

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court has expressed its dissatisfaction over the report submitted by the Punjab government to the court on the Jaranwala incident. LHC judge, Justice Asim Munir on Wednesday heard the petition seeking the constitution of a judicial commission to investigate the Jaranwala tragedy in which a mob vandalized and torched houses and churches of Christians.

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ISLAMABAD: A three-member delegation of Senate of Pakistan is visiting Geneva to attend World Trade Organization's Public Forum at the invitation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The delegation led by Leader of the House, Senator Ishaq Dar, comprises Senator Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah and Senator Kamran Murtaza.

President proposes polls be held by Nov 6

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a new development to the ongoing controversy around the timing of general elections, President Arif Alvi on Wednesday suggested a date for the holding of polls in a letter to the chief election commissioner (CEC).

The president said that in the light of Article 48(5) of the Constitution, he has the authority and mandate "to appoint a date not later than 90 days from the date of dissolution [of assemblies], for holding of a general election to the assembly." President Alvi said that the National Assembly was dissolved by him on the advice of the then-prime minister Shehbaz Sharif on August 9, 2023.

[...] in terms of Article 48(5) the general election to the National Assembly should be held by the eighty-ninth day of the date of dissolution of the National Assembly, i.e. Monday 6th Day of November 2023," the letter stated. It also read that in a bid to fulfil the constitutional obligations, the president invited CEC Sikander Sultan Raja for a meeting to devise the modalities of implementing the constitutional intent and mandate for appointing a date, but the latter took a "contrary view" that it was the Election Commission of Pakistan's domain under the Constitution and framework of electoral laws.

Moreover, the CEC maintained that after the publication of Census 2023 on August 7, the duly notified delimitation of constituencies was in progress as required by Article 51(5) and section 17 of the Elections Act, 2017, the letter added. It further stated that the Ministry of Law and Justice, all provincial governments also voiced the same opinion. Furthermore, President Alvi also called for the general elections to the lower house of parliament and all provincial assemblies to be conducted on the same date.

Earlier on Wednesday, federal and provincial law ministers unanimously urged all organs of the state to respect the autonomy and authority of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in carrying

out the delimitation of constituencies and determining the election schedule. This statement by the law ministers was conveyed via an official statement following a meeting chaired by caretaker Law and Justice Minister Ahmad Irfan Aslam in Islamabad.

The meeting — attended by provincial law ministers Kanwar Dilshad (Punjab), Muhammad Omer Soomro (Sindh), Arshad Hussain Shah (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Amanullah Kanrani (Balochistan) — was held to discuss matters pertaining to the upcoming general elections to the National and provincial assemblies.

It concluded after the huddle determined that the conduct of general elections and announcement of election dates is the sole competence of the country's electoral authority, as per the Constitution. "The Election Commission of Pakistan is an independent constitutional body," the statement, issued by the ministry, read.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz-led (PML-N) coalition government dissolved the National Assembly on August 9 while the Sindh and Balochistan assemblies were also prematurely dissolved to allow the electoral authority to hold elections in the country within 90 days instead of 60 days if the legislature completed its constitutional tenure. If the elections are to be held within the 90-day limit, then the polls are due on November 9, 2023.

However, before dissolving the assemblies the coalition government in a Council of Common Interest (CCI) meeting had unanimously approved the 7th Population and Housing Census 2023. According to Article 51 (5) of the Constitution, the seats of the National Assembly to each province and the federal capital shall be allocated on the basis of population as per the new census. Following CCI's approval, the ECP on August 17 announced the schedule of new delimitations which exceeded the November 9th 90-day constitutional limit, almost making sure that the elections are likely to be held post the 90-day mark.

No alliance with PPP likely in next polls: Sana

F.P. Report

LAHORE: PML-N Punjab President Rana Sanaullah on Wednesday vehemently denied any possibility of alliance with the People's Party in next elections.

"There can be seat adjustment with the PPP on a limited level but there are minimal chances of even such electoral adjustment," Rana Sanaullah said. "The PPP's criticism on the PML-N suit them and they have right to do so," PML-N leader said.

Replying a question, Sanaullah said that as a political party, the PTI has right to do politics and they are entitled of it. "The PTI should keep the elements responsible for May 09 incidents, at distance from it," he was opined. He said the PML-N will decide about alliance with any party after general elections.

"Nawaz Sharif coming back to country on October 21 and he will be given splendid welcome on his arrival," PML-N leader said. It is to be mentioned here that former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday confirmed that Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif will return Pakistan on October 21.

Shehbaz Sharif talking to media in London lauded Nawaz Sharif's achievements in his tenure, saying that the former prime minister made Pakistan a nuclear power, ended the prolonged power load-shedding in the country and signed the CPCEC. He said that Nawaz Sharif was removed from power through a conspiracy and the rigging in the 2018 general elections left Pakistan behind in the region.

Shehbaz Sharif said that he will welcome the three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif on his arrival in Lahore. "We held consultations with the senior leadership of the party, and we have decided that Nawaz Sharif will return to Pakistan in October and lead the election campaign," Shehbaz Sharif said.

Religious scholar shot dead

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A religious scholar has been assassinated in the Gulistan Johar area of Karachi, on Wednesday. According to police, some unknown armed persons riding a motorcycle opened fire on Maulana Ziaur Rehman who was taking a stroll in the park near the FBR building in Gulistan Johar. He died instantly as a result of the indiscriminate fire.

He was the principal of Jama'i Abu Bakar Islami, Gulshan Iqbal. The CTD and Crime Scene Unit recovered 11 shells from the crime scene, out of which four shells were of 9 mm and seven of 30 bore. The shells have been sent for forensic analysis.

The police hoped that they would be able to identify the target killers with the help of CCTV cameras in the vicinity. According to SSP Irfan Bahadur, eyewitnesses informed that two armed persons riding on a motorcycle opened indiscriminate fire on the maulana. Police found the involvement of a foreign agency in the assassination of Maulana Ziaur Rehman. However, they said that they would investigate whether it was a sectarian killing or there was some other motive.

Meanwhile, IG Sindh Rafat Mukhtar and Additional IG Khadim Rind took notice of the incident and sought details from the SSP East. They instructed to form teams to investigate the murder. Karachi police chief Additional Inspector General Khadim Hussain Rind on Wednesday suspected the involvement of India's spy agency RAW in the killing of caretaker of a mosque in Karachi's Gulistan-e-Johar area.



GILGIT: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar talking to media persons after inauguration of Cardiac hospital.

One nation, one law to be ensured, says PM

F.P. Report

GILGIT: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said the problems of Gilgit-Baltistan would be addressed through constitutional means, and no 'hostage group' would be allowed to enforce its agenda.

"The rule of One Nation and One Law will be implemented and there should be no doubt about it," he told journalists at the opening of the out-patient department at the cardiology hospital in Gilgit. The prime minister said it was the responsibility of the State to ensure the rights of the people.

He said every effort would be made to resolve the problems of the people of GB and provide them with an honourable life. He vowed to focus on tapping the economic potential of GB through its tourism and energy production sectors. Kakar said the road infrastructure of GB would be improved to enhance its connectivity with the rest of the country.

He mentioned holding detailed meetings with local stakeholders and highlighted the importance of removing mutual misunderstandings. About financial problems faced by Gilgit-Baltistan University, he said following his discussion with the vice-chancellor, the finance division had been directed to step in.

As an inclusive approach, the prime minister said he had directed the caretaker information minister to telecast air talk shows on Pakistan Television in Gilgiti and Shina languages twice a week. Earlier, PM Kakar took a round of various departments of the hospital where he was briefed about the medical facilities.

The 50-bed hospital contains emergency care, an intensive care unit, a children's ward, cardiac surgery, and treatment sections. It was told that the hospital will become fully functional by June 2024. Caretaker Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti, Information Minister Murtaza

Solangi, Chief Minister GB, and senior officials were present.

PM directs to reconstruct, improve GB's communication infrastructure: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday directed the authorities concerned to formulate a strategy to reconstruct and improve the communication infrastructure of Gilgit-Baltistan.

The prime minister, in a meeting with socio-political leaders of Hunza and visit to Hunar Kohn project of Karakorum Area Development Organization (KADO), assured for early resolution of electricity-related issues faced by the region. The delegation apprised the prime minister of the issues pertaining to demand and supply of electricity in Hunza, allocation of additional seats for Hunza in the GB Assembly in proportion to the population and other matters.

The prime minister instructed for formulation of a strategy for generation of electricity in coordination with the power sector. The GB's political leadership briefed the prime minister about the challenges confronting the tourism sector of the region. They requested the prime minister to order establishment of aerial connectivity with different parts of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Prime Minister Kakar directed the GB chief secretary to utilise all-out resources for early resolution of the issues. The prime minister also visited the digital hub at KADO's Hunar Kohn project and rehabilitation center for the special persons. He lauded the KADO's services for the welfare of local population.

Prime Minister Kakar, while interacting with the freelancer students of Hunar Kohn project, said the passion of GB youth for development was appreciable. Former GB Governor Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan, ex-member of GB Assembly Rani Attiqah, members of GB Assembly Col. (Retd) Ubaidullah Baig and Dilshad Bano, and other socio-political leaders

attended the meeting.

Caretaker PM expresses resolve to bring those involved in smuggling, illicit trade to book: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said that they had identified the officials and political personalities, at the federal and provincial levels, who were involved in smuggling and illegal trade activities.

The relevant authorities were also securing evidences against them which would be produced before the courts of law, leading to their conviction, he said and assured that a stern action would be taken against all those involved in such activities. Expressing his views during the talk show programme of a private TV channel (SAMAA), the prime minister said that in the Iranian oil smuggling issue, a number of bureaucrats and political figures were involved.

The political figures in the past had raised the issue of granting permission for trade in the border areas, he added. The deputy commissioners in those areas used to issue tokens worth Rs 200,000 to Rs 250,000 for the movement of each vehicle carrying oil. More than 20,000 such vehicles were involved in the illicit trade, giving rise to illicit revenue generation, he added.

About a question regarding the illegal dollars trade, he said that through stringent measures, they stopped the trade physically and through enforcement of contemporary laws. "We have changed the nomenclature for such illegal activity by terming it 'illicit trade'. At least, we have achieved a milestone in this regard," he added. PM Kakar further elaborated that the US dollars were converted into different currencies and parked across the region, leading to a vicious cycle that was functioning for the last one and one and a half year, which was now being smashed through physical crackdown and border management laws.

(Continued on Back Page)

Launching ceremony of Pak Navy vessel held

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Launching Ceremony of state-of-the-art Offshore Patrol Vessel, PNS HUNAIN (Desig) being built for Pakistan Navy was held at M/s DAMEN Shipyard Galati, Romania. Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief of the Naval Staff highlighted the importance of maritime security under the prevailing conventional and non-conventional maritime threats to energy and trade highways passing through Indian Ocean Region. In this context, he underscored that Pakistan Navy has tremendous contribution in successfully providing a secure sea environment for maritime trade since 2004. The Admiral expressed his confidence that induction of these multipurpose and highly adaptive platforms; equipped with state-of-the-art weapons/ sensors suite, will further strengthen combat capability of PN Fleet in safeguarding maritime frontiers while ensuring Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean Region, especially in the Arabian Sea.

Imran, Qureshi's remand extended

ATTOCK (INP): A special court on Wednesday extended the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman and party's Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi's judicial remand till September 26 in the cipher case.

Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain, who heard the case at the Attock District Jail under the Official Secrets Act 2023, extended the judicial remand of Imran Khan in the missing cipher case, a classified state document. Hearing of the case took place at the Attock Jail following approval by the Law Ministry amid security concerns expressed by the Interior Ministry.

The PTI Chairman Imran Khan was sent to jail on August 5 following his conviction in the Toshakhana case. On August 29, the IHC had suspended his sentence. However, a special court had directed Attock jail authorities to keep him in "judicial lockup" in connection with the cipher case.

On Tuesday, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) reserved its verdict on a petition filed by PTI chairman challenging the law ministry's decision to conduct the trial in the cipher case at Attock jail. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq reserved the verdict on PTI chairman's plea after hearing the argu-

ments. The court had sought an explanation from the respondents on the notice.

The first information report (FIR) was registered on August 15 under the Official Secrets Act. It was registered on the complaint of Home Secretary. Former prime minister Imran Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi were nominated in the report, while names of former principal secretary Azam Khan and former planning minister Asad Umar were also mentioned.

According to the report, action also will be taken against Azam Khan and Asad Umar after the authorities reached the conclusion that they were also involved in misusing the classified documents. The FIR stated that the former prime minister and foreign minister distorted the facts of the diplomatic cipher. "A conspiracy was launched to misuse the contents of the cipher to fulfill nefarious purposes", it added. It further stated that former premier and top diplomat endangered the state interests. The report claimed that former prime minister asked Azam Khan — the then principal secretary — to "manipulate the contents of cipher". "The former premier deliberately kept the copy of diplomatic cipher, which was sent to the PM office", it added.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali addressing a press conference at Governor's House. Caretaker Provincial Minister for Education Dr. Qasim Jan also present on occasion.

PEDO rapidly working for uplift of energy sector

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial Caretaker Minister for Energy & Power and Mines & Mineral Development, Engineer Ahmad Jan on Monday said that Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO) is working rapidly for the development of the energy sector, which will prove as catalyst economic stability of the province in future and resolve the current energy crisis.

He expressed these views while addressing the introductory meeting at PEDO office Peshawar on Wednesday.

While giving a briefing to the minister the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), PEDO Engineer Naem Khan said that his organization is accelerated working for the production of cheap hydropower energy.

He added that so far more than 47 billion rupees of income has been made from the electricity and efforts are being made to increase this income further to stabilize the economy of the province and the country.

He said that seven major hydropower projects with a total capacity of 162 MW have been completed under

PEDO, which are earning billions of rupees annually for the province. Similarly, five more projects of 216 MW electricity generating capacity are in the final stages of completion. These projects included by 84MW Gorkan Matiltan Hydropower Project, 69MW Lavi, 40MW Koto, 11MW Karora, 10 MW Jabori Hydropower Project.

He went on to say that beside these projects, progress is also underway on the 13.5 MW Chaparichar Khel and 6.9 MW Mujahidin Hydropower projects.

The CEO PEDO said that the company with the financial assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has also started work on 300 MW Balakot Hydropower Project, while practical work is also underway on the 88 MW Gabral Kalam and 157 MW Madin Hydropower projects with the financial support of the World Bank.

Engineer Naem Khan further told that Chief Minister's House, Chief Minister's Secretariat and a number of offices at Civil Secretariat have already been shifted on solar energy. He said that while 8000 schools, 187 BHUs and 4000 Masajid of settled dis-

tricts of the province have also been shifted on solar system.

Similarly, 300 Masajid and other religious places and 100 villages have been shifted on solar energy in the newly merged districts of the erstwhile FATA.

He added that PEDO has set up a business and financial plan, which will generate 2200 megawatts of cheap electricity in the next 8 years, which will be provided to the industrial sector through the wheeling model. The transmission line company established by the provincial government will stabilize the economy and arrest unemployment in the province.

Furthermore, he said that with the support of the private sector work is also underway on 12 megawatt capacity other project, which will be a positive development for the development of the economy of the province.

On this occasion the provincial minister, Engineer Ahmad Jan Khan expressed his satisfaction on PEDO performance and said that he will soon contact the relevant authorities to solve some of the problems related to the federal government.

ETEA declares result of MDCAT

PESHAWAR (APP): Education Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA) on Wednesday announced the result of the Medical Entrance Test (MDCAT) 2023 wherein only 110 students could score 190 plus marks out of a total of 45640 candidates.

Uzra Riaz topped the test securing 198 marks followed by Haseeb Khan who secured 197 marks. Mansoor Khan, Shah Faisal Khan, Syed Aqeel Bacha and Abdul Razzaq secured the third position with 195 marks and Saifullah Imtiaz, Muqtasad Khan, Saifullah Khalid, Halimah, Anam Khan and Saqlain Khan shared the fourth position with 194 marks.

According to Education Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA) results, 1094 students scored 180 to 189 marks, and 2085 could score between 170 and 179, adding that 63.5 per cent of students passed the test with a minimum of 45 per cent marks.

It said that more than 20 thousand students could not even get 100 marks on the test while the tests of 219 students were cancelled over charges of "unfair means".

Quality education vital for sustainable economic uplift

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Wednesday said that quality higher education and research studies in universities were vital for sustainable economic progress and development of the country.

Briefing newsmen about the fiscal analysis of KP universities 2021-2024 report prepared by the Governor's Secretariat KP here, the Governor said that no country can achieve heights of economic prosperity and development goals unless it equipped its people with ornament of quality higher education and concentrated on excellent research work.

He said research based education generates employment opportunities and alleviates poverty in society. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governor said that a total of 34 public sector universities were providing quality higher education to students in KP despite financial constraints.

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Governor Haji Ghulam Ali said that revenue of most of public sectors universities were decreasing and expenditures were increasing due to poor planning and wrong selection of sites for establishment of new universities by the past governments.

He said that only one percent was being spent on research work which was very low compared to international standards. The governor said that in last four to five months, eight public sector universities in KP were functioning without a vice chancellor while VCs of additional seven universities are going to retire shortly. He said that the former PTI government has done great injustice with the universities after passing an act that compli-

cated the appointment of vice chancellors and KP's domiciled human resource for induction in public sector universities.

The governor said that VCs in all universities would be appointed strictly on merit and no compromise would be made on quality of education. The education grandeur of Edwards College Peshawar would be restored, he said.

Governor Ghulam Ali said media role was important in creating awareness about a meaningful education and all the VCs were taken on boards before finalization of the said inclusive report.

According to the said report, over the past three years, federal grants to public sector universities in KP have demonstrated a steady growth with allocation totaling Rs10,133 million in 2021, Rs10,909 million in 2022 and Rs10,954 million in 2023.

These grants are crucial for the development and

improvement of public sector universities in KP which can be used for improving infrastructure, faculty development, research initiatives and student support programs.

However, a pressing concern lies in the promised annual provincial grants of Rs3000 million, which have regrettably remained unpaid despite the government commitment while the provincial grant to the universities last year remained Rs3326 million. Despite the cabinet approval, grants are not released by the finance department, significantly hampering academic growth and research output.

According to the report, the federal grants of 18 universities including university of agriculture Peshawar, university of Lakki Marwat, Abbottabad University of Science and Technology, Shaheed BB Women University Peshawar, Bacha Khan University Charsadda, Fata

University, University of Haripur, University of Science and Technology Bannu, Hazara University, Swabi University, Khushal Khattak Karak, Women University Swabi, Shaheed BB University Upper Dir, KMU, Gomal University DI Khan, IMS, Islamia College Peshawar and University of Malakand were decreased during 2023-24.

The report revealed that despite reforms, universities saw only modest revenue growth ie Rs7 billion in 2021 and Rs2billion in 2022 which means falling short of the progressive targets.

The report said the universities surpluses for 2021 and 2022 were Rs4113 million and Rs3938 million, however the projected surplus for 2023-24 is just Rs545 million due to over recruitment, inflation and lack of saving. Caretaker Education Minister, Dr Qasim Jan was also present.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Information Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel addressing a press conference at Civil Secretariat.

AD&SJ rejects alleged murderer BBA plea

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Additional District and Session Judge (AD&SJ) Peshawar Ijaz Ahmad Khan rejected Bail Before Arrest (BBA) of alleged murder Allah Jan while arrested from the premises, on Wednesday.

According to prosecution, Allah Jan is involved in murder of BS Botany Student at Superior Science College named Danyal and injured Manager Khyber Bank Warsak Road Jahangir Khan while argued for rejection of BBA.

The alleged murder was

taken into custody by Aga Mir Jani police station while started investigation and interrogation from him.

It is worthy to mention that Allah Jan has obtained BBA on 29th August while Danayal Zeb was killed on

10th August 2023. The alleged culprits including Muhammad Islam Khan and Jan Muhammad residents of Rasheed Ghari nominated in the First Information Report are still absconders.

Police arrest 2 smugglers

PESHAWAR, (APP): During an ongoing campaign against narcotics in Peshawar, the Badhber Police have confiscated 10 kilograms of hashish and arrested two smugglers here on Wednesday. The operation led by SHO Badhber police station Nasir Farid Khattak, on a tip off conducted separate operations and arrested two smugglers Iran Gul and Haji Muhammad and recovered hashish from their possession. The police have registered the case and started investigation.



PESHAWAR: Workers repairing safety iron grille installed on road wall in front of Provincial Assembly and Peshawar High Court. — F.P. photo

ICS teaching staff elects new cabinet

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Islamia Collegiate School Teaching Staff Association elected Kafeel Ahmad Khalil and Muhammad Shahzad as president and general secretary respectively for 2023-25 session.

Election Commissioner Rooh Ullah Khan has issued notification of successful candidates as Kafeel Ahmad president, Muhammad Shahzad as general secretary, Ismat Ara as joint secretary, finance secretary Syed Masood Shah, Naveed Ahmad as press secretary and Subhan Ali elected as sport secretary.

The Executive Committee including Dr. Jahangir Shah, Alamgir Khan, Hazrat Umar, Rashid Abbas, Arshad Syed and Inam Ullah Khan as members.

The newly elected cabinet committed for uplift and welfare of teaching staff association as well as will uphold their voice at every forum.

Budget session today

PESHAWAR (APP): The annual budget session of Capital Metropolitan Government Peshawar to held today (Thursday).

Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali has convened the budget session for the year 2023-24 on Wednesday. The second day budget session would be held on Sep 15.

Seminar on traffic rules organized



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A seminar on Traffic Rules and Road Safety was conducted in Aghosh Al-Khidmat Foundation on Wednesday.

The aim of the seminar was to edu-

cate children about road safety and the importance of traffic rules.

During the seminar, SP Education Shazia Shahid informed the children about road crossing, zebra crossing and other traffic rules and the children were also given a practical

demonstration of regular zebra crossing and road crossing.

Chief Traffic Officer Qamar Hayat Khan while addressing the seminar said that children should cross the road carefully by looking at both sides while crossing the road.

He said that children should always cross the road through zebra crossing on highways. He further said that due to heavy traffic on the road, the children should cross the road through nearby people or ask the traffic police who will help them.

He further said that there is a legal ban on driving for people under eighteen years of age, while legal action is taken against the violators. CTO added that students are our future and it is very important to educate them about traffic rules.

Crackdown intensifies against electricity theft

PESHAWAR (INP): Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Shah Fahad, chaired a meeting on Wednesday to accelerate the crackdown on electricity theft and the recovery of overdue electricity bills. Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Shah Fahad, in a meeting, was convened in the provincial capital to address the issue of cracking down on the kunda mafia and arrears collection.

The meeting was attended by

Additional Deputy Commissioner Sania Safi, administrative officials, WAPDA authorities, TMAs officers, local government representatives, and police officials. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding the prevention of electricity theft, actions against the kunda mafia, and revenue collection in Peshawar.

It was emphasized that an effective operation against the kunda mafia is currently underway under the district administration's supervision. In a

joint operation, numerous illegal connections have been dismantled, and FIRs have been filed against those involved in electricity theft.

The Deputy Commissioner instructed that the operation against the cable mafia should be intensified, and no concessions should be granted to them. He appealed to the public to collaborate with the district administration to ensure the success of this campaign and to fulfill their responsibilities in this regard.

Chinese team, VCs of KP universities discussed disaster prevention



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Southeast University (SEU) Naniyang, China's delegation called on Prof. Dr. Iftikhar Hussain, Vice

Chancellor UET Peshawar here today. The delegation met with Secretary Relief and Rehabilitation KP, Mr. Abdul Basit, Deputy Scientific Advisor, Ministry of Science and Technology

(MOST) Islamabad, Mr. Raja Shehreyar, VC University of Science and Technology, Bannu, Prof. Dr. Khair-uz-Zaman, VC University of Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Jehan Bakht. The

visit was aimed to discuss the possibility of establishing the "China-Pak Belt and Road Joint Laboratory for Smart Disaster Prevention of major Infrastructure" which will be established in five designated universities of Pakistan including UET Peshawar, UET Lahore, NED Karachi, NUST and BUITEM Quetta. The senior officials from PDMA KP, Center for Disaster Preparedness and Management, UoP, China Study Center UoP and Civil Engineering Department UET Peshawar gave their presentations.

Prof. Zhou Dong from SEU said, the Civil Engineering Department

SEU is ranked "A+" as a first class discipline, declared by Ministry of Education, China. He said that the cooperation between SEU and Pakistani universities are part of the "Belt and Road" initiative based on talent cultivation, technology promotion and joint research development, adding, it would establish long-term friendship to carry out multi-disciplinary exchanges and cooperation in the field of disaster risk management.

Raja Shehreyar, MOST said, the start-of-the-art Lab at UET Peshawar will serve as hub for public sector universities of KP in collaboration with Southeast University

Naniyang, China. The joint lab will work under the umbrella of MOST and NDMA as part of Public Private Partnership model suggested by the CPEC working group on S&T. Mr. Abdul Basit, Secretary Relief and Rehabilitation KP said that the government of KP has established the Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department (RRSD), is actively working on formulating policies, strategies to look after disasters in the province.

The Vice chancellors of KP universities unanimously appreciated the efforts of MOST, NDMA and PDMA for forging much-needed collaboration in scientific research with Southeast

University China in the field of disaster management. They said it would help in meeting the rapidly increasing climate change challenges in KP due to floods and other natural disasters. Later, the delegation visited the National Earthquake Engineering Center UET Peshawar, an institution that provides solutions and guidance to agencies involved in reconstruction and rehabilitation works.

Prof. Dr. Irshad Ahmed and Prof. Dr. Khan Shahzada briefed the delegation about the center. They told that the center is equipped with state-of-the-art labs, having 6x6m shake table, fourth in South Asia,

contributed in revision of seismic building code Pakistan 2023 while its faculty is actively engaged in research on cutting-edge technology in respect of non-destructive testing of building and bridge structures. Prof. Dr. Sahar Noor, Dean Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Prof. Dr. Amjad Ullah, Dean Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Prof. Dr. Siraj-ul-Islam, Dean Faculty of Architecture, Prof. Dr. Misbah Ullah, Treasurer UET Peshawar, Dr. Khizar Azam Khan, Registrar UET Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Nasru Minallah, Director ORIC and senior officials were also present on the occasion.



In brief

Civil society hold protest F.P. Report

LARKANA: The residents and representatives of civil society protested in front of Badeh Town Hall against Badh, the most populous city of Larkana, not being given the status of Taluka. Sario, Comrade Kadir Brohi, Dudu Desi and others protested and said that for the last four years, we have been continuously protesting for the status of Tehsil to Badeh, the largest city of Larkana district, but the former rulers have done great injustice to us. The speakers claimed that no notification has been issued to give Badh the status of Taluka, he further said that Badeh city is a big city in terms of historical, commercial, population and land as Bada town committee is based on 14 wardens and 24 councilors but alas. It has to be said that since Badeh was not given the status of a Taluka, the residents of the city and the backward areas are suffering because the conditions of education, health, electricity and law and order in the city are not improving. The protesters claimed that they have been forced to do while the elected assembly members of the region were also silent spectators on giving Badeh the status of Taluka during the 14-year government period in the country on public mandate. In order to fulfill the long-standing desire of the people, the notification to give the status of Tehsil to Badh Shahr should be issued so that the public can get rid of the confusion.

Three killed, four injured

TOBA TEK SINGH (INP): At least three people were killed and four others in collision between trailer and passenger van on Motorway M4, rescue sources said on Wednesday. According to details, the accident took place in tehsil Gojra of Toba Tek Singh where a trailer got out of control due to bursting of tyre. As a result of collision, three people were killed on the spot while four others sustained injuries. The deceased included Salma, Faqir Hussain and Nazir and they hailed from Faisalabad. The bodies and injured were shifted to hospital and police after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

AGEGA hold protest F.P. Report

H A F I Z A B A D : Employees of different government departments taken out a rally and protest demonstration against elimination of leave encashment, cut in pension and privatization of government schools by the Punjab government under auspices of All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) Hafizabad. Chairman AGEGA Hafizabad Muhammad Nasir Amin and president AGEGA Muhammad Nageeb Nishat led the rally and protest demonstration. Addressing the participants of rally, Muhammad Nasir Amin, Ch. Riaz Ahmad Tarar, Khalid Javed, Ehsanullah Hanjra, Shahid Javed, Ikram Ullah Bhone, Ch. Fayyaz Ahmad Warriach, Muhammad Aqeel Azad, Asghar Ali Hanjra, Rana Waqar Ahmad Khan, Ch. Khalid Pervez, Qari Atiq-ur-Rehman, Habib Ullah Rana and other office bearers of different Employees Union urged the government to withdraw notification regarding amendments in pension rule, deduction in benefits of leave encashment and other anti-employees policies including privatization of government schools in the Punjab.

Pensioners hold protest for acceptance of demands

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The aged retired employees of Tehsil Municipal Administration Mardan held protest and sit-in against the delay in their pension amount. The protesting employees were carrying banners and placards in their hands inscribed with written notes against the provincial government and TMA relevant officials. The protest sit-in held the other day.

The affected retired employees were chanting slogans against the TMA officials. On the occasion, the aged retired employees expressed and deplored that they were forced to hold protest set-in as they were not being provided their pension amount despite of the fact that the price-hike was on its peak.

They lamented that they spent a big part of their lives while delivering municipal services with whole heartedly to masses but now they were facing lots of difficulties and hurdles in getting their pension. They alleged that they were facing problems in getting pension and salaries since the provincial finance department had stopped and halted PLA. The pensioners asked the authorities concerned to solve their problem forthwith, otherwise, they would be forced to hold protest set-in for indefinite period in front of chief minister office.

Accountability of corrupt politicians demanded: Pakistan People Party central leader Nawabzada Khawaja Muhammad Khan Hoti has asked for stern accountability of corrupt politicians along with government officials in judiciary and other institutions before holding of general elections. He was talking to journalists in a press conference and urged all politicians of the country to present themselves for accountability before going to test polls as survival of Pakistan is not laying in elections.

"We are seeing the holding of election in the country for last seventy years," he added. Khawaja Muhammad Khan Hoti lamented and blamed that few families had been rulling the country since its independence who were giving turn of power to each other. He claimed that Pakistan's

population was consisted of 95-percent poor class. "Poor people has not been provided with their basic needs," he said, adding that poor people were forced to commit suicide due to starvation. He feared that now they were committing suicides but in second phase, they would put their hands over politicians for accountability.

PPP leader said that the political parties which were claiming itself the so-called champion of democracy, had not been discussing issues related to welfare and prosperity of poor. He said that both the politics and power were captured by inheritance in Pakistan. He demanded for holding of stern accountability in mega projects including BRT, Billion tree usnami, Malam Jaba and other mega corruption scandals.

Thieves, robbers freely roams in Rustam: Thieves rule, theft, robbery and have become normal in the limits of Rustam police station, the prayer in front of Rustam Press Club the manager of Mega Mart have lost their motorcycles before night prayers, there has been a lot of panic among the citizens. Citizens have demanded strict measures from DPO Mardan, SP Rural Division and DSP Rural Circle to prevent theft, so that the area becomes a cradle of peace.

According to the details, there has been an increase in the incidents of theft, robbery within the limits of Rustam police station, which has caused panic among businessmen and ordinary citizens. Two incidents of theft took place in half an hour in front of Rustam Press Club. Motorcycle Honda 125 model 2012 was stolen from Mohammad Tayyab son of Shoaib Resident Chagai Baba Rustam.

While before the Night prayer, Rustam Mega Mart Manager Riaz Gul son of Islam Gul Resident Palo-Dheri Rustam parked his motorcycle 70 cc model 2019 in front of the Mega Mart when unknown thieves stole it. It should be remembered that various theft incidents are taking place in the limits of Rustam police station day by day, due to which serious panic has spread among the businessmen and ordinary citizens of the area.

Transformers distributed to counter low voltage

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Residents of different villages of Chitral Town were facing great hardships is low voltage of electricity and the repeated damaging of transformers were facing great problems. To resolve the issue, former Member National Assembly Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali distributed transformers and electric poles worth Rs 80.5 million from his discretionary fund.

In this regard, a ceremony was also held in Grid Station Judilash, in which members of Jamaat-e-Islami and people from the villages participated in large numbers. Former MNA Abdul Akbar Chitrali, said that in the National Assembly, he played a key role in the implementation of the interest free system.

In addition, I have approved billions of rupees for construction of roads, transformers, poles, and other development works in Chitral areas he added. He said that the nation trusted me and I did not disappointed them nor damaged their confidence. He said

that if I had the opportunity to serve again, I would serve the nation vigorously. "I have increased the punishment of the perpetrators of blasphemy law from the National Assembly," he said. He said that I was offered million of rupees as a commission but I refused it. He said that Jamaat-e-Islami would not contest in election as ally with any other party in the future, but there could be talks on the seat adjustment, he said.

Former MNA said that he have approved 6 feeders including Kisu, Broz, Avun, Shashi Koh, Arundo, Ashriyat, etc. Which have been approved and the project will be completed at a cost of Rs 4 billion. He said that I have taken Rs 1.5 billion from the government in terms of electricity. "I didn't even get the fund, but I approached the court and after going to court, I succeeded in taking my right," he said.

Talking to our correspondent, Abdul Akbar Chitrali said that there was a lot of electricity shortage or low voltage in the Town area when electricity was being delivered to Chitral

Town. People were forced to stay in the dark for weeks due to damaging or technical fault in transformer. Now, with my efforts, I earmarked Rs 80.5 million from my discretionary fund for solving this problem. He said that at present 10 Transformers of 100 KV, 9 of 50 KV and one of 25 KV transformers are distributing among the people of Town area, as well as two hundred and fifty small poles and 60 large poles, are being distributed among the people. This will solve the issue of low voltage in Chitral.

On this occasion, people from different villages also expressed their happiness that their transformer was repeatedly out of order in past and they often live in darkness now their frustration will be ended. A large number of people attended the ceremony, which later on ended with the prayer words of Maulana Jamsheed. The people of the area had brought vehicles with them with great enthusiasm on this occasion, who were seen loading these transformers and electric pools in the vehicles.

Crackdown against electricity pilferage

F.P. Report

BANNU: The Lakki Marwat and Bannu district administrations have launched an anti-power pilferage operation in all subdivisions of both districts to detect electricity thieves and disconnect illegal connections.

In Lakki Marwat, under the supervision of deputy commissioner Abdul Hadi, a special task force headed by additional AC Gohar Ali Khan detected dozens of illegal connections in Gulan Kallay, Sher Kallay, Amir Jan Bhatti locality and surrounding areas of Naurang town.

An official said on Wednesday that the power thieves had obtained illegal connections from the transmission line with the help of hook (kunda). He said that all illegal connections were disconnected and complaints were filed with local police for registration of cases against power thieves. He said that power connections of defaulters were also disconnected during the anti-power pilferage operation.

In Bannu, police registered FIRs against electricity stealers and arrested five of them during an anti-power

theft operation led by assistant commissioner Syed Abrar Ali Shah. On complaints about stealing of electricity by domestic and commercial consumers, the administration official along with PESCO staffers and police contingent raided several places in the Sabzi Mandi area and disconnected illegal connections there.

Meanwhile, a high-level meeting chaired by divisional commissioner Parwez Sabatkhel at his office in Bannu discussed matters pertaining to curb electricity theft and launch across the board action against power stealers.

Bannu DC Manzoor Ahmad Afridi, North Waziristan ADC Bashir Ahmad, Lakki Marwat subdivision Bitanni AC Najam Dawar, AC development Gul Nawaz Khan, PESCO superintending engineer Nadir Zaman Kundi and other officials were in attendance.

The strategies formulated by the district administrations in Lakki Marwat, Bannu and North Waziristan to tighten noose around power thieves and defaulters came under discussion at the meeting. It also discussed with detail the effective role of anti-power

theft task force in elimination of electricity pilferage and improving recoveries from power defaulters.

Speaking at the meeting, the divisional commissioner revealed that more than sixty percent electricity was being stolen in Bannu division and there was the dire need to prevent power theft and bring the power supply system in accordance with the demands and requirements of modern times. He directed the deputy commissioners to implement the comprehensive and coordinated plan chalked out by their administrations in letter and spirit so that the anti-power pilferage operation could be made result-oriented.

He said that power theft had become a national tragedy therefore the power supply company with support of other stakeholders and people should take practical steps to take electricity thieves to task and provide relief to honest consumers. Commissioner asked the PESCO authorities to identify domestic, commercial, industrial and other electricity thieves on all power feeders so as to enable the task force to make its actions a success.



SARGODHA: Commissioner Mohammad Ajmal Bhatti distributing saplings among the students during the Plant for Pakistan campaign.

DPO for maintaining peace in Tank F.P. Report

TANK: District Police Officer Ifitikhar Ali Shah on Wednesday said that additional personnel was sought to control the deteriorating situation in the district especially in Bettani areas and crackdown on narcotics traffickers.

In a media statement, DPO Ifitikhar Ali Shah expressed his efforts and heartfelt desire to see Tank especially Bettani areas prosper, crime rates decrease, relief for the local population. He disclosed the request to IGP for additional police personnel to maintain peace in the area and control the situation that was approved.

It is worth mentioning here that Bettani elders recently hold a grand meeting at Umer Ada regarding the worst law and order situation in Bettani circle which was attended by local elders, politicians, social figures, and media representatives, highlighting their concerns about the alarming security situation in Bettani areas.

The DPO assured Bettani tribe that maintenance of peace in the district is in his first priority and applauded Bettani tribe for their support to control the law and order situation in district. The DPO further said that crackdown on narcotics traffickers and other criminals has been launched and they will be dealt with iron hands.

Nazim chairs progress review meeting F.P. Report

BUNER: The tehsil Nazim Gadezai Salazar Sher Alam Khan held progress review meeting with devolved departments heads in his office on Wednesday. The TMO Anwar Shamim Khan and heads of 13 devolved departments attended. The Nazim said it was first meeting of the tenure and hoped all of department would make sure presence in the monthly meeting to personally note the public problems and difficulties presenting by villages chairmen in the tehsil council session.

The Nazim asked one by one all of departments heads about performance efficiency and public interests services besides funds and staff and also vacant positions. Nazim directed SDEO to avoid any pressure for transfer of blue eyed teachers from hard to plain areas schools rather fallow merit based policy strictly. The Nazim was unsatisfied and directed officer fisheries department for making sure increase number of fish and introduce different species besides its protection in rivers. He directed all of departments to involved villages chairmen in activities as they were public representatives and best know about needs and interests of villagers.

The Nazim conveyed complaints to AD RDD that secretaries were were less cooperative with elected villagers chairmen and hoped they would be directed to make sure cooperation to them. He was crystal clear the public cost vote to elected public representatives and their taxes were the main source of soaring nation treasury so both the elected figures and the department heads were subjected to obligatory serve them.

Enrollment drive: PRDS organizes walk

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Enrollment campaign formally commenced on Wednesday to attract out-of-school children to education in Charsadda district of KP. Mayor Charsadda Mufti Abdul Rauf Shakir and Additional Commissioner Waqas-ur-Rehman launched the admission campaign by distributing school bags among the children at TMA Hall Charsadda.

On this occasion, District Education Officer Charsadda Dr. Abdul Malik, Voluntary Service Overseas, Education Cannot Wait, Participatory Rural Development Society (PRDS), Idara Talem-o-Aghai, Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education, RSPN, Tarqae Foundation, UNICEF and representatives of Multi Year Resilience Program, male and female teachers, parents and students were also present in large number.

Addressing the ceremony, speakers said that the literacy rate must be increased if we want to boost up the country's economy and develop all other sectors. They said a huge chunk children are still out of school in Pakistan, where many state run schools lacks basic needs including electricity, so the government along with relevant stakeholders must take concrete measures to overcome these problems.

They said under the Multi Year Resilience program, in three districts of the province i.e. Peshawar, Charsadda and Nowshera, logistic, technical and educational support is being given to the government to improve the education environment as well as to help bring out-of-school students back to the schools and provide them with basic necessities and teacher's training.

The speakers said that education department is

also providing free books to these children, therefore each and every parent should bring their children especially female child to the schools. They said during ongoing campaign in 2023, about 35 thousand students were brought back to schools in Charsadda. Similarly, thousands of girls were also admitted to schools. Emphasizing on the education of girls, they were of the view that it will develop the entire society.

If the teachers teach the children with sincerity and honesty, there is no doubt that the results of the government-run-schools will also improve and the children will be able to compete with the students of private institutes. At the end of the ceremony, shields were also distributed among the guests and teachers while the participants also participated in a walk to create awareness among the people about the enrollment drive.

Man killed in broad daylight in Lower Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A man identified as Khalilullah s/o Muhammad Khan, a resident of Bajaur was killed when a person opened fire on him in the Munda bazaar here the other day. An on duty traffic policeman Islamud Din and constable Sharif Khan, while taking risk, arrested the accused identified as Jamil Khan, a resident of Charsadda on the spot along with the pistol used during the crime.

According to police the accused's accomplice Wakil escaped from the scene. An old enmity is stated to be the cause of the incident. Residents said both the parties had appeared in a court at Samarbagh in the morning and they were on their way back when the incident occurred. The Munda police registered a case and

started further investigations.

PTI activists: The Pakistan Tahreek Insaf former district general secretary in Lower Dir Malik Adnan Khan, a resident of Timergara was arrested by the Balambat police in connection with the May 9 and 10 riots here on Tuesday. The PTI activist, according to locals, had gone underground after the May 9 and 10 vandalism case. He was back home when police arrested him. The PTI activist was presented in a court wherein he was granted a two-day police custody.

College teachers take to streets for promotion and raise in salaries: The teachers of government degree college Gulabad and government degree college Khanpur in Adenzai staged a protest demonstration in front of the Chakdara press

club in favour of their demands for promotion and increase in salaries here the other day.

Addressing the rally, divisional president of the professors and lecturers' association Prof Zafar Yab, Prof Dr Izaz Ali, Prof Jan Alam and others alleged the government had promoted employees of 39 departments but totally ignored the college teachers.

They said the college teachers would start class boycott if their demand was not accepted by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government. They said that teachers across the globe were respected but the situation was different in Pakistan. They said the government should recognize the due status of teachers and hold talks with teachers' leaders for a peaceful solution to their problem.

Caretaker govt mandate limits with holding polls in 90 days: Zehri

F.P. Report

HUB: Senior leader of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and President of Hub district Mir Ali Hassan Zehri has said that the duties of the caretaker government are bound to be followed. Elections should be held within 90 days as per the constitution. No supervisory setup can last for more than 90 days. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that the constitution related to elections should be fully implemented so that the continuity of democracy can be maintained. He further said that due to the day-to-day inflation, common people have been forced to commit suicide.

Every day some poor and helpless people are forced to commit suicide because of the poor situation. It is the duty of the government to take effective measures to control inflation in Pakistan. The daily increase in oil and gas prices is unacceptable. The increase in oil and gas prices should be with-

drawn.

He said that it is the duty of the Election Commission to take measures on an emergency basis for the general elections within 90 days and to seek all possible help from the institutions to remove any obstacles in this regard. He said that if the Election Commission fails to conduct the elections within 90 days, it will be like a night of blood on democracy and legal proceedings against those who violate the constitution are necessary.

PPP leader said that Hub city could not get the position as it should have, despite being the door of Balochistan. For the past several decades, different people have been representing Hub and Lasbela in the provincial and national assemblies, but there has been no difference in the plight of these areas, rather these self-interested elements have turned Hub city into a ruin. The reason for this is definitely that the so-called representatives here have not fulfilled their right

to be the representatives of Hub and Lasbela district.

After being elected, they emphasized on their own prosperity and development instead of the development and prosperity of the region and forgot that the people elected him to solve the problems of the region and the people here and for prosperity and development. These so-called representatives prioritized their personal interests over public interests.

Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said more that Peoples Party is a people-friendly and Democratic Party and the party have always talked about democracy. The people of Hub and Lasbela are with the People's Party and they are fully preparing for the upcoming elections. Insha ALLAH, with the votes of the people and the struggle of the senior leaders and workers of the party, the Pakistan People's Party will achieve great success in the elections and form the government across the country.



UN says Nicaragua's human rights violations on the rise

MEXICO CITY (AP): Nicaragua has increased human rights violations and persecution of the opposition as it ratchets up its efforts to stifle dissent, a United Nations group of experts monitoring the country said. The Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, that the government continues increasing pressure on human rights defenders to force them to leave the country.

That persecution has extended to the education sector, where the government has systematically cancelled the legal status of private universities and seized their campuses. "We have observed the intentional and severe deprivation of economic and social rights, in particular the right to education and academic freedom," said Jan-Michael Simon, chair of the group. "Today, the university sector of Nicaragua as a whole no longer has independent institutions. Nicaragua is being stripped of its intellectual capital and critical voices, leaving the country's prospects and

development on hold." Last month, the government confiscated the prestigious Jesuit-run University of Central America in Nicaragua. It was the latest in a series of actions by authorities against the Catholic Church, but also among some 27 higher education institutions that have been cancelled and confiscated. The group noted that religious figures, in particular from the Catholic Church, are increasingly targets of attacks and some have been forced to leave the country. Once abroad they are sometimes stripped of their nationality and have their assets in Nicaragua confiscated. The university and other education institutions were important centers of dissent during the popular protests in April in 2018 that became a referendum on President Daniel Ortega's administration. Ortega was re-elected after jailing seven potential competitors in 2021.

The government's pursuit of the opposition has continued and intensified. Students and other opposition figures have been imprisoned or forced into

exile. In February, the Nicaraguan government put 222 prisoners on a plane to the United States, declaring them traitors. "The seriousness of these violations, in conjunction with the other crimes documented to date, perpetrated by reason of the political identity of the group targeted, leads the Group of Experts to conclude that these constitute prima facie the crime against humanity of persecution on political grounds," the group said. The group asked the Nicaraguan government to allow independent and neutral organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross into prisons where opponents are being held. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights also confirmed that the human rights situation in Nicaragua continues deteriorating. It said it had documented 27 cases in the past year of Nicaraguans who left the country briefly for travel and were not allowed to return to the country in violation of international treaties. The practice has separated families, the office said.

5 US citizens detained in Iran are 'in full health'

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Five US citizens detained in Iran who are expected to be swapped for five Iranians imprisoned in the United States as early as next week are "in full health," Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said. As part of the prisoner swap deal first made public on Aug. 10, the United States has agreed to the transfer of \$6 billion in Iranian funds from South Korean to Qatari accounts, where they can be spent only on humanitarian goods.

The United States said it will have "oversight" on how and when the funds will be spent. "The money can only be used for humanitarian purposes and we will remain vigilant in watching the spending of those funds and have the ability to freeze them again if we need to," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller told reporters. Allowing the five Iranian Americans to leave Iran would remove a major irritant between Washington and Tehran, which remain at odds on

issues from the Iranian nuclear program to Tehran's support for regional Shi'ite militias.

"They are very healthy and, according to our latest information, they are in full health," Raisi told Lester Holt of NBC Nightly News in an interview taped in Tehran, the US television network said. The five US citizens include Siamak Namazi, 51, and Emad Sharqi, 59, as well as environmentalist Morad Tahbaz, 67, who also holds British nationality, the US State Department has said, declining to identify the fourth and fifth Americans. The five Iranians to be released by the United States are Mehrdad Moin-Ansari, Kambiz Attar-Kashani, Reza Sarhangpour-Kafrani, Amin Hassanzadeh and Kaveh Afrasiabi, according to Iran's state news agency IRNA. IRNA, citing Iran's mission to the United Nations, said "some of the freed Iranians will remain in the United States while others will return ... home." The prisoner exchange could

take place as early as next week according to eight Iranian and other sources familiar with the deal, negotiated in indirect US-Iran talks mediated by Qatar. The United States is on track to secure the return of the five Americans in the "very near future", White House national security spokesman John Kirby told MSNBC, without giving a date.

"The arrangements have been done and the final action of swapping the prisoners should be finalized in the due time," Raisi told NBC, according to excerpts released by the network. While Raisi appeared to acknowledge the \$6 billion may only be used for humanitarian purposes, he said Iran would decide how the money would be spent. "This money belongs to the Iranian people, the Iranian government, so the Islamic Republic of Iran will decide what to do with this money," Raisi said in the interview, speaking through an Iranian government translator.

Many killed in 'huge fire' at apartment in Hanoi

HANOI (Agencies): Many people have been killed in a "huge blaze" at an apartment block in Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, according to state media, with operations under way to rescue survivors. The fire broke out at about midnight local time on Wednesday but had been contained by 2am (19:00 GMT), the official Vietnam News Agency (VNA) reported. It said dozens of people had died in the blaze that engulfed the nine-storey building, which was home to 150 people and located down a narrow alley in a residential area southwest of Hanoi.

Some 70 people were rescued from the block, with 54 of them rushed to hospital, it said. Authorities have yet to confirm the number of deaths. The VN Express International website said hospitals had confirmed at least 11 deaths. Several of the victims included children.

Television images showed firefighters equipped with hoses and ladders at the scene by night, while a column of thick, dark smoke billowed from the building during the day. The AFP news agency said the building's small balconies were surrounded by iron, with the apartment block having only a single exit - and no emergency ladder on the outside. "I heard a lot of shouts for help. We killed not help them much," a woman who lived near the block told AFP at the site. "The apartment is so closed with no escape route, impossible for the victims to get out." Another witness said a small child was thrown from a high floor to escape the flames.

"I was about to sleep when I smelled something. I went outside and saw the fire," she said. "The smoke was everywhere. There was a little boy thrown from a

high floor, I don't know whether he survived or not although people used a mattress to catch him," she said. Police have launched an investigation into the cause of the fire, the agency said. Vietnam has experienced several deadly fires in recent years, frequently at entertainment venues like popular karaoke bars. A year ago, a blaze in a three-storey karaoke bar in commercial hub Ho Chi Minh City killed 32 people. As many as 17 people were also injured in that fire, with the owner arrested on charges related to breaching fire prevention regulations. In the aftermath of the tragedy, the prime minister ordered an inspection of all high-risk venues. Thirteen people died in 2018 after an apartment complex, also in Ho Chi Minh City, caught fire. Another 13 died in 2016 in a karaoke venue in Hanoi following a fire.

Putin hails Elon Musk as an 'outstanding person'

VLADIVOSTOK, Russia (Reuters): Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed South African-born businessman Elon Musk as an "outstanding person" and businessman whose SpaceX company had become a major player in the space transportation industry. Putin's public praise of Musk comes days after the US-based entrepreneur said he refused a Ukrainian request last year to activate his Starlink satellite network in Crimea's port city of Sevastopol to aid an attack

on Russia's fleet there, saying he feared complicity in a "major" act of war.

Former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev took to X earlier this month to laud Musk over that decision - which has been sharply criticised by Ukrainian politicians - as "the last adequate mind in North America". Putin, speaking at an economic forum in Russia's far east, did not refer to the Starlink incident. But when asked about the success of Musk's SpaceX company in launching rockets into

space, he said: "As far as private business and Elon Musk is concerned... he is undoubtedly an outstanding person. This must be recognised, and I think it is recognised all over the world." He (Musk) is an active and talented businessman and he is succeeding a lot, including with the support of the American state," added Putin.

The Russian leader said Moscow planned to persevere with its own space programme despite the failure of a mission to the Moon last month.

10 Malian soldiers killed in attack

BAMAKO (AP): At least 10 government soldiers were killed during an attack by armed groups in northern Mali, the nation's armed forces said, amid ongoing deadly violence in the hard-hit region and as United Nations peacekeepers continue their withdrawal. A coalition of former rebels known as the Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development claimed responsibility for the attack in the city of Bourem in Gao region and said they have captured parts of the city. The development signaled a failure of a 2015 agreement which the former rebels signed with Malian authorities to stop their rebellion.

Malian security forces repelled "the attack with booby-trapped vehicles by several terrorists aboard several vehicles and motorcycles in the locality of Bourem," according to a statement issued by Col. Souleymane Dembelé, a spokesman for the Malian Armed Forces. He said 13 soldiers were wounded in the incident while 46 of the attackers were killed. Claiming responsibility for the attack in an earlier statement the former rebels also said they have "begun operations by taking several positions" in Bourem, a small city where jihadi groups have also been fighting the security forces. Attack comes days after jihadi fighters killed 49 civilians and 15 government soldiers when they targeted a passenger boat near the city of Timbuktu on the Niger River and a military position in Bamba further downstream in Gao.

The violence by the jihadi groups is worsened by recent attacks by the former rebels, who are Tuareg independence fighters that drove security forces out of northern Mali in 2012 as they sought to create the state of Azawad in northern Mali before the 2015 agreement with the government to cease fighting. In August 2020, Mali's president was overthrown in a coup that included an army colonel who carried out a second coup and was sworn in as president in June 2021. He developed ties to Russia's military and Russia's Wagner mercenary group but authorities have struggled to end the violence in parts of the country.

Bahrain prisoners suspend strike

MANAMA (Agencies): Prisoners in Bahrain have suspended a mass hunger strike after 36 days following a pledge from the Gulf monarchy's authorities to improve conditions, activists have said. At least 800 detainees joined the strike, which was the biggest in Bahrain's history, according to the activists who said some prisoners' health was deteriorating.

Bahraini authorities have said 121 prisoners took part. Dozens of people have held scattered protests almost daily in support of the prisoners, in echoes of the large-scale demonstrations that rocked the tiny island state in 2011. "It is a relief that the prolonged hunger strike has been suspended following serious concerns about the deteriorating health of many of the political prisoners," Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, advocacy director at the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), said in a statement.

"Authorities must honour their pledge and act quickly to improve prison conditions, rather than forcing prisoners to resume their strike and risk their lives to secure their basic human rights." Prisoners at the Jau prison, which holds dissidents detained when authorities cracked down on the 2011 protests, have been subjected to 23-hour cell confinement and restrictions on prayer, according to BIRD and the banned opposition. One of the prisoners is Sayed Sajjad, who has been detained since September 2013, and is one of the inmates negotiating with the prison authorities. He told Human Rights First that prison authorities "treat us with a mentality of revenge." "I have been on hunger strike for 33 days and some hours. I feel weak and sometimes I can't even see clearly," he said.

Morocco earthquake Villagers' hopes waning in search for survivors

MOROCCO (BBC): Rescuers in Morocco have been using their bare hands as desperate search efforts continue for survivors of powerful earthquake. A total of 2,681 people are known to have died in the tremor - the country's deadliest in 60 years. Morocco's government is under pressure to accept more international aid, as rescuers battle with exhaustion.

So far, it has accepted help from only four countries - Spain, the UK, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Officials defended the response, and said it would be too chaotic if teams from around the world suddenly arrived in Morocco. The 6.8 magnitude tremor hit the High Atlas mountains south of Marrakesh, and destroyed many rural and remote villages. One of them - Tafeghaghte - has had its population of 200 people nearly halved, and many are still missing. Heavy lifting equipment is struggling to get through roads blocked by boulders and other debris.

Helicopters have been making round trips to deliver aid to mountainous regions. Albert Vasquez, a communications officer for a team of 30 Spanish firefighters, told the AFP news agency that "it's very difficult to find people alive after three days" but "hope is still there". In the village of Moulay Ibrahim, 26-year-old Said told the BBC that he saw his neighbour's house collapse. "A family of six people lived there. The father was outside at the time and is still alive, but his wife and four children were there and died," he said, in a state of shock. "The daughters were 15, eight and five years old. The last child was a little boy about to turn three," he explained.

Said has not been able to sleep or eat. "The situation is catastrophic. I



don't know how I will recover from this," he said. Tom Godfrey, the team lead for UK rescue charity EMT, said the worst impact was in the southwest, where humanitarian relief was desperately needed. Speaking to the BBC en route the village of Amizmiz, he said his team were expecting to treat traumatic injuries initially, with the risk of disease increasing if aid was further delayed. The World Health Organization said more than 300,000 people had been affected by the earthquake, the deadliest in Morocco since a 1960 earthquake destroyed Agadir, killing 12,000 to 15,000 people. The Tinnel Mosque, a historic site in the mountains, has been severely damaged, and Marrakesh's old city, a World Heritage Site has suffered collapsed buildings. Pressure - and anger - is mounting on Morocco's government to accept the help offered by several nations.

The United States, Tunisia, Turkey, Taiwan and France - a former colonial power of Morocco - are

some of the nations which have offered support. Neighbouring Algeria, which has a long history of fraught relations with Morocco, has offered specialised rescue workers, medical personnel and sniffer dogs, as well as beds, tents and blankets. But the Moroccan government has said it does not want to risk a chaotic situation with dozens of countries and aid organisations arriving to help. "A lack of co-ordination in such cases would be counterproductive," authorities said. Dr Clare McCaughey, a GP based in Marrakesh, told the BBC that private clinics like hers would not hesitate to "provide care to any earthquake victims free of charge".

"Moroccans are doing what Moroccans do best," she said, adding that it has been "incredible" to see the outpouring of support from the community. "There are huge trucks going up to the mountains, but also people [taking their cars] to the supermarkets and getting them up the hill to the people."

Thailand's PM says govt will urgently tackle economic woes

BANGKOK (AP): Thailand's new Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin vowed to act quickly to relieve the country's economic problems in his inaugural speech to Parliament, following four months of political uncertainty while parliamentarians were unable to agree on a government. Srettha entered politics after a career as a major real estate developer, and his government is facing high expectations and pressing demands to address a range of economic, political, social and environmental problems in its four-year term.

Thailand's economy has slumped after the COVID-19 pandemic all but crippled its lucrative tourism industry. Public debt rose to more than 60% of GDP in 2023, while household debt spiked to over 90% of the GDP this year, he said. Thailand's post-pandemic economy is like "a sick person," with a sluggish recovery that puts the nation "at

risk of entering a recession," Srettha said. He vowed to quickly take measures to relieve debt problems, mitigate rising energy costs and boost tourism, without going into detail.

He also said the government would work immediately to implement a campaign promise - a 10,000-baht (\$280) handout for all Thais 16 and older to stimulate the economy by boosting short-term spending. Details were not given, though he's previously said it would cost up to \$60 billion baht (\$15.8 billion) and will be ready to deliver by the first quarter of next year. The promise drew major interest in the election campaign, but critics have questioned whether it would have a sustainable effect. Long-term goals cited by Srettha include boosting international trade, supporting start-up businesses, investing more in transport infrastructure, improving agricultural pro-

duction, empowering local government and increasing access to land ownership. The government would also seek to amend the current military-installed constitution through a process that allows public participation. These steps would allow the economy to grow and its people to be able to "live with dignity," he said.

The results of Thailand's elections in May revealed a strong mandate for change after nearly a decade under military control. But Parliament failed to endorse a coalition formed by the progressive Move Forward party, which won the most seats in the May polls, because members in the appointed and conservative Senate were alienated by its calls for minor reforms to the monarchy. Srettha's Pheu Thai party, which ran a close second in the election, then formed a broader coalition without Move Forward and was able to win Senate support. But it succeeded only by including

Top Hamas leader in Beirut in a bid to stop clashes at refugee camp

SIDON, Lebanon (AP): A top Hamas leader arrived in Beirut to push for an end to clashes in Lebanon's largest Palestinian refugee camp that resumed despite multiple cease-fire agreements. Days of fighting in the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp near the southern port city of Sidon left at least six people dead and over 50 others wounded, according to medical officials and state media. Stray bullets and shells hit residential areas in the country's third-largest city, wounding five Lebanese soldiers at checkpoints near the camp.

A cease-fire declared, after Lebanon's head of the country's General Security Directorate met with officials from rival Palestinian factions, lasted just hours before fighting erupted again. Senior Hamas official Moussa Abu Marzouk will meet with Lebanese officials and representatives from the Palestinian factions to try and reach a settlement to end the clashes, the militant group said in a statement. Hamas has not taken part in the clashes. The fighting broke out after nearly a month of calm in Ein el-Hilweh between Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah group and militant Islamist groups. Fatah and other allied factions had intended to crack down on suspects accused of killing Fatah military general, Abu Ashraf al Armoushi, in the camp in late July. Osama Saad, a Lebanese legislator representing Sidon said - in

an interview with Lebanese TV station Al-Jadeed - that the camp clashes pose a wider threat to the whole country. He said al Armoushi had "good relations with all the factions" and kept the tense camp relatively secure. "As political forces, we have a responsibility, and so do the Palestinians and Lebanese authorities to resolve this," Saad said. Ein el-Hilweh is home to some 55,000 people according to the United Nations, and is notorious for its lawlessness, and violence.

Meanwhile, UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, has been tending to hundreds of displaced families who fled the camp alongside other charities. Many have taken shelter in nearby

mosques, schools, and the Sidon municipality building. UNRWA has relocated some 1,200 people to schools in the area from a mosque near the camp's entrance.

"We left without our clothing and belongings. Children and women have no place to go," Mariam Maziar, a Palestinian refugee who fled with her children told The Associated Press from a shelter in UNRWA's Nablus School in Sidon. "Don't they feel remorse for what they're doing to us? Where are we supposed to go? Our homes are destroyed." Ein el-Hilweh camp was established in 1948 to house Palestinians who were displaced when Israel was established.

Fire at naval shipyard in Russia-annexed Crimea after Ukraine air attack

MOSCOW (Agencies): A Ukrainian air attack on a naval shipyard in Sevastopol in Russian-occupied Crimea has caused a large fire and injured at least 24 people, the Moscow-installed governor of the port city said.

Mikhail Razvozhayev said on the Telegram messaging app that Ukraine carried out a missile attack in the early hours of Wednesday morning and Russian air defences had attempted to repel the incoming projectiles.

"All emergency services are working on the site, there is no danger to civilian objects in the city," Razvozhayev said. Sevastopol is the largest city in Crimea and a major port where the Russian Black Sea fleet is based. Kyiv officials have promised to retake Crimea from Russian control and Ukraine has stepped up air and sea attacks on the peninsula in recent weeks. Several Russian Telegram news monitoring channels reported that the Sevastopol shipyard,

which carries out construction and repair on the ships and submarines of Russia's Black Sea Fleet, was on fire. The size of the fire and scale of damage at the shipyard was not immediately known though images posted on social media showed large flames in the darkness engulfing what seemed to be large port infrastructure. Russian Telegram channels posted videos and more photos of sizeable flames at a facility bordering water. Ukraine's Kyiv Independent news outlet said the attack took place at approximately 3am local time (about 00:00 GMT).

Also on Wednesday morning, a Russian drone attack on the Danube river port of Izmail, in Ukraine's Odessa region, caused a fire and civilian injuries, the regional governor said. "Several groups of strike drones were directed to the Izmail district," Odessa Governor Oleg Kiper said on Telegram, describing the Russian air raid on the civilian port as the action of "terrorists".

The Frontier Post

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Foreign intervention and national resilience

RECENTLY, the US Ambassador to Islamabad has called on the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Mr Sikandar Sultan Raja amid heightened controversy regarding the time frame of forthcoming general polls in the country. Foreign Diplomat visited the CEC just hours before the Electoral Watchdog convened a key meeting to respond to the President's letter demanding consultation on exact dates for forthcoming polls. Besides the need and request for a meeting from either side, the time frame and circumstances surrounding the meetup raised eyebrows and suspicions of the masses, media and political analysts about the motives of the foreign diplomat. Immediately after the session between Raja and Donald Blome, the US Embassy issued a statement that the American envoy had reaffirmed US support for free and fair elections in accordance with the constitution of the Country. The US Mission vowed to boost ties and expressed readiness to work with the future government who so ever chosen by the people of the country.

The political chaos and uncertainty remained at high intensity in the country in recent weeks after the Election Commission laid out its plan for delimitation of the electoral constituencies and announced the holding of the next polls under the current digital census that has pushed the nationwide headcount to February- March next year instead of November, that dictates by the constitution. So far, rumours and agitprop have prevailed everywhere while an outcry for a timely election has cast a gruesome situation in the country. Currently, the CEC is the sole driver of the country's cruise through the election season while the interim government, bureaucracy and establishment are on call to provide the Election Commission with the crucial help it needs. The entire nation is divided over the poll's timeframe while political groups are relentlessly demanding a timely completion of the electoral process to avoid further polarization and anarchy.

This is what makes Blome's diplomacy more drastic and treacherous which deepened the impression/suspicion of the US's role in Pakistan's domestic affairs even if that did not exist physically. Through this tactical manoeuvre, the US envoy played the role of saboteur, who successfully trashed the image of the Chief Election Commissioner and sewed the seeds for further distrust, disunity and unrest in the future political landscape in the country. Apparently, refusal to such a controversial meeting was a better strategy for the CEC, however in that case Raja could be deprived of the honour of hosting a powerful Western envoy in his office.

Interestingly, the Frontier Post took the lead in representing the Pakistani nation by raising the issue at the appropriate level with the US Department of State in Washington DC and the US Embassy in Islamabad simultaneously. The Frontier Post's News hawk categorically asked the US authorities what the State Department or any of its diplomats have to do while visiting the Election Commission office of any country. The State Department Spokesperson eluded the question by quoting his unawareness and echoing yet another call to Pakistan for a free and fair arrangement of election in the country.

In fact, US authorities failed to ensure the credibility of their domestic nationwide election in 2016 as well as in 2020 and blamed their worst enemy for hacking the electoral process twice in US history. However, bashing sovereign nations and meddling in their domestic affairs in the garb of Human Rights, and democracy is an old age and well-proven tact of American diplomats, that always served fringe motives of Western nation instead of supporting democracy in other countries. Although the Pakistani nation struck a unique quandary at this time, however, the masses must resist foreign propaganda and condemn unfriendly interventions while keeping a firm belief in its leadership, institutions and above all the judiciary, which can tie the entire nation into one thread. Hence, political wisdom and national resilience are the only way forward to effectively sail the country through a crucial period of its history.

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It's no mystery what Putin wants from Kim

WHEN North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un arrived in Russia's Far East region on Tuesday in his grandfather's armored green train on his way to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin, he helped underscore two important facts about Putin's unprovoked war against Ukraine. First, Putin has turned what was once a mighty and respected army - and country - into one that is reduced to seeking help from an impoverished state that can hardly feed its own people. It's a humiliating exercise for a diminished Putin, who vaingloriously compares himself to the 18th century Czar Peter the Great, and not a great look for a deeply tarnished Russia.

Second, Russia's war on Ukraine is making the entire world more dangerous. More than 18 months in, Russia is now courting a regime that has assaulted its neighbor multiple times, and regularly fires all manner of dangerous missiles in the region, most recently just a few days ago; an outcast nation now likely to emerge even more menacing after negotiating with Putin.

The Kremlin has worked to dust off and revive its old Cold War relationship with Pyongyang's totalitarian dynasty ever since its plans to conquer Ukraine in a few days failed. Already last year North Korea was providing artillery shells and rockets to Russia, according to US officials. But, as the war drags on, it will continue depleting Russia's stockpiles while international sanctions against Ukraine's invader make it harder to ramp up production. And that is excellent news for Kim.

The increasingly isolated Putin has been rummaging for weaponry among other pariah nations. Iran became a key supplier of the drones that routinely kill Ukrainian civilians. (Iran has denied supplying weapons to Russia despite evidence to the contrary.) Now, North Korea may be about to play a larger role, potentially aiding Russia in its illegal war. Putin, it seems, is building something of a team of tyrants, an ad hoc association of repressive regimes, governments of countries where citizens are deprived of many of the

rights that much of the world takes for granted. Places where real and perceived regime critics die in mysterious circumstances - reaching out to other dictators one by one as he searches for help to crush Ukraine's independence.

China, incidentally, another repressive regime, is generally siding with this fledgling bloc, but has played a reluctant role. It has remained supportive but has not handed mass quantities of arms to Moscow. For North Korea, the growing links with the Kremlin afford the opportunity to tacitly pressure Beijing - its one other

firepower to assault Ukraine.

But what's in it for Kim? Why is he venturing out of the country for the first time in four years, only the 10th time since he inherited power in 2011? The real upside of this meeting, as it happens, is for Pyongyang, and that makes the encounter a troubling one for South Korea, for the region and for the rest of world.

The meeting itself grants Kim the kind of global spotlight he craves, which strengthens him at home and raises his standing abroad. But there's more than symbolism and a mes-

“These are our neighbors,” he said, adding “it's better to live with your neighbors in peace and harmony.” (Perhaps he was unaware of what his forces have been doing in Ukraine.) Shoigu laid the ground for this week's visit, and for a grand military bargain - or so the participants hope. Hyper-militarized North Korea has a large arsenal. Russia reportedly primarily wants artillery shells and antitank missiles; more firepower to assault Ukraine.

friend - for more support. What Moscow wants from Pyongyang is not a mystery. When Defense Secretary Sergei Shoigu traveled to North Korea in July, the first visit by a Russian defense secretary in more than 30 years, he toured a weapons exhibition and said the two countries would hold joint war games. “These are our neighbors,” he said, adding “it's better to live with your neighbors in peace and harmony.” (Perhaps he was unaware of what his forces have been doing in Ukraine.)

Shoigu laid the ground for this week's visit, and for a grand military bargain - or so the participants hope. Hyper-militarized North Korea has a large arsenal. Russia reportedly primarily wants artillery shells and antitank missiles; more

sage to China that Pyongyang has options beyond Beijing. Kim is the third ruler from the dynasty that has ruled North Korea since World War II, when his grandfather was installed under Stalin-era Soviet auspices. The Kims have systematically tightened their hold on their country to become one of the world's most repressive regimes, with massive prison camps where forced labor, torture and starvation take place. The regime denies its well-documented brutality.

While the country's economy and ability to support itself shriveled, the Kims lavished massive spending on the military, working obsessively to build up the country's nuclear arsenal, along with the capabilities to use atomic weapons. In addition to

what it did to its own population, the regime established a track record of relentless aggression, repeatedly attacking and threatening South Korea. Just a few weeks ago, North Korea said it had launched a “scorched earth” simulation of a nuclear attack and was rehearsing an occupation of South Korea. Its military maneuvers have not always been rehearsals.

International sanctions - including UN sanctions that Russia itself has backed - and military alliances have curtailed Kim's ability to attack his neighbors. But now Putin seems to need him and it's unclear how much the Russian leader is willing to help him circumvent those restrictions, now that the two foes of the West have even more in common, standing at the sharp end of international sanctions. Last week, when US intelligence revealed a meeting was in the works between the two leaders, and national security adviser Jake Sullivan described Russia's discussions with Pyongyang as “imbued...with an increased intensity,” US officials warned North Korea against arming Russia. Sullivan said North Korea will “pay a price” if it makes an arms deal with Moscow. But it's hard to imagine what additional leverage Washington has to pressure a country already subjected to stiff sanctions.

Kim is said to be looking for satellite and nuclear submarine technology and may also want Russian technology to help accelerate North Korea's ballistic missile program, which could allow North Korea to launch nuclear warheads as far as the United States. In short, the harmful repercussions of Putin's desperate quest to win his wholly unnecessary war against Ukraine - which has already aggravated a food crisis in poor countries - have now reached East Asia, and could well make one of the world's most dangerous countries even more of a threat to its neighbors and the rest of the globe. For countries that believe the war in Ukraine is just another faraway problem, this is a useful reminder of the growing consequences of Putin's war.

CNN

A tale of two G20s

Faisal J. Abbas

IF the past five years have proved anything, it is how much can change in just five years. I was at the G20 summit in Argentina in November 2018 as part of the media delegation traveling with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. I heard first-hand the speculation coming from my Western colleagues.

Since then, I have seen how Saudi Arabia has stood strong despite the smear campaign against its leadership. And when I describe it as a smear campaign, I do mean it that way. For five years, it has been “fair game” for sometimes even the most reputable of Western media outlets to take off the gloves and make ridiculous assumptions and accusations.

I have written here before, and will do so again, that Saudi Arabia is not above criticism and that the leadership at the highest levels has apologized and vowed to correct mistakes that have happened in the past. But honestly, just look at the most recent coverage of everything Saudi Arabia tries to do.

In 2021, the Kingdom announced the Saudi and Middle East Green Initiatives, which aim to fight the effects of climate change, improve the quality of life and protect the environment for future generations. The Saudi Green Initiative includes notable targets such as planting 10 billion trees, increasing the share of the country's energy mix provided by renewables to 50 percent, and cutting 278 million tons of carbon emissions by 2030. Still, the country was criticized and accused of “greenwashing.” This is despite the benefits these initiatives will bring to both the Kingdom and the region, not to mention climate change being a global issue. So, Saudi Arabia is damned if it does and damned if it doesn't.

When the Kingdom decided to invest in sports, well-being and entertainment, using its legitimate and hard-earned money to invest in the best footballers in the world, it was accused of “sportswashing.” This is despite 70 percent of the population being under 30 and 80 percent of the population (citizens and residents) either playing or watching football. Anyone who has visited Saudi Arabia or knows us, knows this is a hardcore footballing nation. Heck, our national team was the only one capable of defeating the eventual champions, Argentina in the last FIFA World Cup. Saudi Arabia has even been accused of “chefwashing,” as many high-profile chefs have opened or are set to open restaurants in the country. Are our citizens, residents and visitors not allowed to enjoy good food?

Politically, Saudi Arabia is an easy target for point-scoring. A case in point were comments made by current US President Joe Biden, who - in an uncharacteristic manner for such a veteran politician - vowed to make the Kingdom a “pariah” during his presidential election campaign. Shortly after his

election, his office also hinted that he would not deal with the crown prince directly and that his “counterpart” would be King Salman. Did the Kingdom react in anger? Not at all. Wise, calculated steps, taken on a path serving Saudi interests, as well as a determined vision to become a force for good, made our leadership a real-life manifestation of the famous Arab saying, “He who is confident walks like a king.”

The result? Well, Saudi Arabia is the fastest-growing economy in the G20 this year. As per a recent poll by Ipsos, this is the second-happiest country on the planet. Women's participation in the workforce has jumped to 36 percent. And we have global football stars Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar and Karim Benzema playing here, while the television rights for our football league are in demand worldwide. Politically, one can hardly call Saudi Arabia a pariah. Biden visited last summer, prompting his famous fist bump with the crown prince, while French President Emmanuel Macron visited Jeddah in 2021 and rolled out the Elysee Palace's red carpet in June. Even the UK has extended an open invitation, with one government official reported as saying “we need them more than they need us.” That British statement could not be more true.

As it stands, Saudi Arabia is involved in mediating between Ukraine and Russia, stabilizing the oil market, the fight against extremism and negotiations in Sudan, while its new mega-projects mean thousands of jobs and contracts for worldwide businesses. It is definitely not a pariah. The cherry on top was the warm embrace given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India during the most recent G20 summit, where the international media had a completely different perspective. President Biden also came with a handshake this time, perhaps realizing that, with Saudi Arabia, you win much more with an open palm than with a closed fist. What about the speculation that the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor defies China's Belt and Road Initiative? Well, to the Americans that might very well be the case, but for Saudi Arabia and the Middle East it is absolutely in our interest.

As it stands, more than 8 million Indians live in the Gulf and India imports some 500,000 barrels of oil per day from Saudi Arabia. The amount of trade between the two countries is huge. Meanwhile, China remains the biggest importer of the Kingdom's oil and it has helped politically by spearheading the recent Saudi-Iran deal. So, while Saudi Arabia absolutely wants a better, stronger relationship with India, it would not do this to intentionally hurt its biggest oil importer. But if anything can be learned from recent policies, it is to benefit from everyone, while hurting no one - unless you have to.

Arab News

Here's how to help earthquake-hit Morocco reduce the risk of disease

Catarina de Albuquerque

MOROCCO is reeling in the aftermath of an earthquake that has killed more than 2,600 people. The survivors, who are being pulled from the dust and rubble, are in critical need of shelter, food and medical assistance. But one critical priority stands out among the rest: to keep earthquake survivors alive, they need access to clean drinking water and proper sanitation services.

When large-scale earthquakes strike, they often cause wide-scale damage to water networks, sewage systems and basic hygiene infrastructure. Mud and debris can bury critical infrastructure, paralysing entire water systems for months. The lack of these services increases the number of infections and drives up maternal mortality rates. It also fuels waterborne diseases like cholera, typhoid and diarrhoea, which rip through communities and

kill children under five at a rate 20 times higher than war.

As the former United Nations special rapporteur on the human rights to clean water and sanitation, this is a case of déjà vu for me. From Nepal to Haiti, and from Pakistan to Turkey and Syria, I've watched similar scenarios play out time and again. In many of these crises, reports have emerged of earthquake survivors covered in grime, unable to shower and disinfect wounds. Toilets, when they exist, are often scarce in overcrowded emergency shelters. Without access to sanitation facilities, people have no other choice but to defecate outside. Women and girls are forced to manage their periods without privacy or access to sanitary products.

So what can we do? First and foremost, humanitarian teams working in the parts of Morocco affected by the earthquake should act

promptly to establish temporary latrines, deliver clean drinking water, and provide households with items like collection drums, filters and purification tablets. Hospitals should be equipped with portable handwashing stations, disinfectants and essential hygiene supplies. Second, we need to take a look at our own communities and ensure that we are adequately prepared for any future earthquake.

According to the US Geological Survey, we can expect 16 major earthquakes in the magnitude 7 range or greater on average each year. An estimated 62 percent of us live in countries with a significant seismic hazard.

Simply put, many if not most of us won't be able to avoid earthquakes, but we can learn from previous mistakes. That starts with making our countries as self-reliant and resilient to

natural disasters as possible, which cuts down on critical wait periods from humanitarian teams and gives earthquake victims their best chance of survival.

We can also learn from countries around the world that are already investing in solutions. For example, following Japan's devastating earthquake in 2011, the country's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare made the renewal and seismic resistance of water infrastructure a top priority, installing ductile pipes that can withstand high impacts.

In the United States, Los Angeles, which sits on a major fault line, has followed suit. In New Zealand, learning from the sanitation challenges faced during the Christchurch earthquake in 2011, scientists, government officials and the Wellington water network have banded together to launch an emer-

gency sanitation plan that anticipates a major wastewater system failure. The plan aims to make residences self-sufficient for seven days following a crisis until emergency teams can restore services. They've also begun piloting compostable toilets that can be deployed in a disaster.

Other good practices include installing earthquake-resilient water sources, when possible, at schools and community centres, which may serve as makeshift shelters in a disaster.

Ensuring that water and sanitation systems are earthquake-resilient should not be viewed as an extravagance but as a crucial investment in sustainable development. This is especially so since the cost of inaction is high and extending crisis recovery can cripple economic growth. For reference, a 6.7 magnitude earthquake in 1994 cost Los Angeles \$40m in repairs. The UN High-level

Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters has developed financing strategies to help governments proactively replace aging infrastructure.

Most importantly, governments need to act now to incorporate water, sanitation and hygiene into emergency response plans and long-term investment and planning. This starts by tapping into the expertise of utilities and regulators, exploring new technology and innovations from the private sector, pulling data and analysis on earthquake hazards from researchers, and partnering with NGOs on crisis strategies. The earthquake in Morocco reminds us yet again of the urgent accountability governments have to citizens when it comes to upholding their human rights. We must give people the tools for survival, resilience and recovery. We can begin with a drop of preparation.

Aljazeera

Sudan conflict at risk of becoming a forgotten crisis

Osama Al-Sharif

AFTER almost five months of bitter fighting in Sudan, the question today is not if the country is hurtling toward an all-out civil war but if anything can be done to stop it. Last month, the UN said that the two warring factions were plunging the country into civil war, as more than 3 million civilians have been displaced and another million have sought refuge in neighboring countries. The death toll is in the thousands and there are corroborated reports that both sides have been involved in atrocities. At the same time, the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has been accused of carrying out massacres on ethnic grounds in the Darfur province.

Earlier this week, the Sudanese army was blamed for a drone attack at a busy market in south Khartoum, which killed more than 40 people and injured at least 50. The military denied responsibility. Since mid-April, when fighting broke out between the Sudanese army under Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and the RSF, commanded by Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, neither side has been able to extend complete control over the capital, Khartoum, the second-largest city, Omdurman, and the adjacent suburbs. Such power would have ended the fighting, although the RSF has managed to subdue most of Darfur in a series of bloody operations targeting civilians.

When the fighting broke out, it was thought that the superior Sudanese army would be able to expel RSF fighters from strategic locations in Khartoum and Omdurman within days. That

turned out to be a superficial belief. For some reason, the military has failed to take over Khartoum airport or dislodge the RSF from the presidential palace. Despite the closure of Sudan's airspace, it is believed that the RSF can get outside help and replenish its munitions, although the army has air superiority. Since gaining independence in 1956, Sudan, which was then the largest and most ethnically and religiously diverse country in Africa, has seen a number of civil wars. The first was between 1955 and 1972, the second lasted from 1983 until 2005, and then there was the Darfur War from 2003 to 2020. There was also the independence of South Sudan in 2011, followed by the conflict in South Kordofan and the Blue Nile between 2011 and 2020, and most recently the Sudanese Revolution of 2018-19 that toppled long-time dictator Omar Bashir.

But the current war of the generals is different. It is between two men who were once reluctant allies in the Transitional Sovereignty Council. When the time arrived for both to relinquish power, the split happened. An attempt to restore civilian rule and guide the country to a state of multiparty democracy was foiled by Al-Burhan. As a new deal was being negotiated between the junta and the civilian powers, personal ambitions - especially by Dagalo, who did not want to lose control over his private militia - stood in the way. When the time came to implement the historic transitional deal, Dagalo broke ranks.

That is not to say that Al-

Burhan also does not carry blame. He short-circuited a civilian government that was working to fulfill its obligations under a transitional deal. Having said that, as head of the Sudanese army, he has some legitimate credentials, especially if the unity of Sudan is at stake. The international community is also to blame. It dealt with both parties on an equal footing as the crisis unfolded. Dagalo's resume is flawed at best. Under his command, the RSF's predecessor, the Janjaweed Arab militia, was accused of carrying out ethnic cleansing operations, including mass killings, rapes and other atrocities, against Darfur's African communities under Bashir's orders. Nearly 400,000 people were killed and the International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for Bashir. Today, the ICC is investigating possible war crimes in Darfur once more.

Dagalo has also been associated with suspicious links to gold smuggling and other illegal activities that would have ended if the civilians had taken over. Now, Al-Burhan is seeking to solidify his legitimacy. He recently visited Egypt, South Sudan, Qatar and Eritrea to present himself as the best option for Sudan's future. He seemed optimistic that the army would win the day. He last week issued a proclamation disbanding the RSF; a symbolic move at best.

He is also doubtful of attempts by the African Union to mediate a compromise. An AU official recently met with an RSF representative and the Sudanese government denounced that meeting. With no decisive military victory

in sight, Sudan faces several existential challenges. Secessionist groups that had laid down their arms under the Juba Agreement in 2020 are now threatening to resume the fight for independence. That would tear the country apart and ignite minor wars throughout the southern provinces. Additionally, the longer the war continues, the more civilians will suffer, as the country's poor infrastructure collapses and ethnic tensions rise. Sudan could become a forgotten crisis as attention switches to the military putsches in Niger and Gabon in West Africa, among others. The continent faces multiple geopolitical challenges, including the Nile water crisis between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan, the devastating earthquake in Morocco, the Russian incursion into former French and European colonies, and China's growing economic role in Africa.

The trouble in Sudan should worry all, but especially one country in particular: Egypt. Sudan is Egypt's Nile source and, without influence over who runs Khartoum, Cairo will find itself in a difficult position. The conflict with Addis Ababa over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam's fourth filling has compromised Egypt's national security. Without a stable Sudan, Egypt will suffer. Choosing between the two warring generals should not be a problem. Unfortunately, Sudan has seen more military rule by a strongman than democratic governance since its independence. Al-Burhan has promised a return to civilian government once the rebellion is crushed. He should be given the benefit of the doubt.

Fifty years after Chile's coup, the region still not safe from US meddling

TODAY is the 50th anniversary of a devastating military coup in Chile which gave way to one of the most brutal dictatorships in Latin American history. On September 11, 1973, a military junta, led by General Augusto Pinochet, overthrew the democratically elected government of President Salvador Allende. What followed was a 17-year dictatorship which tortured 40,000, killed more than 3000 and "disappeared" more than a thousand others. Hundreds of thousands were forced into exile.

The Nixon administration in the United States encouraged and supported the coup that paved the way for these atrocities. Since former US President James Monroe effectively announced a protectorate over the Western Hemisphere in December 1823, known as the Monroe Doctrine, the US has been interfering in nations across Latin America, often in pursuit of its own interests, but always under the guise of protecting democracy and human rights in its "backyard". The 1973 coup in Chile was one such intervention. Official documents and telephone call transcripts that were declassified and made public over the years paint a clear picture of how Washington worked to ensure Allende's downfall ever since he scored a narrow victory in the September 8, 1970, presidential election.

According to handwritten notes of then CIA Director Richard Helms, just more than a week after Allende's victory, on September 15, 1970, President Richard Nixon ordered him to "make the economy scream" in Chile to "prevent Allende from coming to power or to unseat him". Three days earlier, in a phone call to Helms that he recorded, Nixon's national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, had already confirmed the administration's intention to overthrow Allende, noting "We will not let Chile go down the drain." And on September 16, 1973, just six days after Pinochet's bloody putsch, Nixon called his national security adviser to ask whether the US "hand" in the coup would show. According to declassified call transcripts, Kissinger admitted that "we helped them" and that "[deleted reference] created conditions as great as possible." The US did not end its destructive meddling in Chile's affairs after successfully instigating a coup

against its democratically elected leader either. Three years into Pinochet's murderous rule, in June 1976, Kissinger personally visited the Chilean capital, Santiago, to reaffirm Washington's support for the dictator. According to their one-on-one conversation, Kissinger advised Pinochet on how to improve his image in the international arena and dismissed all criticism of his regime's human rights record as "leftist propaganda". "In the United States, as you know, we are sympathetic with what you are trying to do here," Kissinger told Pinochet, who had by then already killed and disappeared thousands of his regime's detractors "We want to help, not undermine you," he added. "You did a great service to the West in overthrowing Allende."

The coup against Allende in Chile was perhaps the most destructive US interference in Latin America, but it was not the first of its kind and would not be the last either. By the time it started working on destabilising the Allende government in Chile, Washington had already engineered a coup to overthrow the democratically elected Arbenz government in Guatemala in 1954, invaded the Dominican Republic with 24,000 troops in 1965, and made countless attempts to assassinate Cuba's Fidel Castro. And, after successfully placing the murderous but US-friendly Pinochet government in power in Chile, it went on to fund as a proxy army some 6,000 "contras" to overthrow the Sandinista government of Nicaragua, offer military training to the armies of the region's many dictators at the School of the Americas, and invade Panama with 24,000 troops to depose its de facto ruler. Regrettably, destructive US efforts to control its "backyard" continue to this day.

Indeed, Washington is still inflicting immeasurable suffering on the peoples of the Americas to ensure that they are all governed in a way that does not challenge US interests. It, for example, still keeps Cuba on the list of countries supporting terrorism in the hopes that the consequent economic distress would trigger a coup. It has also confiscated billions of dollars of Venezuelan property and is making the Venezuelan economy "scream" with its sanctions to arrange for the demise of its

government, paying no attention to the suffering of its people. It condemns, in the words of Trump National Security Adviser John Bolton, "the troika of tyranny" (Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua), but says little about the corrupt right-wing governments in El Salvador, Guatemala, Ecuador and, until recently, Colombia, Honduras and Brazil. It is now popular - and easy - to condemn the coup that deposed Allende and paved the way for Pinochet's many human rights abuses and atrocities. No doubt on its 50th anniversary, there will also be some mention of the primary role the US played in the chain of events that resulted in the devastation of the Chilean people. But there is not nearly enough discussion on how the US approach to its "backyard" did not change that much at all in the past 50 years.

After helping Pinochet assume power in Chile, Washington continued its support for the Monroe Doctrine, which came to mean that the US would intervene in the affairs of Western Hemisphere countries whenever it felt the need or the desire. Barack Obama was the first US president to publicly reject the interventionist policy. His secretary of state, John Kerry, announced to the Organization of American States in a November 2013 meeting that the "era of the Monroe Doctrine is over." Yet just five years later, and without any major change in US policies towards Cuba, Venezuela and many others, Trump National Security Adviser Bolton told Bay of Pigs veterans in Miami that the Monroe Doctrine was once again "alive and well". President Joe Biden, who had shown a keen interest in strengthening relations with Latin American states as Obama's vice president, seems to have re-buried the Monroe Doctrine - or at least its most interventionist interpretations - for now.

Nevertheless, as we remember the tragic events of 50 years ago in Chile, and recall the grave humanitarian consequences of the many other US interventions made in the name of protecting "the backyard" since, we should be conscious that the Monroe Doctrine, as interpreted by Nixon and Trump, still has countless supporters in Washington. Exactly 50 years since Allende's demise, and 200 years since the first articulation of the Monroe Doctrine, the threat of US intervention continues to loom large over Latin America.

Why can't the EU power ahead with green subsidies like Biden's?

Yanis Varoufakis

INGLORIOUS procrastination is one of the European Union's standard responses to major crises. This is not merely due to the difficulty of getting 27 prime ministers and presidents to agree on something. It is also because of their motivated tendency to ask themselves the wrong questions, and thus head slowly but inexorably to self-harming policy solutions.

After the demise of Lehman Brothers in 2008, a group of policymakers gathered in Washington to ponder the relevant question: "How do we bail out the bankers to stop them consuming us?" In Brussels, meanwhile, a much larger group mused for years over a toxic version of the same question: "Given that EU rules prohibit bailouts, how do we maintain the pretence we are respecting them as we bail out the bankers anyway?" The result was a costly delay, and policy choices which ensured that, whereas in 2008 European total income exceeded the US's by 10%, by 2022, Americans were earning 26% more than Europeans. Today, the EU is about to repeat this self-harming act in response to another unforeseen blow that struck Brussels a year ago. Last August, Joe Biden signed into law the misleadingly labelled Inflation Reduction Act, which will release hundreds of billions of dollars of subsidies and tax breaks, over a decade, in support of US industry's green energy transition. (Estimates for its total value range from \$500bn to more than \$1tn.) In one fell swoop, Washington had torn up the so-called Washington consensus: the light-touch free trade and industrial policies that the US and Europe had been foisting on the global south for decades. Suddenly, large unilateral subsi-

dies were introduced by a US government that felt no obligation to keep the rest of the world in the loop - the EU included.

The EU's bureaucrats and politicians were livid. Overnight, the whole of Europe's mighty manufacturing sector faced tall fences impeding access to the vast US market. The problem went far beyond the impact on German carmakers, whose electric cars became ineligible for the up to \$7,500 subsidy that cars assembled in North America will benefit from. By subsidising all domestic battery production, Washington ensured that every manufacturer across the US will face lower energy costs than their European competitors. The shivers down EU policymakers' spines were exacerbated by the news that, not long after Biden's act came into force, the world's largest chemical producer, BASF, decided to curtail its operations in the EU while Tesla put on hold the completion of a major battery manufacturing plant in Germany. Europe's rapid deindustrialisation suddenly loomed large on a bleak and inauspicious horizon.

It is hard not to pity the EU's top brass. They thought that once Donald Trump was out of the White House, Washington would treat them as partners. They expected the Biden administration to endorse Brussels' preference for carbon taxes and pricing schemes that, unlike subsidies, encourage not just more clean energy but also overall energy savings. They believed that the circle around Biden would appreciate the readiness with which, following Putin's invasion of Ukraine, Europe cut itself off from dirt-cheap Russian natural gas to spend billions on the expensive fracked oil and liqui-

fied natural gas Europe now imports from Texas and New Mexico. What is not easy to sympathise with is that, as in 2008, the EU's decision-makers are indulging their penchant for inglorious procrastination, thus inflicting further damage to Europe's already diminished prospects. A whole year after the Inflation Reduction Act was activated, the EU response remains in limbo. Some have argued that this contrast is an exaggeration, since the EU, unlike the US, already had a Green Deal in place, involving funding pledges not too dissimilar to Biden's. Alas, the devil is in the detail: the EU's Green Deal offers up to 1tn of pledges that - unlike the funding offered in Biden's act - is not actual money, but rather a fictional number akin to the notorious Juncker plan, whose pledged 300bn of new investment funds never really materialised.

The argument that Europe offers equivalent subsidies to every electric car sold in the EU is also shaky. A closer look reveals two key differences. First, in the US, subsidies come from the federal government, which means that domestic producers do not face discrimination depending on their location; in the EU, subsidies are grossly uneven and reliant on the fiscal health of each member state. Second, in the EU all electric cars receive the subsidy, including US-produced Teslas. By contrast, in the US no EU-produced zero-emission vehicles qualify for the subsidy. Why is the EU not following the dictum "if you can't beat them, join them"? Why not offer the same subsidies Biden made available to US-based manufacturers to companies manufacturing in the EU? The reason is that, unlike carbon

trading schemes that pay for themselves, subsidies require a common budget, lest Portuguese or Slovenian manufacturers receive much lower subsidies courtesy of their governments' relative impecunity. Without a common money pot for EU-wide manufacturing subsidies, Washington's choice to discriminate against EU manufacturers will lead richer European governments to massively discriminate against the manufacturers of poorer members. And without a common treasury, it is impossible to replicate in the EU what the Inflation Reduction Act is accomplishing in the US, with the active involvement of the US treasury department.

Three pieces of legislation are in the pipeline promising a decent EU response to Biden's act: the Net Zero Industry Act (which will cut red tape and drop state-aid rules), the Critical Raw Materials Act (which focuses on rare earths and other materials crucial to green tech), and reforms of the European electricity pricing model (which has given a great boost to private oligopolies at the expense of both industry and the struggling classes). While the jury is still out on these, two things are clear already: first, the EU cannot afford the billions it would take to compensate industry for its intolerably delayed response. Second, the EU's leaders will never create the common treasury the EU needs, even if the alternative is calamitous (ie, exactly as in the eurozone crisis). As long as climate disaster does not lead to our species' extinction, Europe, I have no doubt, will bounce back. I don't know how or when. What I do know is that we are very close to condemning one or more generations of Europeans to persistent underdevelopment.

The Guardian

China, EU can make G20 more inclusive

Jia Ruixia

THE just-concluded G20 Summit in New Delhi may not have been successful on some fronts, possibly due to differences among the member economies, but it provided a good opportunity for Premier Li Qiang to hold talks with European leaders and make them better aware of China's policies.

At his meeting with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on the sidelines of the G20 Summit on Saturday, Premier Li, in an obvious reference to the EU "de-risking" policy, said: "Risk prevention does not preclude cooperation, interdependence should not be equated with insecurity." Li also met with European Council President Charles Michel in New Delhi. And in his meeting with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Premier Li said China welcomes the United Kingdom to expand practical cooperation, and is willing to deepen cooperation with the UK in fields such as trade, investment, green development, and science and technology.

There are enough reasons for China and European countries to work together to make the G20 mechanism more resilient, and turn the grouping into a platform for effective coordination between the Global North and the Global South to achieve the goals of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. First, China and Europe should deepen cooperation in green development in the face of increasing extreme weather events. Devastating forest fires in Canada, the US, Greece and Spain, the melting of ice in Antarctica, and severe floods and typhoons in many countries are some of the examples of extreme weather events. Japan's discharge of the nuclear-contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear power plant into the

sea is another long-term threat to the marine ecosystem and human health. As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, "The era of global warming has ended; the era of global boiling has arrived." It is therefore the responsibility of all countries to take immediate climate actions to help build a sustainable and peaceful development environment. The G20 Summit's call for "One Earth, One Family, One Future" best explains what needs to be done.

But since it's doubtful whether the United States, the world's most developed and technologically advanced country, would be willing to contribute to achieving this goal, the European Union should strengthen cooperation with other economies to make the best of its advanced green and low-carbon technologies. China's cooperation with many EU countries, including Germany, France, Sweden and Denmark, on low-carbon, green cooperation has yielded some remarkable results. Yet China and the EU need to take more measures to ensure the free flow of green and low-carbon technologies, and establish carbon pricing and carbon-neutrality incentive mechanisms, while helping less-developed countries reduce their carbon emissions. Second, China and the EU can work together to propel global digital development through the G20. Some countries have resorted to technology blockades, thereby rupturing supply chains of the global digital industry.

Under such circumstances, if China and the EU work together under the G20 framework, they can build digital infrastructure and a global digital economy in which more developing countries can participate and help boost the global economy.

They can also help less-developed countries develop and introduce digital payment systems and provide digital public services, as well as strengthen cooperation in digital trade documents, promote mutual recognition of electronic document standards, and make regional free trade agreements more open and inclusive. The two sides could also work with other economies to strengthen cooperation in drafting legislation and regulations on cryptocurrency to combat crimes such as human trafficking and money laundering. And third, China and the EU could work together to make the G20 more inclusive. That the African Union joined the G20 as a new member at the New Delhi summit shows the Global South should be involved in global economic governance. Growing global challenges have, on several occasions, prevented the G20 members from reaching a consensus, thus eroding the multilateral platform. And since China and the EU both uphold multilateralism, they should strengthen multilateral cooperation, and work together to make the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other multilateral trade and financial bodies more open and fair and increase the participation and say of developing countries. China has proposed the Global Development Initiative and taken concrete measures to help some less-developed countries out of serious public debt. China and the EU have more common interests than differences. And since they share the same vision of inclusive development, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative can help them achieve the goal of "One Earth, One Family, One Future".

The China Daily

The US is offering the UK a trade deal

Fred De Fossard

THE British government is on the cusp of agreeing a free trade agreement with India, in a deal which is expected to expand markets for high value British exports, particularly cars and whisky, and facilitate greater trade and mobility between the two countries. Unresolved sticking points around immigration remain. The Prime Minister was correct to say that immigration should be considered separately to any trade deal, given that Indians are already awarded the largest number of visas by the Home Office of any country in the world, at a time of record immigration to the UK. Continued mass immigration, from India or any other country, will harm, not help, growth.

Nevertheless, a deal looks to be coming, and it will mark a significant development in the so-called 'Indo-Pacific Tilt' which the British government embarked upon after Brexit: this has included the Integrated Review of defence policy, the Aukus nuclear submarine pact, and trade agreements with Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Rim nations. Conspicuous in its absence in all this ambition, however, is a trade deal with the world's preeminent economy, and Britain's largest trading partner, the United States of America.

Signing a free trade agreement

with the United States was long considered a prize that Brexit might bring. After talks between the US and the European Union on their own deal stalled, many hoped that Britain and America would agree a trade deal in record time, taking advantage of the simultaneous Conservative Government in Westminster and Republican Administration in the White House. It hasn't happened. Despite overwhelming public support at the time for such a deal, the British political class' distaste for President Trump and protectionist arguments against American food imports meant that talks fizzled out. Since the election of President Biden and a political shift in the US against trade liberalisation, it seemed like the idea was dead for good, or at least another electoral cycle.

However, trade is now back on the agenda in America. The USA is about to sign its first trade deal in many years, an FTA with Kenya, and the political wheels are in motion for a deal with the UK, a fact which has gone curiously unreported in Britain. Following the major new paper by Meredith Broadbent at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington DC, a Bill advocating a US-UK trade deal has been tabled in Congress, with bipartisan

support in both houses. Over the summer, a delegation of Congressmen, including both Republicans and Democrats, visited Lord Dominic Johnson, the Trade Minister, to make the case for a deal, referring to the opportunities for collaboration in artificial intelligence, global supply chains, energy security, and financial services, among other issues. The ground is shifting and Britain must take full advantage. One of the few areas of bipartisan agreement in American politics today concerns the challenge of China, and the importance of strengthening Western alliances to strengthen our resolve.

Concluding an FTA with the United States could be part of this project, providing serious economic weight to the UK's foreign policy and placing Britain at the heart of a global alliance encompassing the CPTPP trade bloc and the AUKUS submarine agreement. Far from the UK acting like some sort of supplicant to the US, this would put Britain in a truly unique, leading geopolitical position between the Atlantic and Pacific. We must also face facts. The American economy has boomed over the last decade. Middle class American families enjoy a standard of living out of reach of many in Britain and Europe. Just as the EU downgrades



SBP's 75 years of inception: State Bank of Pakistan holds unique art exhibition

F.P. Report

KARACHI: An art exhibition titled 'Resurgence: A Kaleidoscope of Dreams' was held at the SBP Museum at Karachi on Wednesday. The exhibition aimed at celebrating the 75-year journey of SBP and Pakistan's national development, and provided a platform to talented young artists from across the country to envision a progressive future.

In his speech Deputy Governor State Bank of Pakistan Dr. Inayat Hussain said that art has an enchanting ability to capture the essence of the times we live in. Appreciating the high standard of the art work in the exhibition, he noted that as we traverse through the various pieces displayed, we can vividly observe

how the young artists have interpreted and responded to the changing world around them. He congratulated members of the selection committee and organizers of the event for gathering creative talents from all parts of the country for demonstration of individualism and versatility.

Dr. Hussain went on to add that the exhibition encapsulated the spirit of Pakistan's past, present and future and underscored the importance of diversity. He elucidated the array of styles, mediums, and perspectives represented here mirrors the diversity that enriches our society.

He pointed out that such exhibitions not only provide opportunity for art lovers to appreciate the works of younger generation, but also act as stimulus to the progress and

development of local art.

Dr. Hussain showed his gratitude to all participating artists who showcased the diverse artistic talent in their special mediums. At the end of his address he declared the exhibition open. The exhibition will remain open to the general public for two weeks from its opening day.

The exhibition showcases the exceptional talent of emerging artists, hailing from all four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir. Through diverse artistic expressions, the young artists incorporated the essence of Pakistan's cultural heritage, social progress, and aspirations of people of Pakistan.

It may be noted here that the artists were encouraged to submit artworks in various mediums such as paintings, sculptures, and mixed

media. The title of the exhibition, 'Resurgence: A Kaleidoscope of Dreams' portrays the spirit of Pakistan's past, present, and future. The participating artists interpreted the exhibition theme in their own unique style, highlighting the collective resilience, growth, and hopes of the nation.

Artists across the country took keen interest for participation in the event. A jury comprising of eminent personalities from across various disciplines short listed the art pieces based on creativity and unique messages. A large number of media persons, city elites, bankers and art lovers attended the exhibition and admired the artistic work displayed. The art lovers were of the opinion that organizing such exhibitions was need of the hour.



ISLAMABAD: PTCL Group President & CEO Hatem Muhammad Bamatraf meetign with Caretaker Federal Minister for IT Dr. Umar Saif.

PSX gains 82 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Wednesday gained 82.53 points, a positive change of 0.18 percent, closing at 45,590.93 points against 45,508.40 points the previous trading day. A total of 102,767,509 shares valuing Rs3.8 billion were traded during the day as compared to 126,341,546 shares valuing Rs 4.987 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 299 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 122 of them recorded gains and 135 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 42 companies remained unchanged. The three top-trading companies were Dewan Motors with 7,200,902 shares at Rs16.12 per share; Agritech Limited with 6,510,500 shares at Rs7.92 per share and Cnergyico PK with 5,014,806 shares at Rs2.90 per share.

Bata (Pak) witnessed a maximum increase of Rs25 per share price, closing at Rs1,725, whereas the runner-up was Lucky Core Ind with Rs18.61 rise in its per share price to Rs627.12.

Pak Services witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs30 per share closing at Rs650, followed by Murree Brewery with Rs13.16 decline to close at Rs285.24.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely, Maersk Columbus, Chemroad Rose and Chem Bulldog, carrying Container and Palm oil, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal and Liquid Cargo Terminal respectively on Monday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Cap Andreas, MSC Ellen and OM with Containers and LPG are also arrived at outer anchorage of the PQ during last 24 hours.

A total of 08 ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, Maersk Columbus, Cap Andreas, Lindsaylou and Sea-peak Galicia are expected to sail on Wednesday. A cargo volume of 151,439 tonnes, comprising 90,367 tonnes imports Cargo and 61,072 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 3,000 Containers (2,400 TEUs Imports and 600 TEUs export) was handled during last 24 hours.

There are ten ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them two container ships, Cap Andreas and MSC Ellen & another containers ship, Maersk Pelepas are expected to take berth at Container Terminal on Wednesday, 13th September, while another containers ship, MSC Tia is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Thursday.

Nashpa production increased: OGDCL

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) on Wednesday proudly announced yet another remarkable achievement in its production enhancement efforts during last 24 hours with the Nashpa Well-10, located within the Nashpa Development and Production Lease (D&PL) in Karak district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Focused on the strategic implementation of production enhancement initiatives, OGDCL's rigorous intervention in the Hangu-Lumshival formation has delivered exceptional results, leading to a substantial increase in hydrocarbon production. OGDCL announced

an additional output of 900 barrels per day (BPD) of oil at a wellhead flowing pressure (WHFP) of 720 PSI from Nashpa Well-10. This enhanced production commenced on September 12, 2023, marking a significant milestone in the company's efforts to meet Pakistan's energy demands. As a result, the cumulative production from Nashpa Well-10 now stands at an impressive 1340 BPD of oil. The gas produced from this well is being seamlessly injected into the SNGPL network.

Nashpa D&PL operates as a joint venture, with OGDCL serving as the operator with a 56.45% stake, joined by Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) holding a 28.55% share, and Government Holding

Private Limited (GHPL) with a 15% stake. Nashpa Well-10 has been in production since December 27, 2020. Prior to this enhancement, the well was producing 440 BPD of oil and 3.40 million standard cubic feet per day (MMSCFD) of gas at a WHFP of 710 PSI from the Datta, Shinawari, and Samanasukh formations.

This achievement not only underscores OGDCL's commitment to sustainable energy production but also reinforces the company's dedication to meeting the growing energy needs of Pakistan. OGDCL remains steadfast in its pursuit of excellence in the energy sector, and this success at Nashpa Well-10 is a testament to our unwavering efforts.

Pakistan's exports to China surged by 81.6%

ISLAMABAD (INP): In the second month of the fiscal year 2023-24, Pakistan's exports to China have demonstrated a promising trend, marking a remarkable surge. During the month of August, exports to China soared by an impressive 81.6% compared to the same period in the previous fiscal year.

According to the latest report of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), in August of the current fiscal year 2023-24, Pakistan's exports to China reached the figure of \$ 211 million.

This represents an 81.6% increase compared to the exports recorded in the same period of the previous fiscal year, which

stood at \$ 116.2 million in FY 2022-23.

As per the report, in August 2023, Pakistan's exports to United Kingdom reached \$ 190 million, exports to the Netherlands stood at \$ 130.7 million,

Afghanistan received exports worth \$ 76.4 million from Pakistan, KSA imported goods valued at \$ 51.8 million, Vietnam's imports from Pakistan totaled \$ 38.7 million, exports to Poland amounted to \$ 37.2 million, Malaysia received exports worth \$ 32.5 million and Turkey imported goods worth \$ 30.1 million from Pakistan.

For the second consecutive month in FY 2023-24, Pakistan's exports to China maintain positive growth.

In July 2023, the country's exports to China increased by 35.1% compared to the same month of the previous financial year.

During August 2023, Pakistan's exports to different destinations of the world stood at \$ 2363 million which is 14.27% less than the exports of the country in correspondent month last year.

In the same month, Pakistan's imports were recorded at \$4,489 million, resulting in a trade deficit of -\$2,126 million.

In August, Pakistan's top export products included linen products valued at \$364.6 million, followed by cotton yarn at \$103.7 million and copper products at \$57.5 million.

Tokyo shares drift lower ahead of US inflation data

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks slipped on Wednesday, dragged down by falls in tech shares on Wall Street as investors awaited the release of US inflation data. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index dropped 0.21 percent, or 69.85 points, to 32,706.52, while the broader Topix index gave up 0.05 percent, or 1.27 points, to 2,378.64.

Tokyo shares zigzagged in a narrow range as investors mostly adjusted positions before US consumer price index data to be released later in the day. This could provide a major clue to gauge future actions by the Federal Reserve as it fights inflation.

"Both the Nikkei and the Topix spent all day without finding a clear direction," said Chihiro Ota of SMBC Nikko Securities. "There was no meaningful momentum in either direction. That's also the mood of the global market," he added.

Daiwa Securities echoed the view and said Tokyo investors became "cautious" about how the US data may impact Wall Street. The dollar fetched 147.28 yen, against 147.15 yen seen Tuesday in New York.

Tokyo tech shares struggled, trailing the overnight falls of the Nasdaq.

Chipmaker Murata Manufacturing lost 1.39 percent to 8,080 yen, while parts producer Taiyo Yuden fell 1.49% to 4,235 yen. High-tech investor

SoftBank Group lost 1.63 percent to 6,631 yen, while Sony Group fell 1.35 percent to 12,445.

Meanwhile, banking shares continued to benefit from a recent media interview by Bank of Japan governor Kazuo Ueda who said policymakers may have enough data by the year end to decide whether to start raising interest rates.

The comment was seen as a hint that the central bank may start tweaking its ultra easy monetary policy.

Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group rose 3.13 percent to 1,317 yen. Mizuho Financial Group rose 0.94 percent to 2,624.5 yen. Toyota rose 1.90 percent to 2,707.5 yen. Honda also gained 0.44% to 5,061.

German companies express desire for joint ventures and investment

ISLAMABAD (INP): German companies have expressed their keen desire for joint ventures and investment in Pakistan in respective fields.

Led by Country Representative for Pakistan of German Chambers of Commerce Abroad Muhammad Usman, a delegation of German companies visited Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) on Wednesday.

The delegation representing various sectors including telecommunication, automobile, construction, logistics, energy & financial services showed interest for joint ventures and investment in Pakistan.

Addressing the German delegation, President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that Pakistan and Germany have great potential to increase bilateral trade in many areas as the

current level of two-way trade of around US\$ 4 billion is not matching with the actual potential of both countries.

He said that both countries are doing trade in limited items as Pakistan's main exports to Germany include textiles, leather goods, sports goods, footwear and medical instruments, and its main imports from Germany include machinery, chemical and electrical goods, motor vehicles and iron goods. He stressed that both countries should strengthen business linkages between their private sectors to explore all untapped areas of mutual cooperation.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that over 40 German companies are doing successful business in many sectors of Pakistan's economy including telecommunication, chemicals, pharmaceuti-

cal, automobile, automotive, wholesale and stressed that more German companies should explore JVs and investment in Pakistan, which is a huge market of over 240 million consumers. He assured that ICCI would connect German investors with right partners in Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, the representatives of German companies said that Germany wants to diversify foreign trade and the purpose of their visit to Pakistan is to develop networking with Pakistani counterparts and explore potential areas of joint ventures and investment. They said that the world's leading agriculture machinery

trade fair AgriTechna will be held in Hanover, Germany from November 12-18, 2023 and invited ICCI delegation to participate in it to discover new

innovations, technologies and machineries in the agriculture sector.

Senior Vice President ICCI Faad Waheed said that German investors from automobile and other sectors should transfer technology and set up business partnerships in Pakistan to export their products to Central Asia and other markets.

Vice President ICCI Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar said that Pakistan has huge potential for foreign investment in the construction sector and German companies should take advantage of these opportunities.

Former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan, Zafar Bakhtawari stressed for direct air links between Pakistan and Germany that would help in promoting trade relations between the two countries.

PCJCCI to collaborate with China for producing herbal medicines

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan-China Joint Chambers of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki said on Wednesday that the joint chamber was keen to collaborate with China for producing herbal medicines, saying that global market for herbal medicines was expected to reach US\$107 billion by the next year and US\$178.4 billion by 2026, creating a vast room for Pakistani herbal medicines.

In a think-tank session held here at the PCJCCI Secretariat, he said that almost 30,000 herbal medicines, cosmetic and health-care production companies were operating in Pakistan and to empower the sector, the government should set up a specialised herbal research institution to develop the industry and

educate the health regulators in the country.

Ghurki added that China was pioneer in the world of herbal treatments based on research of more than 2,500 years, while Pakistan in its Himalayan range is enriched with naturally growing herbs which are of high value in pharmaceutical industries. Their proper utilisation could lead to socioeconomic development of individuals and the country. Following the Pak-China cooperation in the economic and military sectors, both the brotherly nations should also collaborate in the area of traditional medicines and conventional medicine experts, so that they could learn from the experience of each other to benefit millions of people in both countries, who could not afford costly

treatment at the prevailing modern system of health.

Fang Yulong, senior vice president PCJCCI, said that amalgamation of Pakistani and Chinese herbal medicines, techniques and procedures would revolutionise the arena of the herbal curative system and treatments besides capturing a handsome share in the international market for herbal medicines. He added that herbal and plant medicine was a billion-dollar industry and the world was gradually moving towards organic and herbal medicines. Therefore, the industry provides Pakistan with an opportunity to market its miraculous herbal medicines around the world. He highly appreciated the idea of PCJCCI president and deepening collaboration between the two countries

over the years, and said that the Sichuan province of China had one of the largest manufacturing bases of traditional Chinese medicines. He said that there were 1,800 hospitals and 78,000 clinics in the province whereas over 5,000 species of herbs were being used to develop traditional Chinese medicines in the province.

FPCCI Vice President Hamza Khalid said, "We have to create a link among the herbal research centres, the teaching institutes, universities, researchers, academics and experts that will ultimately aid the exchange of information required for the capacity building of Pakistan in the herbal sector. The exchange of knowledge and information will be followed by the setting up of a mutual department of herbal and traditional medicine through which common masses will be able to get advanced herbal treatment."

Rupee gains Rs1.06 against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday gained Rs1.06 against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs298.82 against the previous day's closing of Rs299.88. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs297 and Rs300 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 53 paise to close at Rs320.96 against the last day's closing of Rs321.49, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen lost 02 paise to close at Rs2.02, whereas a decline of Rs1.84 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs372.60 as compared to the last closing of Rs374.44. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 29 paise each to close at Rs81.35 and Rs79.66 respectively.

Stocks retreat as rising oil prices fuel inflation fears

LONDON (AFP/APP): Stock markets mostly fell Wednesday before crunch US inflation data, with investors concerned that a spike in oil will drive consumer prices higher and force the Federal Reserve to lift interest rates again.

All eyes were on the latest reading on US inflation due Wednesday, ahead of an interest-rate decision Thursday from the European Central Bank and the Fed next week.

"Oil prices have risen by more than 25 percent over the past few months, which suggests a new inflationary pressure and something that will muddy the outlook for the Fed at its next rate meeting," noted Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

The dollar traded mixed before the inflation reading. The US central bank has insisted that its decision-making on monetary policy will be data-driven as it assesses a range of figures, which have for much of 2023 suggested that more than a year of tightening is having the desired effect.

That had fanned opti-

mism that July's hike was the last and officials would allow its measures to work through the economy and bring inflation to heel.

But a recent run of strong data, particularly on the jobs market and the services sector, has revived talk that more were on the way, with a surge in oil prices to 10-month highs adding to those concerns.

The pick-up has been fuelled by Saudi Arabia and Russia's decision to slash output until the end of the year, while floods in Libya have hammered its ability to pump.

Oil prices rose further on Wednesday as the International Energy Agency warned that Moscow and Riyadh's decision would cause a "significant supply shortfall".

On the corporate front, shares in British oil giant BP fell nearly one percent after chief executive Bernard Looney unexpectedly resigned, having admitted to not being "fully transparent" about historical relationships with colleagues.

Looney, 53, has left after

less than four years in the role, having seen the firm through a tumultuous period that included huge swings in prices owing to the Covid pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

He had also come under fierce criticism from environmentalists, who have accused BP and rivals of not going far enough in transitioning away from fossil fuels.

Away from oil, German footwear brand Birkenstock has filed for an initial public offering in the United States, planning to list its shares on the New York Stock Exchange.

The proposed terms of its share sale have not been revealed, but news reports previously said that the IPO could value the sandal maker at more than \$8 billion.

The brand, founded in 1774 to make orthopaedic shoes, received a Hollywood boost recently when actress Margot Robbie donned a pair of pink Birkenstocks in the lead role of the hit movie "Barbie".

Motorbikes, three-wheelers sale drops 18.56% during July-August

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sale of motorbikes and three-wheelers in the country has witnessed a decrease of 18.56 per cent during the first two months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to sales of the corresponding months of the last year.

During the months under review, as many as 161,906 motorbikes and three-wheelers were sold against

the sale of 198,824 units in July-August (2022-23), according to the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA).

The sale of Honda motorcycles dipped by 16.96 per cent from 165,090 units to 137,083 units whereas the sale of Suzuki motorcycles witnessed a decrease of 61.54 per cent from 6,967 units to 2,679 units during the months under review.

Similarly, the sale of Yamaha motorbikes also went down from 2,501 units to 1,625 units witnessing a decline of 35.02 per cent while the sale of Road Prince motorbikes witnessed a sharp decline of 55.80 per cent from 6,105 units to 2,698 units.

The sales of United Auto motorcycles witnessed a nominal decline of 2.83 per cent from 15,264 units to

14,832 units.

Meanwhile, the sale of United Auto three-wheelers dipped from 460 units to 85 units while the sale of Qingqi three-wheelers however witnessed an increase of 3.36 percent from 891 units to 921 units.

The sale of Sazgar three-wheelers has also shown an increase of 85.18 per cent from 999 units to 1,850 units, the data revealed.



In brief

Trials take place

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Talent Hunt Youth Sports League for Men & Women in Badminton unveiled a new generation of rising stars on Wednesday at Gujranwala Shehbaz Sharif Sports Gymnasium. Young athletes aged 15 to 25, under the watchful eyes of Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, and the University of Sargodha, showcased their extraordinary talents during the trials which turned into a remarkable event, said Ammara Rubab, the chief organiser of the event. "The Prime Minister Talent Hunt Youth Sports League is dedicated to providing a platform for these budding athletes to display their exceptional skills on the court, fostering a spirit of healthy competition among the nation's youth. As we move forward, we anticipate an exciting season filled with dedication, passion, and outstanding sporting accomplishments," said Ammara, who is also the head of sports of Kinnaird College Women University.

Mushfiquur to miss match

DHAKA (Agencies): Bangladeshi batter Mushfiquur Rahim will skip Friday's Asia Cup Super Four match against India to spend time with his wife and newborn daughter, the cricket board said Wednesday. Bangladesh is already out of the race for the September 17 final after India defeated Sri Lanka by 41 runs in Colombo on Tuesday, in the tournament that is a prelude to the upcoming ODI World Cup in India. Mushfiquur had returned to Bangladesh for the birth of his second child, born on Monday. He was initially expected to rejoin the team for the India match in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo. He will now remain in Dhaka, the Bangladesh Cricket Board said. "Mushfiquur has informed us that his wife is still recovering, and he needs to be by her side and with their children," BCB operations chief Mohammed Jalal Yunus. "We fully understand his situation, and have decided to permit him to skip the game." Skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who also returned home with Mushfiquur after their defeat against Sri Lanka on September 9, rejoined the team in Colombo on Wednesday. They will wrap up the campaign with the India game, before preparing for a three-match series against New Zealand at home next week.

Walsh to miss league matches

LONDON (Agencies): England's Keira Walsh will miss this month's Women's Nations League matches against Scotland and the Netherlands because of a calf injury. Spurs striker Bethany England also misses out with injury and is replaced by Manchester City's Jess Park. Walsh and England are the only players missing from the Lionesses squad that reached the Women's World Cup final. Sarina Wiegman's 24-player squad includes recalls for Lucy Staniforth and Maya Le Tissier. Aston Villa midfielder Staniforth and Manchester United defender Le Tissier both travelled to Australia on standby before the World Cup. England, 29, had hip surgery on 6 September and will miss the start of the Women's Super League season.

Abdullah Nawaz beat Ibrahim Mohib to win Roshan Khan Squash title

PESHAWAR (APP): Abdullah Nawaz of Pakistan Air Force defeated Ibrahim Mohib of Pakistan Army in the final of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Roshan Khan Squash Championship title in a marathon final witnessed by a capacity crowd present on this occasion.

Minister Sports Najeibullah Khan Marwat was the chief guest on this occasion. President KP Squash Association Dawood Khan, former World Champion Qamar Zaman, Director Blue Tone Squash Academy Wazir Gul, players and officials were also present.

Umar Ashraf, Mamoon Khan, Nouman Khan, Abdullah Nawaz and

Azan Khalil also took their trophies in various categories wherein Caretaker Sports Minister Najeibullah Khan Marwat distributed the prizes.

Former World Number-2 Muhibullah, former World No. 8 Ehsanullah, coaches Mansoor Zaman, Tahir Iqbal and other important personalities were present.

Under the auspices of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Squash Association, Roshan Khan Junior Squash Championship was held at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex, Peshawar Sports Complex, in which more than hundred boys of U-11, U-13, U-15, U-17 and U-19 participated. In the Under-11 final, Umar Ashraf of

Pakistan Air Force defeated Mohammad Hussain of PAF 11-8 13-11 8-11 6-11 11-5. In the Under-13 final, Mamoon Khan of PAF defeated Muhammad Fawad Khan 3-0, the score was 11-6 11-9 11-5. In the U-15 final, Pakistan Army's Nouman Khan defeated PAF's Muhammad Shahzeb 11-6 11-3 11-8. In the U-17 final, Pakistan Air Force's Abdullah Nawaz defeated Pakistan Army's Ibrahim Mohib 11-6 11-3 11-0 while in the U-19 final, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Azan Khalil defeated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Yasin Khattak 11-7, 11-8 and 11-7 to win the trophy. Finally, the special guest distributed prizes among the players.

Ben Stokes hits England ODI record 182 against New Zealand

THE OVAL (Agencies): Ben Stokes smashed the record for the highest score by an England batter in a one-day international by hammering a brutal 182 against New Zealand at The Kia Oval.

The Test captain beat the previous best of 180 made by Jason Roy against Australia in Melbourne in 2018. Stokes had only come out of one-day retirement to play in this series and the World Cup in India in October and November.

In his third match back, he played a scintillating innings that helped England to 368 all out and put them on course to take a 2-1 lead in the four-match series. Arriving with England in trouble at 13-2, Stokes clobbered nine sixes and 15 fours in his 124-ball stay.

With Dawid Malan making 96, the third-wicket pair added 199, an England record partnership for any wicket in an ODI against New Zealand. Stokes did not score off any of his first six deliveries and had only 12 off his first 18, struggling for fluency with some wild hacks.



But, growing into his innings on a superb batting pitch, Stokes scored mainly through the leg side to reach the fourth ODI of his career and first since 2017, from 76 balls. He went past 150 with a massive

hit over cow corner from the off-spin of Glenn Phillips and survived a review for lbw on 160 when trying to reverse-hit the same bowler.

The left-hander brought up the record with his final maximum, hitting a full toss from the left-arm pace of Ben Lister over long-on.

With more than five overs of the innings remaining, Stokes had time to become the first England batter to reach 200 in an ODI.

However, two balls after bettering Roy's mark, he miscued another Lister full toss and was caught at deep square leg by Will Young.

Stokes left to a rapturous ovation from a crowd that had not initially realised Stokes had broken the record until it was announced on the big screen inside The Oval.

The highest score by a batter in an ODI is the 264 made by India's Rohit Sharma against Sri Lanka in Kolkata in 2014. Former captain Charlotte Edwards holds the record for the highest score by an England woman in an ODI for her 173 not out against Ireland in 1997.

Naseem out of Asia Cup with injury, Zaman drafted in

COLOMBO (Agencies): Naseem Shah, who injured his bowling shoulder towards the end of Pakistan's Asia Cup Super Four match against India, has been withdrawn from the squad, and has been replaced by Zaman Khan.

The PCB said that Naseem "continues to be monitored by the team's medical panel that is taking all necessary precautions" keeping in mind the ODI World Cup, which starts in less than a month's time. Zaman has linked up with the Pakistan team already and has started training with them.

ESPNcricinfo understands that, at this stage, Pakistan don't expect Naseem's injury to affect his availability for the World Cup.

Meanwhile, Haris Rauf, who did not bowl on the reserve day of the India game after feeling "discomfort in his right flank" on the scheduled day of the match, "continues to recover well", the PCB said.

Team doctor Sohail Saleem said, "These two fast bowlers are our assets and the team's medical panel will provide them the best possible care

ahead of the all-important World Cup."

Neither Rauf nor Naseem batted in Pakistan's chase against India, which ended on 128 for a 228-run defeat, which affected Pakistan's chances of qualifying for the Asia Cup final. They must now beat Sri Lanka in their final Super Four game. In case the weather forces an abandonment, Sri Lanka will go through to the final against India because of their superior net run-rate.

As reported by ESPNcricinfo on Monday, Pakistan had called up

Zaman and Shahnawaz Dahani once Rauf and Naseem, two members of the three-pronged Pakistan pace attack of which Shaheen Afridi is the leader, picked up their injuries.

At the time, the PCB had said that Rauf and Naseem had not been ruled out of the tournament and would remain under the observation of the team's medical panel. The board called it "only a precautionary measure keeping in mind the fitness and well-being of the players" ahead of the World Cup.

Pakistan defeat Kyrgyzstan in C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Women's Beach Volleyball Team made history as they defeated Kyrgyzstan 2-1 in their inaugural match of the Central Asian Beach Volleyball Championship at the iconic Cox's Bazar Beach on the southeast coast of Bangladesh on Wednesday.

According to information made available here by the Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF), Pakistan women powered past their opponents 11-21, 21-14 and 15-13 to emerge victorious.

Teams from hosts Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, India, and Maldives are participating in the three-day-long competition.

"This is a historical moment for us because the Pakistan Women's Volleyball Team is participating in an international event for the first time and they launched their campaign on a winning note against a strong team."

"Pakistan's Azra Farooq and Muqaddas Bukhari played a crucial role in the win," the PVF said in a statement.

Pakistan-India batters dominate ICC ODI rankings

than a month from the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup.

Captain Babar Azam is at the top and enjoys a lead of more than 100 rating points over Gill, while Imam-ul-Haq and Fakhar Zaman are in fifth and 10 positions, respectively.

The latest weekly update, that also considers performances in three matches of the South Africa-Australia series and two matches of the England-New Zealand series, South Africa's Temba Bavuma has closed in on a top-10 place after striking three centuries and two half-centuries in his last eight ODIs. He has advanced 21 places to 11th position while his previous best was 25th.

Australia players Davis Warner (up one place to fourth), Travis Head (up six places to 20th) and Marnus Labuschagne (up 24 places to 45th) have made significant progress as has the Indian pair of KL Rahul (up 10 places to 37th) and Ishan Kishan (up two places to 22nd).

Aiden Markram,

Sadeera Samarawickrama, Liam Livingstone, Daryl Mitchell and Devon Conway are among others to gain in the latest update.

New Zealand's Trent Boult is up to joint-second place among bowlers while Australia leg-spinner Adam Zampa is in the top five of the bowling rankings for the first time after taking four wickets in the second match against South Africa.

India's left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav has gained five places to reach seventh position after grabbing nine wickets in two Asia Cup matches.

Pakistan fast bowler Haris Rauf has soared eight spots and is in 21st position while India fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah (up eight places to 27th) and all-rounder Hardik Pandya (up 21 places to 56th) have also made big gains. Pandya is also up four places to sixth among all-rounders.

South Africa spinners Keshav Maharaj (up 10 places to 25th) and Tabraiz Shamsi (up 15 places to 29th) are among others to move up the rankings.

Naveen back in Afghanistan squad for WC

KABUL (Agencies): Fast bowler Naveen-ul-Haq, who last played an ODI in January 2021, has been called up by Afghanistan for the 2023 ODI World Cup, which starts in India next month.

In January last year, Naveen had said he was taking a break from ODIs and has not been picked in Afghanistan's 50-over squads since.

Now though, he will form a part of their pace attack along with Fazalhaq Farooqi, Abdul Rahman and allrounder Azmatullah Omarzai.

Omarzai, who suffered a side strain during Afghanistan's ODI series against Pakistan in August, is back in the team after missing the Asia Cup.

Rashid Khan will spearhead a strong spin attack that comprises Mohammad Nabi, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Noor Ahmad.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Ibrahim Zadran, Rahmat Shah form their top order, with captain Hashmatullah Shahidi set to slot in at No. 4. Najibullah Zadran will also shore up the middle order. Allrounders Gulbadin Naib, Sharafuddin Ashraf, Fareed Ahmad

Naib and Sharafuddin Ashraf, who were part of Afghanistan's Asia Cup squad, have been named as reserves, along with Fareed Ahmad who was part of the series against Pakistan.

Karim Janat and Mohammad Saleem are the two players from the Asia Cup who have been dropped altogether from Afghanistan's World Cup squad. Afghanistan will begin their World Cup campaign on October 7 against Bangladesh in Dharamsala. They have two warm-up fixtures before that, against South Africa in Thiruvananthapuram on September 29 and then against Sri Lanka in Guwahati on October 3.

Afghanistan squad: Hashmatullah Shahidi, Ibrahim Zadran, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Rahmat Shah, Riaz Hassan, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Nabi, Ikram Alikhil, Azmatullah Omarzai, Rashid Khan, Abdul Rahman, Noor Ahmad, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Naveen-ul-Haq. Reserves: Gulbadin Naib, Sharafuddin Ashraf, Fareed Ahmad

19th Asian Games in China's Hangzhou President POA updates on Pak contingent

LAHORE (APP): President, Pakistan Olympic Association (POA), Lt Gen (retd) Syed Arif Hasan said that all arrangements have been finalized to ensure smooth participation of Pakistan in the upcoming 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China later this month.

Addressing a news conference here on Wednesday at the POA house, Arif Hasan discussed the details of the contingent, which includes personnel supported by the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), National Federations (NFs), and POA. A comprehensive sports-wise list of the contingent was shared with the media.

Responding to inquiries about allegations of excluding athletes and officials from Athletics, President POA clarified that POA had not excluded anyone, if received within the timelines. Instead, PSB received and forwarded the Names of athletes and officials for accreditation much after the given timelines set by the Organizing Committee i.e. 20th May, 2023.

"Similar complications arose in the sport of Hockey due to late changes in team composition which were not processed. POA has informed the Pakistan Hockey Federation that processing new accreditation beyond the established deadlines was not possible", he said.

President POA emphasized the importance of adhering to timelines and

assured that any accreditation request received within the stipulated time frame had been processed. He also mentioned that the matter regarding allegations of exclusion of athletes and coaches is now before the Honorable Court, and 'we will also submit the facts before the Court'.

Addressing questions about the performance of athletes and officials, Lt Gen, Syed Arif Hasan stated that in the absence of a support structure for elite athletes in Pakistan, high expectations from the athletes would be unjustified.

"The Government of Pakistan has committed to improving national sports standards by establishing elite sports training facilities across Pakistan. In Pakistan, we are winning medals only due to the exceptional dedication and talent of athletes", said POA chief.

Addressing a question on the situation of the Olympic Movement in Pakistan, he informed that POA, after 2021, attended the recent meeting of the Pakistan Sports Board, during which PSB agreed to amend its Constitution to align it with the Lausanne Agreement and the Olympic Charter. "Only once this process is complete, POA will be able to proceed with organizing major sports events in Pakistan, including the South Asian Games", President POA added.

On the question about the FIH's decision to withdraw Olympic Qualifier from

Pakistan, President POA said that it is a great loss for national hockey.

On the question of the public discourse holding POA responsible for the sports development of Pakistan, he said that the people are rightly concerned as 'we have a huge potential in Pakistan'. POA is held accountable for the functions for which POA is in no way responsible.

"We continue to request the Govt to extend support to the Paris 2024 qualified athletes which should have started in 2021. Instead, the then officials opted to launch a misleading campaign to deflect the responsibility of deteriorating national sports standards on POA", he asserted. As far as assistance for athletes is concerned, he informed that POA with the help of Olympic Solidarity has provided over Rs. 55 million to 11 athletes and 19 National Sports Federations during 2022-2023. This support includes the IOC Scholarship for athletes from which Arshad Nadeem, Ghulam Mustafa Bashir, Gulifam Joseph and many others are benefiting.

However, given the lack of international standard facilities for elite athlete training, the standards of the national sport will only deteriorate", he maintained.

POA chief informed that the POA has managed to train highly energetic professionals to support the strengthening of the internal governance of the sports organizations.

Int'l Karate Coaching Course in Peshawar from Sept. 15

PESHAWAR (APP): Three international Karate Coaching Courses in Peshawar from September 15, former two times SAF Asian gold medalist Khalid Noor told APP here on Wednesday.

Khalid Noor, who also remained as Pakistan team coach and announced as Course Conductor, disclosed that the said coaching course would be organized under the auspices of Pakistan Karate Federation wherein the participants from all across the country would be taking part.

A three-day karate coaching course with the support of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Karate Association will start from September 15 at Qayyum Sports Complex Peshawar, in which national and national coaches will train the participants during lectures and regular practice.

In the coaching course, the participants will be informed about the new rules and modern techniques of karate.

Coaches and players who wish to participate in the course should register their names with the coordinator of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Karate Association, Shah Faissal said. He said coaches from Sindh will also be participating in the course on special invitation.

World Cup qualifying: Argentina beat Bolivia without Lionel Messi



LA PAZ (Agencies): Argentina rested Lionel Messi but still beat Bolivia 3-0 to make it two wins from two in World Cup qualifying.

Chelsea's Enzo Fernandez opened the scoring, with further strikes from Nicolas Tagliafico and Nicolas Gonzalez sealing victory in La Paz.

Brazil also secured their second win after beating Peru 1-0 thanks to a 90th-minute goal from Marquinhos. Marcelo Bielsa suffered his first defeat in charge of Uruguay after Ecuador came from behind to win 2-1.

Bielsa's side, who beat Chile on Saturday, took the lead through Agustin Canobbio, but a goal in each half from Felix Torres secured the win for

Ecuador, who also missed a penalty through Enner Valencia. Messi watched Argentina's victory from the bench but was not listed among the substitutes having complained of tiredness after scoring the only goal in Wednesday's win against Ecuador.

"Leo was not ready to play," said boss Lionel Scaloni after the game. "He tried to recover, but he did not feel comfortable." Former Manchester United midfielder Angel di Maria captained the side in Messi's absence and provided the cross for Fernandez to stroke home a first-half opener.

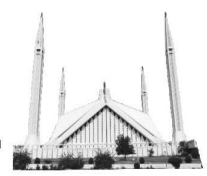
Bolivia forward Roberto Fernandez was then sent off for a high challenge on Cristian Romero, before Tagliafico headed home Di

Maria's free-kick before the break. Julian Alvarez hit the post in the second half as the world champions continued to dominate, before Gonzalez wrapped up the win with a left-footed drive late on.

Brazil are the only other side in South American qualifying to make a perfect start but were frustrated for large periods by a defiant Peru side in Lima.

The game looked to be heading for a draw before Neymar's in-swinging corner was glanced home at the near post by by Marquinhos.

Elsewhere, Chile and Colombia played out a goalless draw in Santiago, while a stoppage-time penalty from Salomon Rondon secured a 1-0 victory for Venezuela against Paraguay.



In brief

59 FIRs registered

RAWALPINDI (APP): The District Health Authority (DHA) had lodged 59 FIRs and sealed ten premises for violations of anti-dengue SOPs during the last 24 hours. District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control (DCEPC), Dr. Sajjad Mehmood, said Wednesday that the health department, in collaboration with allied departments, had issued tickets to 15 and imposed a fine of Rs 75,000 for violations of dengue SOPs during the last 24 hours. Presently, the health officer informed that 96 patients were admitted to different health facilities in the district, of which 66 were confirmed cases and 419 were discharged after treatment. Dr. Sajjad added that with the arrival of 34 more cases during the last 24 hours, the district's total tally had reached 485 confirmed cases. Among the new cases, he informed that 17 patients had arrived from the Potohar town urban area, 9 from the Municipal Corporation, 4 from Chaklala cantonment, and three from the Taxila cantonment area. The health officer added that September was critical for dengue spread and urged the residents to adopt precautionary measures to avoid mosquito bites.

259000 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 259000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 213400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1545.1 feet and was 147.1 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 115700 cusecs and 130000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1237.50 feet, 187.5 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 13700 cusecs and 45000 cusecs respectively.

Illegal buildings demolished

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Directorate of Enforcement, Capital Development Authority (CDA) has demolished over 7,000 illegal structures in the markets, roads, green belts, and sidewalk tracks in the federal capital during the last year. "During the operation, around 12,137 items of encroachers have also been confiscated, subsequently these articles are auctioned. Besides, fines worth Rs. 4.876 million has also been recovered from trespassers as a penalty," sources in the CDA told APP. They said, "Directorate of Enforcement has launched as many as 1,363 anti-encroachment operations carried out across the board in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) during the last year." The sources said, "Directorate was vigorously undertaking anti-encroachment operations on a regular basis throughout Islamabad in order to curb the illegal constructions in the ICT." They said the continuous operations were being carried out on a day-to-day basis 24/7 for retrieval of state land from land grabbers and encroachers. The matter was being dealt with by the Directorate of Municipal Administration working under the administrative control of the Municipal Corporation, Islamabad, they added. "The forest guards keep patrolling throughout the day in all the trails and hiking tracks of Margalla Hills, National Park, they said."



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Morocco Muhammad Karmon calls on Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori. —APP Photo

Sanjrani extends condolences to Libya over flood calamity

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has expressed deep sorrow and consolation over heavy loss of lives and property caused by the floods calamity in Libya. "In this time of great distress, the people and government of Pakistan stand firmly in solidarity with our Libyan brothers and sisters. May Allah grant protection to all affected by this sudden natural calamity," the Chairman Senate remarked.

Sadiq Sanjrani also expended his heartfelt prayers to the families of those who have tragically lost their lives in the floods and to those facing the arduous task of rebuilding their lives in the aftermath of this disaster.

Chairman Senate also highlighted the global environmental challenges, emphasizing the need for international cooperation to combat climate change.

Deputy Chairman Senate Mirza Muhammad

Afridi, Leader of the House in the Senate Senator Ishaq Dar, and Leader of the Opposition Senator Dr. Shahzad Wasim have also expressed their profound condolences and sympathy for the loss of lives and property caused by the devastating floods in Libya.

They also extended their prayers for the elevated status of those who have lost their lives and for the swift recovery of the injured.

BISER declares HSSC results

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Rawalpindi (BISER) here on Wednesday announced the result of the Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) first annual examination 2023.

BISER Chairman Muhammad Adnan Khan and Controller Examination, Prof. Sajid Mehmood Farooqi announced the result.

The Chairman informed that out of a total 62,395 enrolled candidates, 61,391 including 24,056 male and 37,335 female students appeared in the examination. A total of 44,650 were regular while 16,741 were private students.

The Controller Examinations said that a total of 33,111 candidates remained successful with 53.93 being the overall pass percentage. A total of 28,215 candidates failed the exams. Pass percentage of female students remained 60.34, he added.

He further informed that 894 students remained absent from the exams.

According to BISER spokesman, the students could check their results on the board's website www.biserawalpindi.edu.pk.

In case of any difficulty, the students could contact the controller examination on 051-5450917 and 051-5450918 or visit the board's Interbranch at BISER Complex, he added.

Envoy assures for continued support to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Wada Mitsuhiro called on Minister for Defence, Lieutenant General (R) Anwar Ali Hyder here at the Ministry and assured of his government's continued support to Pakistan and exploring new avenues of mutual collaboration.

The Defence Minister highlighted the historical close ties between Pakistan and Japan and appreciated the Japanese support for prosperity and development in Pakistan over the years through Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), said a

news release on Wednesday.

He expressed his hope that Japan would help create economic activities in Pakistan through mutually beneficial participation in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as well as considering investment in maritime and industrial manufacturing sectors especially like Gawadar Shipyard.

The Defence Minister emphasized on continuation of training and collaboration between two Navies and reiterated Pakistan's continued commitment to UN Peacekeeping Operations.

The minister also com-

mended the efforts of Japanese Government for regular holding of Pakistan-Japan Politico-Military and Military to Military Dialogues, adding that such interactions were a concrete expression of the desire of both the countries to enhance mutual defence collaboration. He mentioned the potential to cooperate in the defence field and need to strengthen the existing level of defence collaboration.

The Japanese Ambassador assured of his government's continued support to Pakistan and exploring new avenues of mutual collaboration.

‘Welfare of writers, poets top priority of present govt’: Jamal Shah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah Wednesday said that the welfare of actors, writers, and poets is among the topmost priorities of the present government and concrete steps are being taken to facilitate the literary segment.

Talking to PTV news channel, he said the government has planned various special packages for artists' community, and people with related skills in a bid to revive the country's entertainment industry.

He said we have directed the authorities concerned to make all-out efforts to promote the culture of the country abroad, adding, artists need to provide quality entertainment to the citizens by making dramas, telefilms, and other programs on the current themes and utilize their positive thinking and best quality, direction, and production.

Replying to a question, the minister assured that his ministry is determined to highlight the heritage, civilization, language, art, and culture of the province

in a creative and constructive way.

Set up new museums and strengthening and modernizing the existing museums are also priority areas of the ministry, he said, adding, that the government would utilize all available resources for the restoration of the heritage and historical sites of the area.

To another question, he said poets and artists are our identities in the world, he said, adding, that launching the artist support fund for the welfare of artists would reflect the government's priorities.

Question mark on transparency of elections

RAWALPINDI (NNI): Former interior minister and Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid said on Tuesday there was a huge question mark over the transparency of elections even before their announcement.

In his statement on social media platform X (formerly Twitter), the veteran politician said economic stability would

be achieved once there is political stability in the country.

"It is a huge question mark who will rebuild the economy," Rashid said.

He added that people represented the state and country would prosper when the general public would be satisfied economically.

According to the AML chief, the problems aren't solved by arresting the

political opponents.

The seasoned politician was of the view that everyone would have to sit together to resolve the economic crisis being faced by the country.

"The resentment is increasing and people are already fed up with the current system. We'll have to take our people on board in order to achieve economic stability," he concluded.

Railways Police arrest around 3,720 accused

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways Police claimed to have arrested a total of 3,720 accused due to their involvement in violations of rules and laws and also registered some 3,454 cases against them in eight Railways divisions in one year.

"Around 613 cases were registered in Peshawar Division, 537 in Rawalpindi, 1,023 in Lahore, 307 in Mughalpur workshops, 378 in Multan, 197 in Sukkur, 337 in Karachi, and 62 in Quetta Division," official sources

in the Ministry told APP.

They said the Railways Police Help Desks had been established at all the major railway stations across the country and the performance of Railways Police is quite satisfactory during the last year.

"The Railways Police has handed over 193 missing boys and 68 girls to their heirs and 263 boys, 154 girls, and 43 women who ran away from home to their parents/siblings and the welfare organizations," they added.

The sources said the lost

luggage worth about Rs12.43 million of 2,157 passengers was handed over to them.

Besides, 10,213 passengers were also provided with other facilities like first aid, wheelchairs, and stretchers.

Regarding the performance of Railways Police, they said, "Police are performing duties efficiently despite the limited resources and the performance of Railways Police will be further improved to the optimum level during the next year."

26 drug peddlers held, narcotics recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have apprehended 26 drug peddlers from different areas of the city including those involved in supplying drugs at educational institutions and recovered 8,550 gram hashish and 4,983 gram heroin from their possession during the last 48 hours.

Following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, a police spokesperson said that Islamabad Police have intensified the crackdown against the crackdown against the drug peddlers involved in supplying drugs at educational institutions to eliminate this menace from the city.

During this crackdown, the Margalla police team arrested two accused namely Hanook Tanveer and Asif Khan and recovered a total of 980 gram heroin from their possession. Karachi Company police team arrest-

ed an accused namely Nabeel Masih and recovered 637 gram heroin from him.

Shalimar police team arrested two accused namely Azhar and Shan and recovered 560 gram hashish and 215 gram heroin from their possession respectively. Likewise, the Ramna police team arrested Sajjad and recovered 510 gram heroin from his possession. Golra police team arrested two accused namely Asif Khan and Afzal and recovered a total of 1021 gram heroin from their possession.

Sumbal police team arrested an accused namely Shafi and recovered 1246 gram hashish from his possession. The Industrial Area police team arrested 1 Salamat Masih and recovered 550 gram heroin from him.

Tarnol police arrested Ameer and recovered 225 gram hashish from his possession. Sangjani police arrested Kashmir Khan and

recovered 680 gram hashish from his possession. Sabzi Mandi police team arrested two accused namely Hassan Raza and Sher Ahmed and recovered 1773 gram hashish from their possession.

Moreover, the Koral police team arrested Umer and Ubaid for having 398 gram heroin while Kirpa police arrested Sagheer and recovered 1100 gram hashish from his possession. Sihala police team arrested two accused namely Mehtab Rafique and Iftikhar and recovered 435 gram heroin from their possession.

Lohi Bher police team arrested an accused namely Ehsan Danish and recovered 237 gram heroin from him. Phulgran police team arrested three accused namely Hassan Mir, Nadeem and Bilal and recovered 1036 gram hashish from their possession.

Rawal Raj remarkable document, message for every Pakistani

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Tuesday paid tribute to senior journalist and author of the book Rawal Raj, a detailed account of the history of the ancient city, for writing a remarkable account of its history and termed it a message of harmony and love for every Pothohari and Pakistani.

Addressing the book launching ceremony of 'Rawal Raj' the speaker lauded the author for his indelible contribution to unearthing the obscure historical details of Rawalpindi.

He said the region of Pothohar had a unique character wherever in the world it was searched, its reference was available.

"Book writing is an uphill task that demands great effort and Sajjad Azhar compiled a document in a remarkable way," he added.

Most of the people, he said had considered Rawalpindi as a garrison city only but Sajjad Azhar corrected the record of Islamabad and historical background of this ancient land, he added.

Pothohari language had a unique style and had the traits of humbleness, equality, mutual respect and love, the Speaker said.

"This area had a great acceptance for other faiths and people. I would like to thank Sajjad Azhar for acquainting us as a potho-

hari with our history and language," he said.

Senior journalist, Aizaz Syed said Sajjad Azhar was not only a journalist and author but rather a fine poet. "Landi Kotal ki lal-taan is a great piece of poetry. His writings have resistance which is fading away from present-day writings and pieces of literature. His poetry and this book is beyond time and space. The book is based on the history of Rawalpindi and Islamabad," he added.

He noted that there was a great issue that books were not written in our society and the writers did not get their remuneration.

However, the publishers should be taken into account and the National Press Club should also establish collaboration with publishing houses to ensure the right of the author.

He also commended the military history of Pindi written by Sajjad Azhar.

Sajjad Azhar, Author of Rawal Raj said he had spent seven years to write these articles that were finally compiled into a book. He had visited the British Archives in the UK and read 200 books to write this book and also visited Microsoft Archives which possessed 50 million books that had references of Rawalpindi.

"It took another one and a half years to establish references for this book. I had put a milestone to continue the journey of research and

study on the novel idea of exploring Rawalpindi's thousands of years old heritage," he added.

The author underscored that no such book was written earlier that had provided true and genuine accounts of various historical instances of Rawalpindi, he added.

Chairman Rehmat ul Alameen Authority, Khurshid Nadeem said Sajjad Azhar had aptly recorded the history of the region in his book.

His writings helped learn the unknown history of the Pothohar region, he added. PPP leader Farhatullah Babar was also present on the occasion.

Former Senator Pervaiz Rashid of PML-N said the colonial era deprived us of our history and language and without it, an individual becomes a pigmy or dwarf in a society.

"The history we are taught and imparted to our children has no link to the real history as its all fabricated. I wanted to testify that I had witnessed the historical Pindi which is projected by Sajjad Azhar in this book and whatever is written in his book is truth. This book entails the interfaith harmony of old Pindi before partition," he added.

Former Senator Zafar Ali Shah of PTI said the author was a prolific writer who had a vast knowledge of history.

"He (Sajjad Azhar) created a historic document of

Pindi's history. He accurately mentioned Hindus, Sikhs and people of other faiths. However, many unknown facts have been revealed in this book," he said.

Former Chairman Pakistan Academy of Letters, and famous Poet of Urdu, Iftikhar Arif said this region was a great land of prehistoric times that hosted world's ancient civilization of Soan.

Soan River history was revealed by Sajjad Azhar in his article, whereas the Soan, Korang and Lai nullahs were one river in ancient times, he added.

He has discussed the historical periods Veida, Bhuddism etc., and this book was a compiled document of history, Arif said.

"Sajjad column's are part of history that will survive," he added.

President PFUI Dastoor Haji Nawaz Raza said Sajjad Azhar had great abilities and it's difficult to judge either he was a journalist or an author.

"His book is an account of the history, culture and customs of Rawalpindi. I call him an investigative journalist. He very aptly narrated the history of Rawalpindi," he added.

PFUI, President Afzal Butt commended the effort of the author for compiling a great piece of history. He termed the book as a reference for the future researchers and investigators of history.

Police destroy drug lab

QALAT, Afghanistan (Xinhua): Afghan counter-narcotics police have destroyed a drug processing lab, seizing arms and ammunition in south Afghanistan's Zabul province, provincial police spokesman Zabihullah Jawhar said Wednesday. During the operation launched on Tuesday, police arrested one person and found an AKM assault rifle, five hand grenades, two anti-vehicle mines and a huge quantity of bullets, the official said.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Saffar 27, 1445 — Thursday, September 14, 2023

IEA extends condolences

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has expressed its condolences over the recent storms and heavy rains in Libya, which have resulted in significant casualties and substantial financial losses. The severe weather has deeply affected both the government and the people of Libya. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the IEA extended its deepest condolences and sympathy to the Libyan government and its people.

Domestic trade: Central Bank makes efforts to promote Afghani

KABUL (TOLONews): The central bank of Afghanistan called on citizens in the southwest to use Afghani in all their transactions.

A spokesman for the Central Bank, Hassibullah Noori, said that residents of Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, Uruzgan, and Daikundi provinces have been given two and a half months to do all their transactions in Afghan currency and refrain from using regional currencies, and violators will face legal action.

"Residents of these provinces were given two

and a half months to conduct all their transactions in Afghani and refrain from using regional currencies," said Hassibullah Noori.

Meanwhile, some residents in the south of the country said they consider the action of the central bank important in maintaining the stability of the Afghan currency against foreign currency.

"In every country, its national identity is the currency of that country, and our national identity is not the Pakistani Rupee, but Afghan currency," said

Mohammad Akram, a Kandahar resident. The Chamber of Commerce and Investment of Afghanistan welcomed the action of the central bank of the country to promote Afghani in the markets of the country.

"Fortunately, we got the news that 100 billion Afghanis were printed, and more or less of it came to the country, and we see that the new Afghan money has replaced the old money," said Khan Mohammad, an official of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment of Afghanistan.

Residents for restoration of historical sites

URUZGAN (TOLONews): Some residents of the Uruzgan's Deh Ravod district said that historical heritage sites in the district are faced with destruction.

In the Deh Ravod district, there are some historical heritage sites that have a historical background of more than a thousand years.

"There are many historical heritage sites in Deh Ravod district, which have not been paid attention to by the government for many years, and now they are being destroyed," said Fazal-ul-Rabu, a resident of Uruzgan.

"These historical places have a lot of history, but the government has not paid any attention to them. It also has a good water area that should be properly arranged so that people can come to see it," said Rahmatullah, an Uruzgan resident.

But the head of Information and Culture of Uruzgan pledged to reconstruct these historical places.

"Historical places that are in Uruzgan province, in addition to their protection, if they need to be restored, we will start the work. We have also shared the issue with the center," said Agha Wali Qureshi, head of the Information and Culture of Uruzgan.

In a ceremony held at ARG, in which Amir Khan Muttaqi, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs was also present, the Prime Minister welcomed the new Chinese ambassador.

Bilal Karimi, Deputy Spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, said Zhao said that China, as a good neighbor of Afghanistan, respects the independence, territorial integrity and independence of decisions and will not interfere in Afghanistan's

IEA accepts credentials from new Chinese envoy



KABUL (Agencies): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's Prime Minister, Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, accepted the credentials of Zhao Xing.

In a ceremony held at ARG, in which Amir Khan Muttaqi, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs was also present, the Prime Minister welcomed the new Chinese ambassador.

Bilal Karimi, Deputy Spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, said Zhao said that China, as a good neighbor of Afghanistan, respects the independence, territorial integrity and independence of decisions and will not interfere in Afghanistan's

internal affairs, and in the same way, it does not want to make Afghanistan its sphere of influence.

Karimi added that politics, economy and some other areas were also discussed in this ceremony.

The Chinese ambassador expressed his satisfaction with his new mission in Afghanistan and said: "It is a matter of honor for me to start my duty as the Chinese ambassador in Afghanistan."

He also offered the greetings and good wishes of the Chinese leadership to the leader of the Islamic Emirate, and Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, the Prime Minister.

"We are happy that in the last two years, along with the growth of the economy and providing security, there has been a lot of progress in the fight against corruption, crimes and drugs. I will try to strengthen the relations and cooperation between Afghanistan and China in the political, economic and other sectors," said Zhao Xing.

At the same time, the Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate appreciated the leadership of China for appointing Mr. Zhao Xing as ambassador and expressed hope that his appointment will lead to the promotion of diplomatic

relations to a high level and the beginning of a new chapter between the two countries. This is the first diplomatic step at this level in Afghanistan in the past two years.

The newly appointed Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Afghanistan also presented a copy of his credentials to Muttaqi.

Besides congratulating the new Chinese ambassador, the acting minister wished him success in his new mission.

Muttaqi assured the new Chinese ambassador of cooperation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Afghan Taliban reject UN report on drugs



KABUL (Agencies): The Afghan interim administration on Wednesday rejected a United Nations report on drugs in Afghanistan and said the Taliban completely banned drugs in the war-torn country.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban spokesman, said they rejected a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as Afghanistan is now free from drugs.

"Our government has

taken very important steps to eliminate drugs in Afghanistan, including a ban on poppy cultivation, trade, and drug smuggling across the country," Mujahid said in a statement sent.

The UNODC in its latest report said that since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan in 2021, heroin trafficking has continued at a reduced rate, while methamphetamine trafficking has surged.

"Methamphetamine traf-

ficking is expanding at a staggering pace. Across Afghanistan and neighboring countries, there was nearly a twelvefold surge in seizures, from 2.5 tons in 2017 to 29.7 tons in 2021," said the UNODC.

"Within Afghanistan, annual seizures rapidly rose from less than 100 kilograms (220 pounds) in 2019 to nearly 2,700 kg (5,962 pounds) in 2021, suggesting increased production," it said.

Afghan students place in top 20

KABUL (TOLONews): Five Afghan students, both male and female, who attended the international mathematics competition of mathematics in Malaysia, were among the 20 winners.

The competition, which was held with the participation of nearly 2,000 students from 86 countries, was facilitated by the UCMAS Abacus and Mental Arithmetic International Competition.

A total of 15 Afghans students including eight girls and seven boys participated in the competition.

"The biggest achievement for Afghanistan was that we were able to reach five top positions among the 20 top rankers," said Mehrdad Hashamzade, head of the UCMAS Office in Afghanistan.

The students said that they had prepared for participation at these competitions.

"I have attended UCMAS and reached first position," said Mohammad Maisom Rustami, a student.

"This was my first year that I attended the international competition of the UCMAS. I have attended primary level. There were 300 questions and I should have solved them in 8 minutes," said Yasra Noori, a student.

The girls who participated in the competition called on the interim government to reopen the girls schools above grade six.

"We call on the Islamic Emirate to reopen the schools for the girls of Afghanistan so they can study and bring honors to their country," said Asinat Qanawiz, a student.

"We call on the Islamic Emirate to allow the girls students above grade six to study," said Rahil Nayab, a student.

Domestic printing of academic documents: Finance and Higher Education ministries sign MoU

KABUL (Agencies): The Finance and Higher Education Ministries of the country have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to print one million copies of academic documents domestically.

The MoU was signed by Mohammad Nasser Akhund, the Acting Minister of Finance, and Mawlawi Neda Mohammad Nadim, the Acting Minister of Higher Education.

According to a statement from the Finance Ministry, this MoU will facilitate the printing of one million security papers for the Ministry of Higher Education. This includes 500,000 diplomas and 500,000 transcripts, which



were previously printed in Germany.

The sample of these

security papers has been evaluated by professionals. They have confirmed that

its quality meets international standards and offers an economic advantage.

Neili residents decry absence of transport service

NEILI (Pajhwok): Some residents of central Daikundi province complain about the lack of a well-organized transport system in the province.

Inhabitants of Neili say they have to use motorbikes as taxis in the absence of public transport buses.

Reza Sadaqat, a resident of Neili city told Pajhwok Afghan News as the use of taxis was limited, most people relied on motorbikes, impeding public movement.

Sadaqat said: "If women want to travel, they either do not have mahram (an individual you can't marry) with them. Thus they cannot ride bikes behind strangers. At the same time, it is also diffi-

cult for patients to use motorbikes for transportation to hospital."

Comparatively speaking, women face more problems because they can neither travel alone with motorcyclists nor even in the presence of mahram men.

He asked the government to pay due attention to the issue and think about launching a reliable public transport service in the city.

Din Mohammad, another resident, explained the transport problems multiplied during the winter when residents could not ride motorbikes.

Most Neili residents want the government to find a solution to transport sector problems, but their consistent demand has been

ignored, says Din Mohammad.

On the other hand, the use of motorbikes as taxis has been a source of income and job generation for some residents of the city.

Suleman, a motorcyclist, told Pajhwok he worked from dawn to dusk and earned some money to meet the daily needs of his family.

He confirmed: "In this city, there are fewer taxis which operate only when they are needed urgently. We charge each passenger only 20 afis, but taxi driver charges 300 to 400afis. All people cannot afford to pay taxi rents."

He pointed out: "There are no other employment opportunities. We come

here and make around 70 or 100 afis a day and buy bread for our families."

Road transport officials say they plan to find a permanent solution to the problem by putting in place a transport system across the province.

Jamaluddin Irshad, head of Land Transport Authority, promised relevant departments would work on a bus terminal for to resolve people's transport problem.

"A location has been selected for the terminal and this issue will be resolved soon" he added.

Later on, he said, the authorities would impound motorbikes, which cause most of traffic accidents in the city.

Budget shortfall in Afghanistan: WFP warns of humanitarian crisis



KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Food Programme (WFP) has said it needs one billion dollars to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan. The organization also emphasized that it can provide food assistance to one out of every needy Afghan citizen. On Wednesday, the organization once again warned about the budget shortfall in Afghanistan through a statement on its social media platform X.

The WFP adds that 10 million people in Afghanistan have been deprived of receiving aid this year.

Additionally, the United

Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in its latest report, has also warned about the reduction and discontinuation of health services for those in need in Afghanistan due to budget shortages.

It is worth noting that the World Food Programme previously stated that it needed one billion dollars to assist 21 million people, and over 20 million people in Afghanistan are at risk of hunger. Many humanitarian organizations have raised alarms about budget shortages and a growing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan

due to rising poverty and hunger. Out of the required \$3.23 billion for humanitarian aid, only about \$1 billion has been provided thus far.

Afghanistan, a highly aid-dependent country, lost Western donor support following the Taliban's return to power after the US and NATO withdrawal in August 2021. The Afghan economy quickly crumbled, forcing self-reliant Afghans to seek humanitarian assistance for survival.

Taliban's government, unrecognized and sanctioned, faced international isolation due to widespread human rights violations.

Open Madrassas instead of schools: Panjsher girls

PARAKH (Pajhwok): Girl students of secondary and high schools in central Panjshir province have expressed their concerns over the closure of girls' schools and asked the acting government to open religious schools — Madrassas — for them.

The Islamic Education Department pledged to opened religious schools for girls in the coming educational year.

Back in 2022, the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' (IEA) closed

girls schools above class sixth and said a strategy was being worked out on the bases of which girls would be allowed to go to schools, but the strategy is yet to be completed and introduced.

Now some girls from secondary and high schools have demanded religious schools — madrassas — where they could go and learn education.

Nasrin, the student of class eight at Ghulam Haidar school in Rakha district, told Pajhwok Afghan

News: "It is third year for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan but girls school above class sixth are still closed while learning is our legitimate right, when schools are closed then government should open religious schools."

Fatima, the student of class ninth at Noshwan Peyawash High School in Rakha district, said: "Government should create official Madrassa when it did not want to reopen school so that girls are not deprived of education."

Roya, another student deprived of education due to the closure of schools, demanded the opening of official religious schools for girls.

Girls interest in religious school has grown

Mawlawi Abdul Hafeez, Anwari, deputy education director of Jami Al Anwar Madrassa in Rakha district, said after the closure of girls schools above class sixth, girls' interest in Madrassa had increased.

He added a large number of girls referred to the

Jamai Al Anwar Madrassa for enrollment after the closure of schools but they were not entertained due to the lack of teachers and educational materials.

He said currently over 200 girls were getting education with them now and during the past regime they had up to 50 students.

Anwari said the IEA should consider other social needs as well and reopen girls' schools

This comes that earlier, acting Interior Minister Serajuddin Haqqani dur-

ing a meeting with the OIC uelma delegation said that girls education was the need of society and girls schools above class sixth would be soon reopened.

Sanobar, one of the Jami Al Anwar Madrassa students, said after the closure of girls' school she suffered from depression and then she was happy to be enrolled in Madrassa and got her mental and psychological relieved.

She said: "I am worried for the other girls who do

not have religious schools in their villages, the schools are also closed, they also wish and need education, when the government closes school, it should open religious schools."

Matuallah Jawad, deputy head of the Islamic Education Department, said next year government would strive for the establishment of new religious schools in the province.

He did not said how many religious schools would be created in the

province but added the IEA leadership directed the Islamic Education Department in the centre to create 100,000 new posts for Islamic Education.

He said currently, 77 girls Madrassa, three Madrassa for boys and girl, three boys and girls Darululums and 14 female Madrassas are operational in Panjsher province.

He added over 4,800 girls are currently studying in different religious schools in Panjshir.

COAS, Erdogan vow to boost diplomatic, military relations

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), COAS is on an official visit to the Republic of Türkiye. The visit is part of the high level mutual visits by both the brotherly countries to enhance the historic diplomatic and military ties. During the visit COAS called on H.E Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of Türkiye, Foreign and Defense Ministers, Commander of Turkish General Staff and Commanders of Turkish Land and Air forces.

During the meetings, COAS emphasized on enhancing defence collaboration and training cooperation. COAS appreciated Turkish Military's efforts for maintaining peace and stability in the region and also praised the standards of operational readiness of Turkish Armed Forces. Turkish leaders acknowledged the efforts extended by Pakistan Army Engineers who worked along NDMA Teams during the unfortunate earthquake that hit Türkiye in February this year.

COAS visited the Mausoleum of Mustafa



Kemal Atatürk in Ankara to pay homage to the great leader and laid floral wreath in his honour. COAS later visited the Turkish Land Forces Headquarters, where on his arrival he was given a warm welcome and was presented with the Guard of Honour. COAS was also conferred with the Legion of Merit by the Minister of Defense and Commander Turkish Land Forces in recognition of his services towards promoting defence relations between two countries.

During the ceremony COAS highlighted that, "Pakistan and Türkiye have strong brotherly relations which have always stood the test of times. Pakistan Army is always willing to extend full support to the Turkish Land Forces in multiple domains. Pakistan has always stood with their Turkish brothers in times of calamity and moments of triumph and shall continue to strengthen the fraternal ties amongst the two nations."

Azerbaijan's Ambassador calls on Air Chief

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Khazar Farhadov, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office on Wednesday. The meeting covered a wide array of topics, including matters of mutual interest, regional developments and the evolving geopolitical landscape.

Amidst the discussions, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, shared his strategic vision for Pakistan Air Force and reiterated his unwavering commitment to modernize its capabilities across the realms of air, space, cyber and electronic warfare. The discussion primarily focused on the areas of joint operational training and comprehensive cooperation in cross-domain, multi-spectrum operations.

Emphasizing the historical friendship between the two nations, the Air Chief stated, "The relationship

between Pakistan and Azerbaijan has a myriad of reasons, deeply rooted in mutual experiences, enduring religious, cultural and historical bonds, all underpinned by a shared commitment to regional peace, security and stability." Chief of the Air Staff reaffirmed his steadfast determination to further enhance the existing inter-military cooperation between the two sides, particularly in the fields of training and defence aviation. In the backdrop of upcoming major air exercise being held at Air Power Centre of Excellence, the Air Chief emphasized the pivotal role of joint aerial drills between the respective air forces to foster mutual learning and effectively address common security challenges.

Chief of the Air Staff offered his full cooperation for comprehensive training programs, starting from the basic level and progressing to tactical training of Azerbaijan Air Force air and ground crew in order to strengthen their technical skills and foster greater

interoperability between the two air forces.

The Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan and his team expressed great interest in the upcoming multi-national aerial exercise that would incorporate all domains of airpower. He lauded the historic and exemplary professionalism displayed by PAF personnel in times of both conflict and peace. He also expressed admiration for PAF's notable achievements in nurturing a vibrant and progressive domestic aviation industry. The visiting dignitary reaffirmed that Pakistan and Azerbaijan, with their strong diplomatic and defence ties, are poised for an even stronger alliance in future.

He also praised the visionary leadership of the Air Chief, particularly commending the success of 'National Aerospace Science and Technology Park' and expressed keen interest in this state-of-the-art project, highlighting its significance in advancing the domestic aerospace industry.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Khazar Farhadov, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force.

Kim vows full support for Russia

MOSCOW (AP): North Korea's Kim Jong Un vowed "full and unconditional support" for Russia's Vladimir Putin on Wednesday as the two leaders isolated by the West held a summit that the US warned could lead to a deal to supply ammunition for Moscow's war in Ukraine.

The meeting, which lasted over four hours at Russia's spaceport in the Far East, underscores how the two countries' interests are aligning: Putin is believed to be seeking one of the few things impoverished North Korea has in abundance — stockpiles of aging ammunition and rockets for Soviet-era weapons. Such a request would mark a role reversal from the 1950-53 Korean War, when Moscow gave weapons to support Pyongyang's invasion of South Korea, and in the decades of Soviet sponsorship of the North that followed.

The decision to meet at the Vostochny

Cosmodrome, Russia's most important launch center on its own soil, suggests Kim is seeking Russian help in developing military reconnaissance satellites, which he has called crucial to enhancing the threat of his nuclear-capable missiles. North Korea has repeatedly failed to put its first military spy satellite into orbit. Putin met Kim's limousine, brought from Pyongyang in the North Korean leader's armored train, at the launch facility, greeting his guest with a handshake of about 40 seconds. Putin spoke of the Soviet Union's wartime support for North Korea and said the talks would cover economic cooperation, humanitarian issues and the "situation in the region."

Kim, in turn, pledged continued support for Moscow, making an apparent reference to the war in Ukraine. "Russia is currently engaged in a just fight against hegemonic forces to

defend its sovereign rights, security and interests," he said. "The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has always expressed its full and unconditional support for all measures taken by the Russian government, and I take this opportunity to reaffirm that we will always stand with Russia on the anti-imperialist front and the front of independence."

North Korea may have tens of millions of aging artillery shells and rockets based on Soviet designs that could bolster Russian forces in Ukraine, analysts say. The United States has accused North Korea of providing Russia with arms, including selling artillery shells to the Russian mercenary group Wagner. Russian and North Korean officials deny such claims. But either buying arms from or providing rocket technology to North Korea would violate international sanctions that Russia has supported in the past.

US dollar drops in interbank

KARACHI (INP): The US dollar (USD) dropped below 300 rupees in the interbank this morning and trading at 298.30 PKR on Wednesday. "The green-back rate dropped by 1.59 rupees in interbank and trading at 298.30 Pakistani rupees," Forex dealers said.

"The banks are selling dollar to importers at below 300 Pakistani rupees," currency dealers said. Pakistani rupee (PKR) has made impressive recovery against the US dollar (USD) in recent days. The US dollar has dipped below Rs300 in the interbank market as the rupee continued its upward trajectory, the forex dealers said. President Forex Association of Pakistan Malik Bostan earlier said that the US dollar will enter in the reverse gear mode and will drop below Rs 300.

It is pertinent to mention here that the caretaker government announced crackdown against dollars smuggling following the identification of facilitators linked to government officials. To combat dollar smuggling, hoarding, and organized crime, the caretaker government has decided to launch comprehensive crackdown. The identification of facilitators and patrons among government officials has already taken place, and a list has been compiled for this purpose, sources said.

The USD recorded another decline today followed by a decline of Rs7.21 in the interbank and Rs30 in the open market in the six trading sessions. Analysts said that the dollar price was reduced after ongoing crackdowns across the country to curb currency smuggling. Yesterday, the US dollar (USD) went down below the interbank rate in the open market. USD was dropped by 4.00 rupees in open market and traded at 298 rupees till evening.

The dollar's buying has been scarce, while sellers' number has soared in exchange companies. In August, the Pakistani rupee (PKR) had been witnessing a continuous devaluation. The buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market were standing at Rs322 and Rs325 respectively.

Hamza dashes back to Lahore

LAHORE (INP): Former Punjab chief minister and PML-N leader Hamza Shehbaz, who had left for London via Dubai two days ago, returned to Lahore in the early hours of Wednesday on the party's instructions.

Sources said that Hamza, who was due to attend a meeting in London to discuss the return of former prime minister and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, reached Lahore onboard Emirates Airlines flight. Earlier, the party leadership had asked him to stay in Dubai rather than travelling to London.

Five killed in Nowshera accident

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: In a late-hour accident on Motorway, a Peshawar bound bus overturned near Rashakai Interchange in Nowshera district, killing five passengers and injuring 13 others.

According to details provided by the Motorway Police on Wednesday, a bus enroute from Lahore to Peshawar overturned near Rashakai Interchange after its driver fell asleep. As a result, five passengers were killed on the scene while 13 others including two women sustained critical wounds. Police said the condition of the four injured was stated to be critical.

The rescue teams shifted the dead and injured to Qazi Hussain Ahmad Medical Complex Nowshera and Mardan Medical Complex. Police said the driver of the bus who also sustained injuries in the mishap, was arrested. The bus which fell into a shallow ditch after overturning was retrieved with heavy machinery and the road was made clear for traffic.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi chairing a meeting on the framework for classification of disabilities, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Toll from floods in Libya passes 5,100 dead

DERNA (Agencies): Search teams combed streets, wrecked buildings and even the sea for bodies in a devastated eastern Libyan city on Wednesday, where authorities said massive flooding had killed at least 5,100 people, with the toll expected to rise further.

Authorities were still struggling to get aid to the Mediterranean coastal city of Derna after Sunday night's deluge washed away most access roads. Aid workers who managed to reach the city described devastation in its center, with thousands still missing and tens of thousands left homeless. "Bodies are everywhere, inside houses, in the streets, at sea. Wherever you go, you find dead men, women, and children," Emad Al-Falah, an aid worker from Benghazi, said over the phone from Derna. "Entire families were lost."

Mediterranean storm Daniel caused deadly flooding in many towns of eastern Libya on Sunday, but the worst-hit was Derna. Two dams outside in the mountains above the city collapsed, sending floodwaters washing down the Wadi Derna river and through the city center, sweeping away entire city blocks. Waves rose as high as 7 meters (23 feet), Yann Fridez, head of the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Libya, told broadcaster France24. Mohammed Derna, a teacher in the city, said he, his family and neighbors rushed to the roof of their apartment building, stunned at the volume of water rushing by. It reached the second story of many buildings, he said. They watched people below, including women and children being washed away.

"They were screaming, help, help," he said over the phone from a field hospital in Derna. "It was like a Hollywood horror movie." Derna lies on a narrow coastal plain

on the Mediterranean Sea, under steep mountains running along the coast. Only two roads from the south remain usable, and they involve a long, winding route through the mountains.

Aid teams with some supplies managed to get in that way, while authorities in eastern Libya worked Wednesday to repair the faster coastal access routes. Otherwise, local emergency workers were relying on whatever equipment they already had on hand. Search teams combed shattered apartment buildings and retrieved the dead floating offshore in the Mediterranean Sea, Al-Falah said. Collapsed bridges the river split the city center, further hampering movement.

Ossama Ali, a spokesman for the Ambulance and Emergency Center in eastern Libya, said at least 5,100 deaths were recorded in Derna, along with around 100 others elsewhere in eastern Libya. More than 7,000 people were injured in the city, most receiving treatment in field hospitals that authorities and aid agencies set up, he told The Associated Press by phone Wednesday. The number of deaths is likely to increase since teams are still collecting bodies from the streets, buildings and the sea, he said. At least 9,000 remain missing, but that number could drop as communications are restored, Ali said.

At least 30,000 people in Derna were displaced by the flooding, the UN's International Organization for Migration said, adding that the city remained almost inaccessible for humanitarian aid workers. The startling devastation pointed to the storm's intensity, but also Libya's vulnerability. The country is divided by rival governments, one in the east, the other in the west, and the result has been neglect of infrastructure in many areas.

Enlisting politician in PIL: PHC seeks reply

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Investigation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to submit reply for placing former Advisor for Commerce Abdul Kareem Khan in Provisional Identification List (PIL), on Wednesday.

The counsel Muzammil Khan advocate argued that Abdul Kareem served as former Advisor and Member Provincial Assembly but nominated in case registered at Chota Lahore police station for 9th& 10th May vandalism along with 299 other workers after arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan.

The petitioner has obtained bail in the cases while now going aboard but found that his name has been put on Provisional Identification List, the counsel argued.

However, the federation's representative informed that Abdul Kareem Khan name had placed on PIL on directions DIG Investigation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as per Federal Investigation Agency list submitted before PHC. PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Abdul Shakoor and Justice Syed Arshad Ali ordered DIG Investigation to inform the court that why Abdul Kareem Khan has put on Provisional Identification List and adjourned further

hearing.

Similarly, another PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Sahibzada Asadullah stopped arrest of former MPA Riaz Khan from Buner and ordered submission of cases record registered him.

The counsel Shah Faisal advocate informed that police raiding residence of former MPA despite he had obtained bails in the cases in which Riaz Khan was nominated and requested for submission record of cases if any against him. PHC ordered provincial government for submission record and stopped arrest of former MPA Riaz Khan till further orders while adjourned further hearing.

One nation, one law

(Continued from Page 1)

The prime minister expressed the optimism that Pakistani rupee would be further strengthened. About holding of elections in the country, he opined that the polls could be held in mid-January or by the end of January, however, it was upto the Election Commission to take a decision in that regard. He said that the caretaker set up was ready to assist the electoral process, look after the law and order and financial matters related to holding of elections.

The delimitation was a due and constitutional process, the president had also advised the ECP in that regard, and the Commission would hold deliberations, he added. The prime minister, about a query, maintained that inflation was linked with the supply and demand of goods and the availability of essential services. He said an artificial inflation was created through hoarding and smuggling, adding that ongoing operations were yielding tangible result and positive outcome, and cited the reduction in price of sugar etc.

To another question regarding economic revival, he lauded the incumbent Chief of Army Staff for contributing towards the national economy. He said that the organizational strength of the armed forces was being utilized though it was an additional burden on them. He stressed upon capacity

building of those civil institutions which were facing a deteriorating situation. In his view, the utilization of an organization's strength, always delivered good results, he added.

The prime minister said that the incoming government should focus on manufacturing and enhancement of services and without any financial reforms programme in the manifestos of the political parties could affect the achievement made during the short period of caretaker government. He said that the economic stability was linked with the political stability and all the political parties had the inherent rights to acquire political power through legal course and without disfiguring the constitutional and legal provisions.

About the May 9 incidents, he expressed how could anyone set his own house on fire after getting angered. There was no logic in such acts and approach, which neither would succeed nor would be accepted. "If I have been a part of the PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf), I will have genuinely condemned such acts and taken the party away from the vandalism," he asserted. PM Kakar, responding to a question about trials of PTI chief, said that such matters should be left to the courts to decide.

About Shah Mahmood Qureshi's arrest, he observed that it was upto the law enforcement agencies to decide whether laws

permitted someone to be handcuffed or not. About a related query regarding the return of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif to Pakistan, he said the law enforcement agencies would decide whether he could be arrested or otherwise in accordance with the laws.

They would intervene only if the laws were defied, he added. Welcoming the incoming Chief Justice of Pakistan, the prime minister said he considered him as a modern and enlightened personality of his native province Balochistan and hoped he would initiate judicial reforms. The prime minister, to another question, said that the US forces had trained the Afghan national army and spent trillion of dollars in Afghanistan, but after their withdrawal, the Afghan national force disappeared quickly and the weapons given to them disappeared. Now, the same were on sale in the black markets across the globe, he said, adding that the terrorists outfits like TTP, Daesh and BLA had used such weapons in terrorist acts inside Pakistan. He said a large number of Afghans who had been living in Pakistan without documents or forged documents would be immediately repatriated. The prime minister also agreed that there should be a transparent accountability of all, but using it as a tool for political victimization, should end.

President for implementing PWDs job quota

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi has emphasized the need for implementation of job quota for persons with disabilities (PWDs) by the public and private sectors. Speaking during a follow-up meeting on the framework for classification of disabilities held at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Wednesday, he said that 10-12% population of the country was facing various forms of disabilities.

Dr. Arif Alvi said that it was the responsibility of government and private sectors to employ PWDs, as per their skills and qualifications to empower them financially. Senior officials from the Ministry of Human Rights, Council on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), NADRA, NAVTTC, representatives from the four provincial governments, Gilgit-Baltistan, AJK, and a representative from the World Health Organization (WHO) attended the meeting.

The meeting was briefed by the Ministry of Human Rights on the progress made so far with regard to implementation of disability employment quota. It was informed that the ministry was actively pursuing with the government organizations to implement job quota for persons with disabilities in letter and spirit. The ministry highlighted that 98 differently-abled-persons (DAPs) had been provided jobs by the government organizations since March 2023.

The ministry further informed that a master list of potential employers was being prepared to seek their support in providing jobs to PWDs. The NAVTTC apprised the meeting that 1500 PWDs had been trained for job placement. The meeting was apprised that presently DAPs availed the job quota only from BPS 1-15 while no specific quota had been reserved for them against the gazetted positions.

President Alvi stressed the importance of amending the existing recruitment rules to reserve quota for PWDs in gazetted jobs. He underlined the need for imparting skill-based education to PWDs to enhance their employability and ensure their active participation in mainstream economic activities. The president also highlighted the importance of close coordination among the stakeholders to address issues related to the registration of PWDs at federal and provincial levels.

He also appreciated the efforts made by NAVTTC by training 1500 PWDs as well as the role of Ministry of Human Rights for helping DAPs in getting jobs. The officials from provincial governments updated the meeting about the measures taken by them for the facilitation and training of PWDs. Meanwhile, a delegation, led by the Director and CEO of Tang Chinese International Education and Technology (Pvt) Ltd, Song Jianying held a meeting with President Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Song gave presentation on the technical and skilled education for Pakistani youth. The CEO informed that Tang Chinese International Education and Technology (Pvt) Ltd had sent 150 Pakistanis to China for getting advance skilled education. He further informed that his institute would send more Pakistani youth to China on scholarship basis for getting advance skilled education. The president lauded the services of the organization for imparting skilled education to Pakistani youth.