process significantly," an official at the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) told Reuters on

Friday. Of the more than \$1bn owed to India's power companies, some \$800 million is to Adani Power, he added. Adani Power did not respond to a request for comment.

PTC India and SEIL Energy India Ltd have written to the BPDB to recover about \$80m and \$190m respectively in payment for the power they provided to Bangladesh, documents reviewed by Reuters show. "PTC has a long term business relation of supplying power to BPDB since 2013 and the power supply under [the] current contract is from 2022," a PTC India spokesperson said.

A SEIL spokesperson said it had informed the Bangladesh authorities about what it called an "unsustainable situation". Bangladesh, which imports nearly 20 per cent of its power from its neighbour India, has not paid for the electricity for the last eight to nine months, a source told Reuters. SEIL received a contract in 2018 from BPDB to supply power to Bangladesh over a total period of 15 years.

"While we continue to supply power to Bangladesh, we remain hopeful the concerned authorities will uphold the contractual terms and expedite the clearing of the dues so that power supply can be sustained," SEIL said in a statement. SEIL and PTC India have bank guarantees relating to their power contracts with Bangladesh for \$34.1m and \$30.7m, respectively, the documents show. This has left Bangladesh's Rupali Bank trying to access dollars to settle a payment of about \$270m, as otherwise, the Indian companies plan to cash the guarantees.

Rupali Bank and BPDB are working "together for the necessary US dollar resources from (the) Bangladesh Central Bank for the purpose of paying bills in foreign currency, which will continue in the future," the documents show. PTC India declined to comment on the specifics of the terms and conditions of the contract, while calls to Rupali Bank went unanswered due to a weekend holiday in Bangladesh.

Iran summons Afghan envoy for 'disrespecting' anthem

TEHRAN (AFP): Iran summoned the acting head of Afghanistan's embassy on Friday after saying a visiting Afghan official disrespected the country's national anthem by not standing, days after a similar incident in Pakistan.

Standing up during the national anthem is a widely practiced gesture of respect and patriotism in many countries. It is often seen as a way to honour the nation and its values. Pakistan condemned the "reprehensible disrespect" for the country's national anthem by an Afghan diplomat, who decided to remain seated when the anthem was played at a Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government event on Tuesday, sparking an uproar on social and mainstream media.

However, the Afghan consulate downplayed the incident, attributing the envoy's decision to remain seated to the presence of "music in the anthem". Following the incident at a conference in Tehran on Islamic unity, the Afghan delegate apologised, but said he didn't stand up because music in public was banned by the Taliban.

An Iranian foreign ministry statement said a "strong protest" had been lodged after the Afghan official's "unconventional and unacceptable action". It accused Kabul's representative to the Islamic Unity Conference of "disrespecting the national anthem of the Islamic Republic".

The foreign ministry "condemned this action, which went against diplo-

matic custom". Afghanistan's representative remained seated when Iran's national anthem was played. "Apart from the obvious necessity of the guest respecting the symbols of the host country, paying respect to the national anthem of countries is internationally recognised behaviour," Iran's statement added.

On Friday the Afghan official in Tehran for the conference posted a video apology, saying he meant no disrespect but that sitting during anthems is his custom. Iran shares a 900 kilometre border with Afghanistan, but has not officially recognised Taliban's government since it came to power in August 2021 after US forces withdrew.

EU to loan Ukraine \$39b to rebuild power grid

KYIV: The European Union has pledged to loan Ukraine up to 35 billion euros (\$39bn) as part of a plan by the Group of Seven (G7) nations to raise \$50bn through profits from frozen Russian state assets.

The loan, announced by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Kyiv on Friday, will help Ukraine repair its war-battered energy grid and boost its heating capacity as winter approaches. "You will decide how best to use your funds," von der Leyen told President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who said his priorities were to rebuild the energy network, build more bomb shelters, improve schools and buy more weapons.

In June, the leaders of the G7 nations — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States — agreed to finance a \$50bn loan for Ukraine on the back of future profits from frozen Russian assets. The EU also participates in all G7 discussions. "Relentless Russian attacks mean Ukraine needs continued EU support," von der Leyen posted on X as she announced the loan, calling

it "another major EU contribution to the Ukraine's recovery".

She said earlier that Europe would lend Ukraine its support on a range of subjects, including winter preparedness and defence during her eighth visit to Kyiv. About half of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been destroyed since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in 2022, and rolling electricity blackouts leave parts of the east in darkness for four hours at a time.

Ukraine's winter runs from late October through March with January and February the toughest months. Europe hopes to help supply about 25 per cent of the 17 gigawatts (GW) of power that the country is likely to need this winter. Russia has knocked out about 9 GW of Ukraine's energy infrastructure, which von der Leyen said was the equivalent of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia losing electricity.

One aim of the EU assistance is to provide an incentive for people to stay in Ukraine. About four million people have fled since the war began in February

2022, often to Poland and other neighbouring countries. Von der Leyen's visit to the country comes after a summer of intense fighting with Moscow's troops pressing an advance in the east and Kyiv holding onto swaths of Russia's Kursk region.

As Ukraine tries to bolster military supplies to maintain momentum, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani announced on Thursday that his country would send a new Samp-T antimissile system "to protect hospitals, schools, universities" while underlining that "defending Ukraine does not mean bringing a world war". The spokesman of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maria Zakharova, said on Friday that the West should stop supplying weapons to Ukraine and sponsoring "terrorist activity" if it wanted to show it was serious about seeking an end to the war. Zelenskyy reiterated this week that Ukraine had completed preparation of a "victory plan" that he intends to discuss with President Joe Biden during his upcoming visits to the US. — Aljazeera

Trump says Jews will be partly to blame if he loses election

WASHINGTON (AA): Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said on Thursday that Jewish-American voters would be partly to blame if he lost the November 5 election to Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic candidate.

During comments to the Israeli-American Council National Summit in Washington, the former president lamented that he was trailing Harris among American Jews. Israel would likely cease to exist within two years should Harris win the election, and Jews would be partly to

blame for that outcome because they tend to vote for Democrats, Trump argued.

"If I don't win this election — and the Jewish people would really have a lot to do with that if that happens because if 40 per cent, I mean, 60pc of the people are voting for the enemy — Israel, in my opinion, will cease to exist within two years," Trump told the crowd. Trump was citing a poll that he said showed Harris polling at 60pc among American Jews. He also lamented winning less than 30pc of the vote among American Jews in

the 2016 election, which he won, and the 2020 election, which he lost to Democratic President Joe Biden.

It was not clear what poll the former president was citing, but a recent Pew Research Survey found American Jews favour Harris over Trump, 65pc to 34pc. Trump made similar comments at a separate summit earlier in the evening, also in Washington, which was dedicated to fighting antisemitism in America. The Trump campaign has made winning over Jewish voters in key battleground states a priority.