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Govt. allocates historic budget for growth of IT, Telecom sectors: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that the federal government had allocated a historic development budget in the current fiscal year, for the promotion of Information Technology and Telecom sectors.

He said the incumbent government was prioritizing steps for increasing country's IT export.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with a four-member delegation of GSM Association, led by its Asia Pacific head Julian Gorman, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was at-

tended by Minister of State for IT and Telecom Shaza Khawaja Fatima, Chairman Pakistan Telecommunication Authority Major General (retired) Hafeezur Rehman and other relevant senior officials.

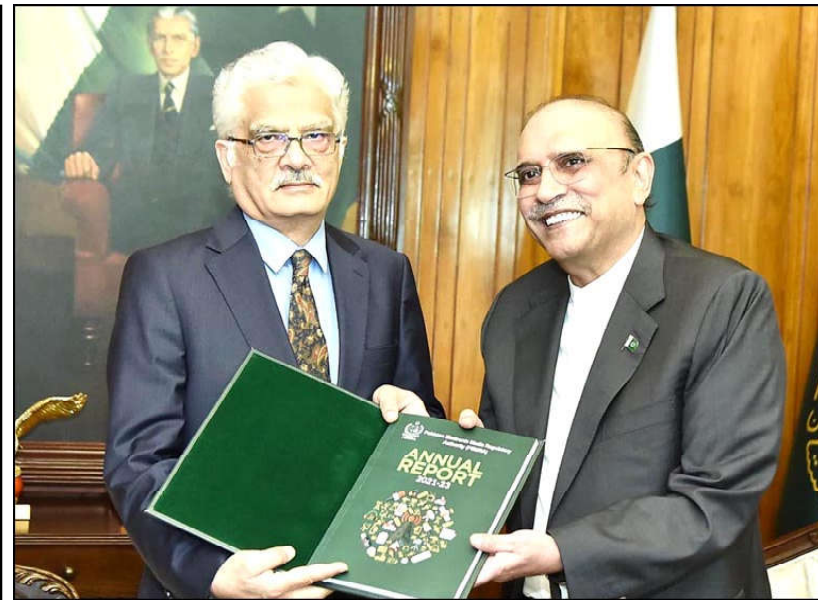
The prime minister observed that GSMA had significant and vital role in the digitization processes and welcomed holding of Digital National Summit in Islamabad for the promotion of telecommunication and IT.

He said the mechanism processes for IT sector reforms and digitization was being implemented and the focus was made on common man's better access to Internet, digital infra-

structure, E-Governance, professional training of youth in the digital skills and innovations, besides promotion of business in this sector.

"Our vision envisaged access to smart phone by every individual, broadband Internet facility to every household and facility of QR Code for all businesses," the press release quoted the prime minister as saying.

The delegation apprised the prime minister of GSMA role throughout the world, including Pakistan, over promotion of telecom services and expressed its keen interest in enhancing cooperation with the government in IT and telecom sectors.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) Muhammad Saleem, presented PEMRA Report 2021-23 to President Asif Ali Zardari, at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

President emphasizes upon discouraging fake news, disinformation

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday underlined the need for discouraging the spread of fake news and disinformation by promoting a culture of fact-checking and verifying information.

He said the media should uphold the highest standards of journalism and play its role in promoting tolerance, unity and ethical values in the society.

The president expressed these views while talking to Chairman Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) Muhammad Saleem who called on him and presented PEMRA Report 2021-23, at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

Talking to chairman PEMRA, the president said that modern communication technologies had opened up new challenges and the

media was required to play a responsible and constructive role in shaping the public opinion.

A code of conduct regarding the spread of misinformation and propaganda should be observed, he further stressed.

President Zardari also stressed upon the need of improving capacity of PEMRA by adopting modern tools and technologies and building a pool of talented human resources.

He opined that the media should also raise awareness about socio-economic issues, besides promoting a soft image of the country.

The chairman PEMRA briefed the president about the role and performance of PEMRA in the regulation and development of the media landscape of the country.

The president affirmed his support to further strengthen PEMRA.

Imran ready to tender conditional apology over May 9 mayhem

PTI founder's apology linked to alleged involvement of his party protesters that can be ascertained via CCTV footage

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: Imran Khan, the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has offered a conditional apology for the widespread protests and violence that occurred on May 9, 2023.

He called for the release of CCTV footage to verify the involvement of PTI members in the incidents.

"If any PTI members are found guilty of participating in the events of May 9, I will apologise, expel them from the party, and ensure they face punishment," Imran stated

during an informal conversation with journalists.

He emphasised that accountability must be applied universally, questioning why only the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) is held in high regard.

"I was dragged by the Rangers, yet there seems to be no respect for Pakistan's most popular figure, both nationally and internationally. Don't I deserve an apology as well?" he remarked, referring to his own treatment during the protests.

The statement reflects ongoing tensions

between the PTI and state authorities, as the PTI founder continues to challenge the official narrative surrounding the May 9 incidents.

The call for transparency and accountability is expected to stir further political debate in Pakistan.

Earlier, Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, Director-General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), reaffirmed the military's unwavering stance on the violent protests of May 9.

He reiterated that those involved in the riots must be held accountable.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of GSM Association calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Discussions with JI leaders remained fruitful: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attallah Tarar says the discussions with Jamaat-e-Islami have been fruitful with several issues being resolved in writing.

While briefing the media persons on recent discussions with Jamaat-e-Islami in Rawalpindi tonight, he said demands of Jamaat-e-Islami are aligned with the government's agenda.

He said a follow-up meeting with Jamaat-e-Islami has been planned for tomorrow evening.

The information minister said that Jamaat-e-Islami's right to protest is recognized as a democratic right. Additionally, he confirmed that the party's detained workers in Sialkot

have been released.

Highlighting the positive outcomes and progress made during the negotiation, the Minister emphasized that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is committed to reducing electricity prices, with a significant subsidy of 50 billion rupees provided to consumers using up to 200 units of electricity for the months of June, July, and August.

In response to concerns regarding Independent Power Producers (IPPs), Attallah Tarar announced the formation of a task force to review and address the issues. He assured that Prime Minister Sharif is actively overseeing these measures.

Govt. to establish independent body to regulate drug prices

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani government has taken a significant step towards regulating drug prices in the country. A committee formed to make recommendations for determining drug prices has proposed the establishment of an independent body to oversee the process.

The proposal was discussed in a meeting chaired by Minister of Law Azam Tarar, who emphasized the need for an independent and transparent approach to drug price regulation. The committee considered a proposal to form an independent body under the supervision of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) to determine drug prices.

The meeting also discussed the separation of regulation and price determination as two distinct domains. Minister Tarar stressed the importance of ensuring representation from all provinces in the independent body. The proposal is aimed at addressing concerns over high drug prices in Pakistan and ensuring that essential medicines are available to citizens at affordable rates. The government is expected to take a final decision on the proposal in the coming weeks.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Donald Armin Blome, Ambassador of the United States of America to Pakistan calls on Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain.

Deputy PM calls for durable, unconditional ceasefire in Gaza

JEDDAH (Agencies): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar has called for preventing further escalation of tensions and violence in the Middle East and facilitating complete, durable and unconditional ceasefire in Gaza.

In his remarks on the extraordinary Open-Ended Meeting of OIC Executive Committee in Jeddah today, he said that if the Israeli leadership continues to subvert the legally binding demand for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, the entire OIC membership would take several collective measures in response, including imposition of trade and oil sanctions.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister said that the control of the Rafah crossing should be handed back to Egypt in order to enhance the provision of humanitarian assistance to the beleaguered Palestinians in Gaza and meet their needs for food, medicines, energy and other essential supplies.

Ishaq Dar demanded the earliest withdrawal of Israel from Gaza and the commencement of its reconstruction, as envisaged in the plan approved by the Security Council.

He stressed the need to rapidly secure Palestine's admission as a full member of the United Nation and urgently commence the political and diplomatic process to establish the two State solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders with Al Quds Al Sharif as its capital.

He said that in order to initiate the establishment of an international judicial mechanism, which would seek "restitution, damages and satisfaction" from Israel for its crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide in Gaza and hold accountable those responsible for these crimes.

Highlighting the war crimes of Israel, he said that 40,000 innocent Palestinians, mostly children and women, have been mercilessly martyred by Israel.

Digitization of economy inevitable for national dev: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday emphasized the crucial role of digital technology in driving economic growth, transparency and good governance. "Digitalization of the economy is inevitable for achieving the national development," he said while addressing the first National Digital Summit.

He highlighted the importance of leveraging technology to address pressing issues, promote transparency, and foster economic development.

He advocated for adopting digital technologies to enhance infrastructure, human resource development and digital literacy.

The minister stressed the significance of collaboration between educational institutions and the tech industry, saying it was essential for promoting professional and digital skills among youth.

Rashid Langrial appointed new FBR Chairman

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

According to a notification issued by the Establishment Division, the BPS-21 officer "is transferred and posted as Chairman, Federal Board of Revenue, under Section 10 of the Civil Servants Act, 1973, with immediate effect."

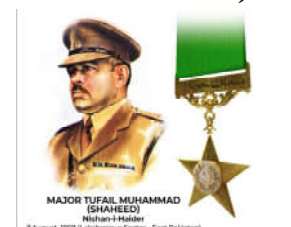


Rashid Mahmood Langrial, from the Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), as the new chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

Armed forces pay rich tribute to Major Tufail Muhammad Shaheed (Nishan-e-Haider)

RAWALPINDI: The Armed Forces of Pakistan, the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, and the Services Chiefs pay a solemn and heartfelt tribute to Major Tufail Muhammad Shaheed, recipient of the prestigious Nishan-e-Haider, on the occasion of his 66th martyrdom anniversary today.

Major Tufail Muhammad, the second recipient of the esteemed Nishan-e-Haider, valiantly laid down his life in 1958 while fearlessly engaging the enemy in the Lakshampur sector of East Pakistan. Despite fatal injuries, he resolutely completed his mission, exemplifying unparalleled bravery, unwavering resolve, and un-



Major Tufail Muhammad Shaheed, recipient of the prestigious Nishan-e-Haider, on the occasion of his 66th martyrdom anniversary today.

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

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

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

Both sides agreed that Pakistani pilgrims travel-

ing to Iraq for Arbaeen would no longer need to surrender their passports upon arrival. The meeting decided that the Pakistani pilgrims would be issued visas by the Iraqi Embassy, bypassing travel agents and the quota for Pakistan pilgrims would be increased.

It was also decided that special flights would be operating from Pakistan for Pakistani pilgrims while a new consulate will be opened in Karachi and both sides initiate a crackdown on agents charging excessive fees from pilgrims.



ISLAMABAD: Former Chairman Senate and Member of Balochistan Assembly Sadiq Sanjrani calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Efforts afoot to empower youth, provide maximum relief to people: Mashhood

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

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

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

The Chairman reiterated his pledge that the government was committed to empowering youth through several revolutionary initia-

tives and was taking crucial steps for the betterment of the youth.

He added that technical training will be directly provided to two hundred thousand and indirectly to six to eight hundred thousand youth this year under various skill development programmes as there was a great demand for a skilled workforce abroad. Giving details of the successful maiden visit of the Commonwealth secretary-general RT Patricia Scotland to Pakistan, Mashhood said that several agreements and memorandums of understanding were signed.

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

ECP files review petition against reserved seats verdict

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday moved a review petition to the Supreme Court against the verdict regarding the reserved seats. It has been said in the petition that the Commission has not misinterpreted any legal and judicial decision, and prayed the top court to review its verdict dated July 12.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit Baltistan Engr Amir Muqam chairing a meeting regarding Gilgit Baltistan.

PTI challenges Election Act (Amend. Bill) 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) on Wednesday moved a petition in the Supreme Court of Pakistan challenging the Election Act Amendment Bill 2024.

The petition has been moved by PTI's Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan which requested the top court to annul the recent amendments.

The petition is moved under Article 184/3 of the constitution through the lawyer Salman Akram Raja. The federation and Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) have been named as

respondents in the case.

The PTI has adopted the stance that the amendments should be declared as unconstitutional and illegal, and the ECP should be immediately stopped from allotting reserved seats to other political parties.

It prayed the court to order allotment of reserved seats for women and non-Muslims to PTI as it was the right of petitioner political party after the judgment dated July 12, adding that the party has submitted the lists of candidates to the ECP.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Another overture

Along with criticising India for its flawed approach in held Kashmir to mark Youm-i-Istehsal on Monday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif used the occasion to make a fresh peace overture to New Delhi.

Aug 5 marks the date in 2019 when India revoked held Kashmir's special constitutional status, in effect annexing the territory despite its disputed status as per international consensus. The prime minister observed that a peaceful solution was required to settle the Kashmir question, while adding that "durable peace in South Asia" depended on the resolution of this 77-year-old dispute. Of course, settling the Kashmir issue at the negotiating table — with the participation of Pakistan, India and the Kashmiris — could set in motion the process of normalisation in the subcontinent, but only if New Delhi is interested in pursuing peace.

Unfortunately, there has been little indication that India is ready to mend fences with Pakistan. Instead, along with earlier lukewarm felicitations exchanged by both sides, India has been increasingly using the overplayed 'terrorism' card to stall any chances of dialogue with Pakistan. Last month, while attending an event to mark the Kargil conflict, Indian PM Narendra Modi used inflammatory language targeted at this country, accusing Pakistan of fomenting unrest in the region through proxy groups. If India continues to use such language, peace in the region will remain a remote possibility. But Mr Sharif has done the right thing by continuing to invite India to talk out all outstanding issues. India should take up this offer for an improved geopolitical atmosphere in the subcontinent.

While the resumption of direct peace talks anytime soon is unlikely, both states can start with confidence-building measures. For example, the respective high commissioners have been absent from both capitals since 2019, which is unprecedented during peacetime. Restoring both missions to their full diplomatic strength can be a starting point for rebuilding better ties. Moreover, backchannel dialogue can be initiated, even if the current focus of this engagement is 'talks about talks'.

Pakistan is due to host the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Heads of Government meeting in October. India is also part of this multilateral body and should send a high-level delegation to the event. The point is that engagement is the only way that mistrust between Islamabad and Delhi can be overcome. India keeps playing the same tune, harping on about 'terrorism', but Pakistan also has significant evidence linking India to malign activities on its soil.

Therefore, both states can remain locked in this perpetual cycle of blame and retribution, or turn a new leaf and look to the future. While Mr Modi's ideological comrades in the Sangh will scowl at the very thought of peace with Pakistan, the Indian leadership should rise above parochialism and accept Islamabad's dialogue offer.

Diplomacy deficit

Mahir Ali

Paeans to Joe Biden's diplomatic skills have been flowing since the fruition of a prisoner exchange between Russia and the West. The deal apparently took years to negotiate.

From a Western point of view, the consequences are commendable. It's easy to accept that the American journalist, a few other Westerners, and the small bunch of Russian dissidents who were liberated ought never to have been incarcerated.

But where do those diplomatic skills vanish when it comes to negotiating an end to the war of attrition between Russia and Ukraine? Sure, Vladimir Putin is the culprit insofar as he launched the war, and one could argue endlessly about the extent of US/Nato/EU provocation. But the point is to end the hostilities, and in this context the US has served more as a hindrance than a facilitator.

Its role in the Middle East follows an equally naked trajectory of near blind support for Israel and its actions, including assassinations, combined with blanket assurances of assistance to the Zionist regime. Israel's fatal attacks against Hamas' political chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran and Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukur in Beirut came shortly after a genocidal maniac called Benjamin Netanyahu received 58 standing ovations during the Israeli prime minister's address to the US Congress. Netanyahu spouted a stream of nonsense, such as condemning American agitators against his genocide — many of them young Jews — as agents of Iran.

The US, meanwhile, has deployed more warships to coordinate Israel's 'defence' in the event of attacks from Iran, Lebanon or elsewhere.

This week, the US Central Command chief visited Israel to discuss "joint preparations", and the US defence secretary, according to the Pentagon, "has ordered adjustments to US military posture designed to... increase support for the defence of Israel".

It is precisely this kind of American posturing that condemns the world to endless strife while contributing to the coffers of the military-industrial complex. Israel has for ages demonstrated its proficiency as the most effective terrorist state anywhere on earth, yet has never featured on any list of sponsors of terrorism. Israel's crimes against humanity have stood out since 1948, yet it has got an easy pass from the self-ordained upholders of the global conscience, thanks in part to the abhorrent atrocities perpetrated against European Jews by the Nazi state.

There have been echoes of Nazism ever since, not least in Bangladesh in the run-up to its independence in 1971. Hasina Wajed's flight to India on Monday was a dramatic and welcome denouement, but it does not clarify what the future holds. It's not hard to justify the uprising against her authoritarian misrule, but reports of concomitant atrocities against Hindu communities are alarming, and the future of the Rohingya refugees from neighbouring Myanmar, that Bangladesh has reluctantly accommodated, rests in the balance.

Sudan's predicament is even worse. Unlike Bangladesh, it faces a repeat of both the Darfur genocide a couple of decades ago and the famine of 1984. A conflict between the Sudanese armed forces and the Rapid Support Forces — an outgrowth of the Janjaweed militia that terrorised Darfur — followed a falling out between the gen-

erals who aborted their nation's drift towards democracy after the toppling of Omar al-Bashir in 2019.

That was a welcome development, but Sudan's descent into a deadly crisis should serve as a warning to Bangladesh — just as the Awami League's premature jubilation after the January elections should remind Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro that manipulation may not pay off, and that his threat to 'pulverise' his opponents on the streets (who include many former Chavistas) might seriously backfire. It is incredibly dumb for the US to recognise Maduro's opponent as the legitimate president, especially since this kind of absurdity came a cropper just a few years ago. But if Maduro is truly a disciple of Hugo Chávez, he should recognise that his time is up.

Far away in the UK, Keir Starmer has almost echoed Maduro in his threats against the 'far-right thugs' who have wreaked havoc across cities in England in the wake of the horrific attack on young girls in Southport. It was an outrage, but one that involved neither an 'illegal immigrant' nor a Muslim. That did not deter fascist elements from unleashing violence against libraries, mosques and asylum-seeker hotels. The law-and-order response from the new Labour government might stifle the symptoms, but appears to ignore its causes.

Almost a century ago, Antonio Gramsci announced from an Italian prison something along the lines of 'the old world is dying and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters'. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris shake hands with the monsters. Donald Trump is determined to be one himself. -- Courtesy Dawn

Eco-anxiety truths

Muhammad Hassan Dajana

Climate anxiety plagues minds and hearts globally, creating a silent, inner storm. The constant stream of news about approaching climate catastrophes fuels emotional turmoil. Questions — "what will happen to the world?", "how can we stop environmental degradation?" — haunt us but remain unanswered. Climate anxiety is a genuine and increasingly pervasive problem that impacts us at multiple levels.

According to psychologist Melanie Klein's paradigm, climate anxiety has two forms: first, depressive anxiety, involving loss, regret and dependency controlled by neurotic defences, and second, paranoid-schizoid anxiety, involving persecution and feelings of annihilation, fought by denial, projection and splitting.

Individuals often distance themselves from impending news either by emotionally shutting down or becoming engrossed in tasks to ignore broader societal contexts — responses can lead to demotivation, disengagement and subpar performance, accompanied by sadness and frustration. This turmoil intersects with mental health issues: depression, panic attacks and PTSD. Affective neuroscience highlights how fear of external threat and loss precipitates climate anxiety, evoking reactions similar to those experienced during the pandemic.

Climate anxiety affects individuals across demographics. Some time back, a global survey in *The Lancet* of 10,000 young people aged 16 to 25 years in 10 countries, revealed alarming figures: 59 per cent expressed extreme worry about climate change accompanied by sadness, anxiety and powerlessness, and over

45pc said it impacted daily life and had raised existential questions about a warming planet.

Additionally, "extreme and slow-moving" weather events contribute to intimate partner violence, substance abuse and suicidal tendencies. Displacement, infrastructural breakdown, food insecurity and unemployment exacerbate mental health challenges. Vulnerable populations, including women and those with pre-existing mental illnesses, are particularly impacted.

In the US, around 10pc experience climate anxiety, 9pc feel uncontrollable worry, and 7pc report diminished pleasure due to global warming. Worry has steadily risen over the past two decades, with 27pc expressing significant concern.

According to Yale Sustainability 2023, the number of worried individuals has tripled in six years, highlighting a growing awareness of the issue.

To understand the gravity of climate anxiety, we need to engage in conversations, listen to the quiver in voices, notice furrowed brows, and recognise that this emotional turmoil matters. Certain coping strategies are recommended:

a) Mindful breathing: deep breathing anchors one in the moment. The world may be at a difficult point but we cannot be productive if we are unhealthy.

b) Purposeful action: channel anxiety by reducing personal carbon emissions and supporting eco-friendly initiatives with environmental groups.

c) Support network: climate anxiety can be isolating. Communicating with friends, colleagues and others provides relief, sparks innovation and bolsters the commitment to make a difference.

d) Self-care: mental and emotional health is essential. Engage in stress-reducing activities, such as exercise, meditation and making time for nature.

e) Activism: join environmental organisations to support initiatives, donate to environmental causes and volunteer for habitat restoration.

f) Information: it is important to know about climate change with an understanding of science, policies and solutions for effective climate action.

g) Build resilience: strengthen coping mechanisms and skills to navigate stress. Resilience aids productive engagement and mitigates climate anxiety.

h) Limit online time: set a schedule for news consumption and avoid pseudo-fulfilment on social media.

i) Focus on the present: acknowledge future uncertainties and concentrate on actionable steps. Emphasise immediate actions and well-being over existential concerns.

While individual actions matter, systemic change is crucial to addressing climate change. Governments and politicians must develop laws and policies to mitigate the crisis. By supporting sustainable energy programmes, advocating for climate policies and holding officials accountable, we can make a greater impact.

Collaborating on individual and systemic levels is essential to combating climate change, alleviating anxiety and building a sustainable future.

This is vital not only for environmental sustainability but also for the protection of community mental health and resilience worldwide. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Agri scientists, policy makers urged for actively contributing in sector development

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain, on Wednesday urged agricultural scientists and policymakers to actively contribute to the improvement of the local agriculture sector to ensure food safety and security in the country.

Speaking at the inauguration of the seed potato complex and the International Symposium on Seed Potato Production and Supply Chain, the minister highlighted that despite Pakistan's agricultural economy, the country continues to import food items.

The event was organized by the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) in collaboration with the Korean Program on International Agriculture (KOPIA). Its goal is to produce virus-free seed potatoes to enhance local crop yields and generate an exportable surplus.

The ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, senior officials from PARC, NARC, KOPIA, as well as representatives from national and international organizations, development partners, agricultural scientists, experts, private sector

organizations, NGOs, and progressive farmers from across the country.

During his address, the minister emphasized the importance of fostering public-private partnerships to advance agricultural research and ensure its effective dissemination to farmers. This, he stated, is crucial for increasing per-acre yields of all major and minor crops to meet domestic needs.

The minister noted that potatoes are a significant cash crop in the country and the third-largest food crop, cultivated over 837,669 acres in various seasons and regions.



Federal Ministers, MNFS&R Rana Tanveer Hussain, Korean Ambassador to Pakistan, Park Ki Jun, Dr. Kwak Do-Yeon, DG NICS/RDA Korea, Chairman PARC, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali, Dr. Cho Gyoung-Rae, Director KOPIA-Pakistan inaugurating Aeroponic Green Houses for seed production at NARC Islamabad.

Govt committed to Digital Pakistan Vision: Shaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja Wednesday said that the present government is committed for the fulfillment of Digital Pakistan vision.

On the directives of the Prime Minister, Ministry of IT & Telecom is taking steps for digital transformation in the country, she said this while delivering keynote address at Digital Nation Summit organised by GSMA in collaboration with Ministry of IT & Telecom. She also emphasised the need of ending digital

divide between rural and urban areas of the country.

Shaza Fatima said that under Prime Minister's vision of digitalization, the economy, governance and society are being digitalised.

She said that Telecom industry has important role in country's economic uplift.

She said that effective steps are being taken for boosting Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the country.

The Minister said that remarkable progress have been achieved with over 80 percent teledensity

and over 190 million subscribers.

"Our broadband customers continue to grow", she added.

She said that the government is working on National IT Policy focused on ease of doing business and tax breaks to accelerate economic activity in this sector. She said that Pakistan's IT Exports saw record surge as it reached 3.223 billion dollars during FY 2023-24.

She said that there were great opportunities for youth in IT sector, as government is focused upon equipping youth with latest digital skills.

Tax deptt partners with ICT admin for market worker registration

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Income Tax Department is expanding its efforts to register all market workers in the Federal Capital, aiming to increase the tax net with support from the district administration. In a recent meeting with the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, officials from the Income Tax Department outlined plans to include all market workers

in the tax system, said the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration. This initiative seeks to bring a broader range of individuals, including street vendors and those selling vegetables and fruits, under the tax umbrella. The department emphasized the need for collaboration with the district administration to ensure the success of this effort.

SMBR visits Revenue Tower in Lahore

LAHORE (APP): Senior Member Board of Revenue (SMBR) Punjab Nabeel Javed paid a surprise visit to under-construction four-story Revenue Tower at Farid Court House on Wednesday to review the construction work.

He said during his visit there would be no compromise on quality of material used in the new tower and issued orders for swift completion of the building's decoration and renovation.

FM highlights initiatives to enhance economic growth, stability

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday again highlighted the initiatives aimed at enhancing economic stability and promoting long-term growth.

In a meeting with Ambassador of Finland to Pakistan, Hannu Ripatti, who called on him, the minister shared updates on Pakistan's economic performance, highlighting rise in tax collection, increased remittances, and foreign exchange reserves exceeding USD 9 billion.

He emphasized the positive evaluation from international credit rating

agencies, which reflect the stability of Pakistan's economic environment, according to press release issued by Finance Ministry. The Minister also discussed the successful conclusion of the 9-month Standby Agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the recently finalized staff-level agreement for a 37-month IMF programme.

Additionally, the Minister outlined ongoing initiatives, including end-to-end digitization in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to broaden the tax base, reforms in the energy sector, restructuring of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and focus on export-led growth.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja addressing Digital Nation Summit.

Jazz xlr8 partners with GSMA innovation fund to support high-potential startups

ISLAMABAD (APP): Jazz Pakistan's leading digital operator, through its startup accelerator program 'xlr8', has partnered with the GSMA Innovation Fund to identify and support high-potential startups, especially in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), health, education, and digital lifestyle. This strategic collaboration aims to foster innovation and stimulate large-scale socio-economic and environmental impact said a news release. Under the partnership, Jazz's xlr8 program will support the

GSMA Innovation Fund startups by providing Jazz expertise in digital platforms which are based on building and launching Pakistan's largest homegrown apps like SIMOSA and Tamasha, access to Jazz's 71 million users based on intelligent segmentation, specialized mentoring from Jazz domain experts, extensive digital growth & data analytics and platform architecture expertise.

Additionally, Jazz will offer technology development, B2B support, and access to 9 million farmers and 18 million SIMOSA app users.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb was called on by the Ambassador of Finland to Pakistan H.E. Mr. Hannu Ripatti.

PTA, NCSW, GSMA host workshop on bridging mobile gender gap

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) and Global System for Mobile Communication (GSMA) Action Collation for bridging the digital divide organized a one-day workshop titled "Bridging the Mobile Gender Gap".

The workshop featured participation from representatives of the Ministry of Information Technology & Telecom, Ministry of Federal Education &

Professional Training, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Defense, Universal Services Fund, Ministry of Human Rights and other government and private entities said a news release issued here on Wednesday.

The workshop aimed to address the digital gender divide in Pakistan by bringing together government and civil society stakeholders to improve gender in ICTs.

Gold rates dip by Rs. 500 per tola to Rs.255,500

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

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

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where three ships, Saehan Jasper, Ginga Liger and Maran Gas Asclepius carrying Palm oil, Chemicals and LNG, berthed at Liquid Terminals, Engro Vopak and Engro Elengy Terminal respectively on Tuesday. A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours.

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

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

The review meeting was held at the CM House on Wednesday morning and was attended by Provincial Ministers Sharjeel Memon, Dr Azra Fazal, Nasir Shah, Saeed Ghani, Sardar Shah, Jam Khan Shoro, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Chairman P&D Najam Shah and provincial secretaries and

project director of the world bank-assisted projects. The World Bank team comprised Kamran Akbar, Murtaza Noorani, Omar Riaz, Waleed Anwar, Uzma Sadaf, and others.

The Karachi Mobility Project (KMP) aims to enhance mobility, accessibility, and safety along selected corridors in the city. It comprises the construction of two bridges (Jam Sadiq Bridges) for Yellow Line BRT corridors, the development and operation of the BRT Yellow Line System, and capacity building and technical assistance for the project.

Progress regarding the Jam Sadiq bridges, it was reported in the meeting that the concept design

was finalized on August 6, mobilization has been completed, the test pile was cast on July 7, and load tests are scheduled to be conducted on August 12.

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



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah in meeting with National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman, Lt. Gen. (Retd) Nazir Ahmed discuss the progress of ongoing inquiries and investigations within the province, at CM House in Karachi.

MoU signed between Istanbul, Lahore medical universities

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

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

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

In his remarks, the

health minister highlighted the close and fraternal relations between Pakistan and Turkiye, emphasizing the exemplary health system of Turkiye and the shared goals between the two countries. He mentioned the recent advancements in Punjab's healthcare system, including the launch of an air ambulance service and the establishment of the Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer and Research Center in Lahore and the Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cardiology in Sargodha.

Punjab governor announces cycles, kits for rally participants

LAHORE (APP): Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan has announced new sports cycles and kits for the participants in the First Jashan-e-Azadi President Asif Ali Zardari Cycle Rally 2024.

Welcoming the cycle rally participants upon arrival at the Governor's House here on Wednesday, he warmly welcomed the cyclists and PPP workers from Kasur.

He said that the doors of the Governor's House were open to all and sundry, adding that the rally is a celebration

of the 69th birthday of President Asif Ali Zardari.

The governor, accompanied by PPP leader Haji Azizur Rehman Chan, said the rally also marks the 77th Independence day of the country.

The First Jashan e Azadi President Asif Ali Zardari Cycle Rally started from city of the great Sufi poet Bullah Shah - Kasur and will culminate at Jinnah Sports Complex Islamabad on August 13 - a day before the 77th Independence Day of the country.



LAHORE: A group photo of Governor Punjab Sardar Malik Salim Haider with athletes of President Asif Ali Zardari Sports Cycle Rally at Governor House.

Alhamra achieves milestone with Intl exhibition in Qatar

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Arts Council, Alhamra, has again demonstrated its dedication to elevating Pakistani art globally, marking a significant milestone in its ongoing endeavors.

The council's forthcoming participation in an international exhibition in Qatar exemplifies its commitment to preserving and promoting Pakistan's rich cultural heritage internationally. During an essential meeting, organised by the National Heritage and Culture Division, all arrangements for Pakistan's representation at the exhibition were finalized,

said a press release issued here on Wednesday. Alhamra's Executive Director, Sarah Rashid, played a pivotal role in this meeting, providing detailed insights and updates to the attendees.

In recognition of her leadership, the government has appointed Sarah Rashid as the focal person overseeing the preparations for the international exhibition.

Sarah Rashid expressed profound pride in Alhamra's role, stating, "It is a great honor for Alhamra to represent our nation on such a prestigious platform."



RAWALPINDI: Workers are busy in draining accumulated rain water after heavy rain at Imam Bara road area, in morning hours in the city.

Minister says: Irrigation land to be retrieved from grabbers

MULTAN (APP): Provincial minister for Irrigation, Mian Kazim Ali Pirzada on Wednesday directed the officers concerned to submit detailed assessment report regarding grabbing and encroachments at irrigation land with in next 15 days to make proper plan to retrieve the land.

Talking to media persons, the minister said that different initiatives

were being taken by the provincial government to facilitate masses as per vision of the Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. He said that the irrigation department paying special focus on the arrangements to prevent water theft. He lauded the officers concerned to ensuring equal distribution of water adding that after so many years the water reached to the farmers of tale of the canal.

2 children drown in rain drains

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

According to the details, an 8 year old child was crossing a floody street and slipped in deep water which swept him away, in Boston Khan Road. The CCTV footage shows two children trapped in water, trying to escape the heavy water flow.

Both the children tried to cross the water, during which one child drowned into the drain while the other survived.

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

The spokesman Rescue 1122, Muhammad Usman informed APP that search and rescue operations were initiated in both areas immediately.

Kamran for contribution of all for progress and prosperity of nation

KARACHI (APP): Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori on Wednesday said that we must all play our part to promote the progress and prosperity of our nation.

In this endeavor, we need to hold each other's hands and move forward together," this he said while addressing a ceremony organized by the Noor Project.

The event was also attended by The Noor Project's founder Amjad Wattoo and honorary president Rear Admiral (retired) Faisal Shah. Governor Sindh

Kamran Khan Tessori further stated, "I am deeply impressed by the tireless efforts of the Noor Project team. Their welfare initiatives are commendable." He highlighted that his notification as Governor Sindh was issued on the blessed day of 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal, upon which he vowed to serve the people wholeheartedly.

"Alhamdulillah, today, fifty thousand young people are receiving IT training at the Governor House. These students are now capable of earning between \$300 to \$600 per month."

Two passengers killed in bus, truck collision in Bahawalpur

BHAWALPUR (APP): At least two innocent lives were lost and several others were left battered and bruised as the two vehicles crashed into each other with immense force at Jhangra Sharqi Interchange Bahawalpur on early Wednesday morning.

According to details, Rescue sources said that the accident occurred in Bahawalpur where a truck collided with a bus and took the lives of two people on the spot, a private news channel reported. The rescue sources said that truck caught fire right after the accident however the rescue team arrived on the spot of the incident.

International News

Israel kills 12 Palestinians in West Bank raids

Monitoring Desk
JENIN: Palestinian officials said Israeli forces killed 12 people in three separate raids in the northern West Bank on Tuesday, as violence in the occupied territory showed no sign of abating.

Five people were killed in the Jenin area and four in Aqaba town in Tubas district when Israeli forces carried out early-morning raids, the health ministry in Ramallah said.

The Israeli army said three people were killed and two arrested in another raid in the village of Kafr Qud, west of Jenin.

The Palestinian Red Crescent had earlier reported deaths and injuries "due to the occupation's shelling of two vehicles in the eastern neighbourhood of Jenin".

Aqaba residents said Israeli troops arrived at dawn and surrounded the house of Amid Ghanam, leading to clashes between

troops and young Palestinians.

Ghanam and two others were killed in the clashes, while another teenager was killed near a hospital, Tubas governor Ahmed Assad told AFP.

"The army entered and surrounded the house as snipers took positions on nearby rooftops and shot anyone who moved," he said.

The teenager was shot when the troops "entered the area of the hospital", Assad said. Aqaba mayor Abdel Razaq Abu Arra said the teenager "was killed in cold blood". "This Zionist crime is a systematic crime that the Israelis carry out on a daily basis," he added.

Lebanon's group Hezbollah launched a series of drone and rocket attacks into northern Israel on Tuesday but warned that its much-anticipated retaliation for Israel's killing of a top commander last week

was yet to come.

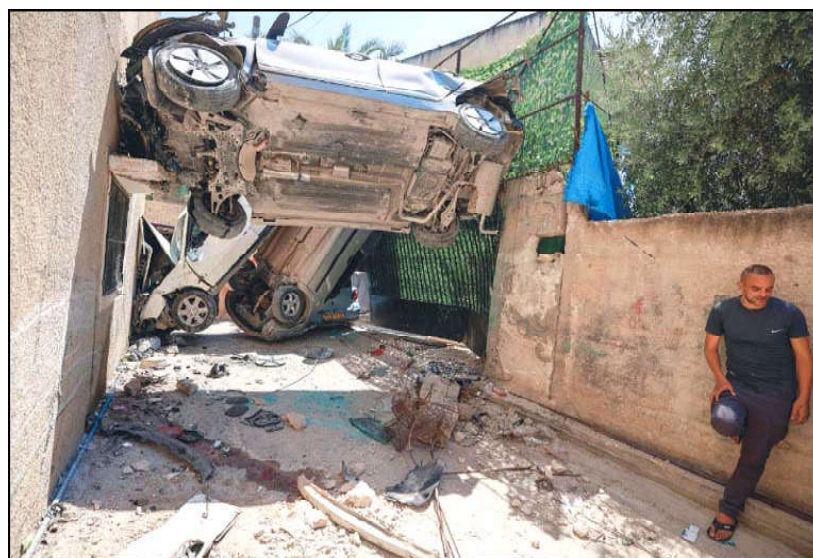
Hezbollah said it launched a swarm of attack drones at two military sites near Acre in northern Israel, and also attacked an Israeli military vehicle in another location.

The Israeli military said a number of hostile drones were identified crossing from Lebanon and one was intercepted.

Israeli medical officials said seven people were evacuated to hospital, to the south of the coastal city of Nahariya, one in critical condition.

The Israeli military said an initial investigation indicated the injuries were caused by an interceptor that "missed the target and hit the ground, injuring several civilians." It said the incident was still under review.

A Hezbollah source told Reuters that "the response to the assassination of commander Fuad Shukur has not yet come."



A car is wedged between two walls after an Israeli raid in Jenin, occupied West Bank.

Flurry of diplomacy to ease Mideast tensions as Israel awaits Iran attack

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: Diplomatic pressure mounted on Monday (Aug 5) to avoid an escalation between Iran and Israel following high-profile killings that have sent regional tensions soaring, while numerous governments urged their citizens to leave Lebanon.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said late Sunday that his country was "determined to stand against" Iran and its allied armed groups "on all fronts". As its war against Iran-backed Hamas in Gaza nears its 11th month, Israel has been bracing for retaliation from the Tehran-aligned "axis of resistance" for the assassinations of two senior figures.

Palestinian armed group Hamas's political leader Ismail Haniyeh was killed in Tehran on Wednes-

day in an attack blamed on Israel, which has not directly commented on it. The killing came hours after an Israeli strike on Beirut left Hezbollah military chief Fuad Shukur dead.

Tehran said on Monday that "no one has the right to doubt Iran's legal right to punish the Zionist regime" for Haniyeh's killing. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his counterparts from the G7 nations in a conference call on Sunday that any attack, which he expected to be a joint undertaking between Hezbollah and Iran, could happen within 24 to 48 hours, as early as Monday, US news site Axios reported. Blinken asked his counterparts to place diplomatic pressure on Tehran, Hezbollah and Israel to "maintain maximum restraint", it added.

One dead, several buried in German hotel collapse

Monitoring Desk
KROEV: Rescue teams were working to free people trapped after part of a hotel collapsed in western Germany, killing one person and burying another eight, authorities said on Wednesday.

Emergency services have already rescued one man, a child, and two women from the building on Wednesday morning, a police spokesman told AFP. The person who died has not yet been recovered, the spokesman added.

A floor in the hotel in Kroev, a town some 110 kilometres west of Frankfurt, collapsed for unknown reasons around 11:00 pm local time on Tuesday, police said in a statement.

Of the 14 people inside at the time, five managed to get out. Some of those still trapped "were seriously injured".

Blinken warns Iran but also Israel not to 'escalate'

Monitoring Desk
ANNAPOLIS: Both Iran and Israel should avoid escalating conflict, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday, in his most direct wording toward US ally Israel on the Middle East's spiraling tensions.

"No one should escalate this conflict. We've been engaged in intense diplomacy with allies and partners, communicating that message directly to Iran. We communicated that message directly to Israel," Blinken told reporters.

Iran has vowed a re-

sponse after Israel was suspected of killing Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran.

President Joe Biden has hinted at frustration with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the assassination, which came just as he hoped to make progress in talks to reach a ceasefire in the 10-month Gaza war.

"Our commitment to Israel's security is ironclad. We will continue to defend Israel against attacks from terrorist groups or their sponsors."

Hamas names Yahya Sinwar as Haniyeh's successor

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Hamas named its Gaza leader Yahya Sinwar as successor to former political chief Ismail Haniyeh, the group said on Tuesday. Analysts see the appointment as a move that reinforces the radical path pursued since the Oct 7 raid. Sinwar has been in hiding in Gaza, defying Israeli attempts to kill him since the start of the latest conflict.

"The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas announces the selection of commander Yahya Sinwar."

Turkey will bid to join ICJ genocide case against Israel, source says

Monitoring Desk
ISTANBUL: Turkey will submit on Wednesday a declaration of intervention in South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, a diplomatic source said. The declaration will happen at 1330 GMT, the source added, after Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said this week that Turkey would make the declaration on Wednesday. "Turkey's intervention pushes the international community to recognise and address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza."

5 people killed in a helicopter crash in the mountains northwest of Nepal's capital

Monitoring Desk
KATHMANDU: All five people on board a helicopter were killed when it crashed Wednesday in the mountains just northwest of Nepal's capital, authorities said. The bodies of four men and a woman were pulled from the wreckage, said Krishna Prasad Humagai, the government administrator of Nuwakot district. Police and army rescuers reached the area and two rescue helicopters were also sent to assist in the operation, the official

said. The crash site is in the Suryachaur area, which is just northwest of Kathmandu, and is on a mountain covered by forest. The helicopter had taken off from Kathmandu international airport at 1:54 p.m. local time and was heading towards the town of Syaprubeshi. The helicopter, an Eurocopter AS350 belonging to Nepal-based Air Dynasty, had lost contact with the tower just three minutes after takeoff, according to a statement from the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal.

Harris draws more support among Black voters, Trump up slightly among white voters

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

The analysis, which examined more than 10,000 responses from seven nationwide Reuters/Ipsos polls conducted since May, points to significant strengths and vulnerabilities for Harris, the US vice president who took over Biden's campaign when the president dropped his re-election bid on July 21.

Some 70 per cent of Black voters polled in July picked Harris over Trump on a hypothetical ballot, up from 59pc who backed Biden in May and June

polls.

Trump's share of the Black vote rose marginally to 12pc in July from 9pc in May and June.

Trump, meanwhile, is seeing increased support from white voters. Some 50pc picked Trump in July polls, up from 46pc in May and June. Harris had the support of 38pc of white voters in July, compared to 36pc in May and June.

The race remains essentially tied, with Harris and Trump each getting 43pc support in an aggregate of last month's polls. Biden and Trump each had 40pc in the polls conducted in the previous two months.

The analysis examined poll responses gathered throughout July on a hypothetical Harris-Trump contest and included responses from before Biden, 81, ended his bid.

Lebanon's Hezbollah launches drone attacks on Israel, says more to come

Monitoring Desk
BEIRUT: Lebanon's armed group Hezbollah launched a series of drone and rocket attacks into northern Israel on Tuesday (Aug 6) but warned that its much-anticipated retaliation for Israel's killing of a top commander last week was yet to come. Hezbollah said it launched a swarm of attack drones at two military sites near Acre in northern Israel, and also attacked an Israeli military vehicle in another location. The Israeli military said a number of hostile drones were identified crossing from Lebanon and one was intercepted. It said several civilians were injured to the south of the coastal city of Nahariya. Reuters TV footage showed one impact site near a bus stop on a main road outside the city.

In a statement, the Israeli military said sirens sounded around Acre, but

that turned out to be a false alarm. It said its air force struck two Hezbollah facilities in south Lebanon.

Fears are rising that the Middle East could be tipped into full-blown war following vows by Hezbollah to avenge Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukur's killing, and by Iran to respond to the assassination in Tehran last week of the head of Palestinian militant group Hamas. A Hezbollah source told Reuters that "the response to the assassination of commander Fuad Shukur has not yet come". Earlier on Tuesday, four people were killed in a strike on a home in the Lebanese town of Mayfadoun, nearly 30km north of the border, medics and a security source said. Two additional security sources said those killed were Hezbollah fighters, but the group had not yet posted its usual death notices.

Tarar says: Parliament converted a rule into law to stop floor crossing as envisaged in Constitution

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Wednesday the Parliament was a supreme institution and through the Election (Amendment) Act it had converted a rule into a law to stop floor crossing as envisaged in the Constitution. Addressing a press conference here, he said that Bilal Azhar Kayani of Muslim League (Nawaz) had presented the Election Act Amendment Bill in the National Assembly whereas Senator Talal Chaudhry moved it in the Senate.

The minister said that the bill was passed by the National Assembly and the Senate by majority votes and became an act.

He maintained that the Constitution and law were clear regarding floor crossing and the new piece of legislation and further elaborate the matter.

According to the rules, he said an independent candidate had to join any party within three days after the announcement of official results of the elections. The minister posed a question if a member's party could be changed after submitting an affidavit for joining a party.

He said that two Supreme Court judges had raised important points and questioned that even after 15 days, the detailed

decision was not issued by the majority judges in the bench. Tarar said that the PTI-backed independents joined a party that did not exist in Parliament, how could that party get any seat as those seats were given on the principle of proportion. Moreover, he said under proportional representation rules, it was binding on each political party to display its candidates lists for both women and minority seats.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting regarding establishment of Safari Park.



ISLAMABAD: Additional secretary (Asia Pacific) MoFA, Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, Chairman ASEAN Committee (ACI) and High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam, Col. (Retd) Pengiran Haji Kamal Bashah Bin Pengiran Haji Ahmed and others cutting the cake during celebrate the 57th Asian Day at ISSI, on the occasion of Roundtable Discussion title 'Pakistan and ASEAN: A growing Partnership, in the Federal Capital.

Director PDMA Punjab assures prompt action on rain emergencies, damaged buildings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Hamidullah Malik Wednesday assured that all relevant departments, divisional, and district administrations are maintaining close coordination to effectively address emergency situations arising from rain incidents and reconstruction of damaged buildings that pose a danger to the public.

Talking to PTV news channel, he said with a proactive approach, the authorities are working together to mitigate the impact of rain-related disasters and ensuring the safety

of citizens.

The PDMA has already alerted all rescue services, including machinery and personnel from Rescue 1122, to be ready for deployment, adding, the authority has urged citizens to exercise caution and stay away from electric poles and hanging wires, as well as avoid dirty and dilapidated buildings during the monsoon season.

Malik encouraged collaboration with other PDMA institutions, stressing that a unified approach is crucial in mitigating the impact of rain-related disasters.

Replying a query, he assured that the authority is fully prepared to respond to any situation, with all necessary resources and personnel on standby.

In addition to its emergency response efforts, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has also taken proactive measures to mitigate the impact of heavy rainfall on high-risk buildings and urban flooding.

PDMA Director Hamidullah Malik emphasized the importance of timely measures to protect human lives, stating that 24-hour monitoring is being conducted in both provincial and district control rooms.

MoU signed to introduce foreign language training in ICT Schools

ISLAMABAD (APP): A landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on Wednesday between the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC), and National University of Modern Languages (NUML). This agreement paves the way for introducing foreign language training in selected schools of Islamabad.

The signing ceremony was graced by Minister of Federal Education and Professional Training, Dr.

Khalid Maqbool, Rector NUML and Secretary Federal Directorate of Education. As per the MoU, Six-month foreign language course will be imparted to the students of FDE and certificates will be given upon the completion of courses.

The selected schools in Islamabad will participate in the language courses.

This collaboration between FDE, NAVTC, and NUML aims to equip students with foreign language skills, enhancing their global prospects and fostering cultural understanding.

He questioned India's motives, saying, "It knows Kashmiri children do not support India and instead want to sacrifice themselves for Pakistan."

Safi floods India's use of pellet guns in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ghulam Mohammad Safi, convener of All Parties Hurriyat Conference-AJK chapter, has strongly condemned India's use of pellet guns in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), stating that it was prohibited globally and violated international laws.

Addressing a cultural, organized by Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) in connection with Kashmir, Safi emphasized, "Thousands of children have lost their sight due to pellet gun injuries and that India's actions have crossed all limits of oppression."

He questioned India's motives, saying, "It knows Kashmiri children do not support India and instead want to sacrifice themselves for Pakistan."

Powerful blast reported near police vehicle at Warsak Road

ISLAMABAD (APP): A powerful explosion has been reported near a police vehicle on Warsak Road Peshawar on Wednesday afternoon.

According to SP Arshad Khan, rescue and relief teams have been dispatched to the site following the report.

No information on casualties has been confirmed yet, he added.

Security forces and law enforcement agencies are also arriving at the location.

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

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

He said that it would be a grand project to establish Pakistan's first international standard zoo and safari park in Islamabad where 200-acre facility will be home to 5,000 animals and birds, with 2,000 to be introduced in the first phase.

The minister directed the registration of the zoo and safari park with the World Association of Zoos

and Aquariums and instructed officials to finalize all matters related to the project swiftly.

The foundation stone of the project is expected to be laid down in October.

The project, reviewed in a meeting chaired by Minister Naqvi at the CDA headquarters, aims to increase tourism in Islamabad and provide world-class recreational facilities to citizens. Chairman CDA Mohammad Ali Randhawa briefed the meeting on the project's details.

This development marks a significant step towards enhancing Islamabad's recreational infrastructure and promoting tourism in the capital city.

Three Pakistani fishermen released from Yemeni prison after 16 years, return home

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: In a heart-warming reunion, three Pakistani fishermen who were imprisoned in Yemen for 16 years have returned home, thanks to the efforts of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Link Office in Muscat, Oman.

Saleem and Imam Bakhs, both from Karachi, and Khudad from Gwadar, were arrested in 2008 for illegally entering Yemen's territorial waters while fishing. They were released last night and have been reunited with their loved ones in Pakistan.

The FIA Link Office in Muscat, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Yemen, worked tirelessly to secure their release.

The spokesperson for the FIA confirmed the news, highlighting the agency's commitment to helping Pakistani citizens in distress abroad. The return of the three fishermen marks a significant success for the FIA and its international partners, and is a testament to the power of collaboration and diplomacy in resolving complex cases.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif planting a sapling to launch Monsoon Tree Plantation campaign.

OWFDs providing services 24/7 at all Airports to Overseas Pakistanis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) has established One Window Facilitation Desks (OWFDs) at all International Airports of the country and providing the services to Overseas Pakistanis.

An official source told APP here on Wednesday, he said that OWFDs are located at each terminal (International arrival/departure) for the assistance of overseas Pakistani passenger's round the clock.

Courteous and trained officials deputized at OWFDs to ensure provision of high quality of facilitation and assistance to overseas Pakistanis. Existing infrastructure at OWFDs has been upgraded. Besides additional facilities, the service delivery at facilitation counters at various airports has also been improved with added staff/services.

To a question he said that OWFDs providing various services including necessary assistance to the overseas Pakistanis at the time of arrival and departure.

Coordination among the various agencies/departments functioning at the airport to ensure smooth arrival and departure of overseas Pakistani passengers.

Special assistance to overseas Pakistanis who are physically challenged, senior citizen and passengers not maintaining good health.

Assistance in lost and found baggage and for improvement in services/complaints at airports, these counters are contacted.

Necessary guidance is also provided to overseas Pakistanis for their connecting flights and travel advisory for their destinations within Pakistan.

He said that information material about OPF and its projects/schemes at all international arrival/departure lounges.

NUST awards high performing researchers, innovators

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) conferred the Best Researcher and Innovator Awards (BRAIN) upon the high-performing researchers and innovators on Wednesday.

The distinguished awardees demonstrated exceptional capabilities in securing national and international funding, conducting cutting-edge research, producing high-quality publications, and creating impactful inventions during the academic year 2022-23.

Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui graced the event as chief guest and presented cash prizes and certificates to 80 awardees in 108 different categories. Speaking to the Award holders and faculty members as chief guest, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said it was a moment of celebration and triumph for NUST. Lauding the leadership role of NUST in nurturing the best minds, addressing socio-economic challenges.

Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said it was a moment of celebration and triumph for NUST. Lauding the leadership role of NUST in nurturing the best minds, addressing socio-economic challenges.

NCC Education UK, IBCC join hands to enhance educational standards in Pak

ISLAMABAD (APP): NCC Education UK and the Inter Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC) Pakistan have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on enhancing educational standards in Pakistan. The MoU was signed in Manchester, UK, marking a significant step towards strengthening educational ties and supporting the strategic goals of Pakistan's educational regulatory frameworks.

This partnership aims to empower Pakistani students by enhancing their skills and knowledge through the NCC Education Level 3 International Foundation Diploma for Higher Education Studies.

In addition, the agreement includes provisions for technical assistance and expert consultation to support the initiatives of Pakistani regulatory authorities.

The collaboration will also involve training delegations from local educational boards in Pakistan to raise the quality standards of local education, as well as adopting best practices in educational methodologies and regulatory frameworks.

Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah, Executive Director of IBCC Pakistan, commented on the agreement: "This MoU represents a pivotal moment for Pakistan's educational landscape. By partnering with NCC Education, we are opening doors for our students to gain international exposure and high-quality education. Our collaboration will not only enhance the skills and knowledge of our students but also help

us in adopting global best practices in educational standards and methodologies. We are committed to raising the bar for education in Pakistan, and this partnership is a testament to that commitment."

Prof. Peter Ford, Chairman of NCC Education, added: "We are thrilled to collaborate with IBCC Pakistan in this important initiative. This partnership will allow us to share our expertise and resources to help elevate the educational standards in Pakistan. We are committed to supporting IBCC in its mission to enhance educational opportunities and foster academic excellence for Pakistani students. Together, we aim to create pathways for students to achieve their academic and career aspirations."



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar had a meeting with Law Minister Punjab Sohaib Ahmad Malik.

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

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, Engr. Amir Muqam, on Wednesday said addressing the issues of Gilgit-Baltistan was a top priority for the federal government and assured to apply their resources to advance growth and well-being in the region. Minister Muqam chairing a high-level meeting at the Gilgit-Baltistan Council highlighted the region's vast potential to emerge as a premier global tourist destination. Additionally, he pointed out the

area's rich mineral resources and hydropower capabilities, vowing to harness these assets for regional development. Amir Muqam assured that issues faced by Gilgit-Baltistan's traders would be resolved amicably in accordance with existing rules and laws, and that all stakeholders would be kept informed and involved.

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

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

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

Trader delegation visits Traffic Headquarters; meets CTO Islamabad

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: According to the details, a delegation of trade representatives from the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries met with Chief Traffic Officer Islamabad

Virk about the traffic issues faced in commercial centers. The Chief Traffic Officer immediately issued directives to resolve the traders' issues.

The delegation appreciated the performance of

Islamabad Police during the meeting. The Chief Traffic Officer assured the delegation that Islamabad Police is making every effort to ensure the security of traders.

Muhammad Sarfraz Virk at the Traffic Headquarters, Islamabad.

During the meeting, the delegation informed CTO Muhammad Sarfraz

Islamabad Police during the meeting. The Chief Traffic Officer assured the delegation that Islamabad Police is making every effort to ensure the security of traders.

ICT admin swiftly responds to rains, ensures smooth drainage

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration officials sprang into action during the recent rains, ensuring smooth drainage and monitoring potential flood zones. "Drainage work has been completed across various areas and roads in the Federal Capital," said the spokesman of ICT administration. During the rain, Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates were on the ground, overseeing the situation, he added.

Teams from the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and

Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) also working diligently. They used dewatering pumps to clear water from different areas.

On the occasion, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, emphasized the strict monitoring of all drains to prevent any flooding. The ICT administration teams reached all low-lying areas, ensuring proper drainage.

The DC informed that despite ongoing highway construction, the traffic flow had remained unaffected.



ISLAMABAD: Students boarding a pink bus on her way at a road in the Federal Capital, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training notified 10 routes for the 'Pink Bus Service' - a fleet of 20 buses to facilitate female students, teachers and other women commuting from rural to urban areas.

Dr Abbas warns Severe penalties for plastic bag ban violators, exposes hidden dangers

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

Dr. Zaigham Abbas talking in a Radio Pakistan's program sounded the alarm that

plastic addiction is pushing us to the brink of ecological disaster where we must declare a war on plastic waste and need to take immediate action to reduce its use, and safeguard our environment.

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



ISLAMABAD: Senator Rubina Khalid, Chairperson BISP, meets Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development.