

LHC summons PM, CM
LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court summoned the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar and Caretaker Punjab CM Mohsin Naqvi on Oct 16 in connection with blasphemous content posting on social media. The LHC Justice Shujaat Ali Khan heard the case and ordered the PM and CM Punjab to appear before the court on Oct 16. The judge remarked that for eight months the federal government could not submit the report.

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Army will continue to play role for peace in KP: COAS

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir on Wednesday said the Pakistan Army would continue to play its role in upholding peace and stability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and facilitating a "secure environment for economic development". The army chief made this statement during his address at the provincial Apex Committee meeting in Peshawar.

During the Apex Committee meeting today, the army chief was briefed about the overall security situation in the province, including initiatives against smuggling, hoarding and drug trafficking, according to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

It said the participants of the

meeting affirmed that state institutions and people were united for the protection of life and property of citizens. The participants also paid rich tribute to the Shuhada and their families.

"We have to synergise our efforts for the peace and prosperity of our beloved country," the ISPR statement quoted the army chief as saying. He underlined that the Pakistan Army would continue to play its role in ensuring peace and stability in KP to provide a secure environment for economic development.

COAS also attended meeting of the Provincial Apex Committee along with Caretaker Chief Minister KP, Muhammad Azam Khan.

General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff visited Peshawar on Wednesday and had an interactive

session with the respectable women of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during 'KPK Women Symposium - 2023'.

While addressing the participants of the women symposium, COAS said that, women have played a positive and an important role in the progress of country throughout the history of Pakistan. COAS highlighted that women's role in Pakistan's progress and development is quintessential and most important.

COAS remarked that women of KPK have continued to face multifaceted challenges due to prolonged fight against terrorism, however, they have proven their resilience, commitment and bravery at the face of all odds. COAS encouraged the women to take part in the progress and development of KPK and Newly Merged Districts.



PESHAWAR: General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff along with Caretaker Chief Minister KP, Muhammad Azam Khan chairing the meeting of Provincial Apex Committee.

Rocket blast claims seven lives in katcha area

KANDHKOT (INP): A rocket explosion in a house in katcha area of Kandhkot district on Wednesday claimed seven lives and injured six others. "A rocket exploded at a house in Shah Ali Sabzoi village in katcha area leaving seven people dead including four children," local police said. "Six others were injured in the incident," police said without elaborating details of the explosion.

The injured were transferred to hospitals. The incident has caused a wave of panic and horror in the area. SSP Kashmore district Rohail Khoso has said that the rocket shell was found in the affected house. "Children hurled it in the stove resulting in deadly blast," district police chief said.

"Police has cordoned off the village and conducting a search operation," police officer said. The family members of deceased and injured protested outside the hospital over absence of doctors in the medical facility. Caretaker Chief Minister of Sindh Maqbool Baqar while taking notice of the rocket blast in katcha area of Kandhkot, has summoned report from the IG Police.

"How the rocket shell reached in Sabzoi Goth. If a consignment of arms was being smuggled in katcha area," Caretaker CM questioned the police chief. "Are there facilitators of bandits in the village," he further questioned. "How the rocket exploded, claiming loss of several lives," the CM further questioned.

"I want a detailed report of the incident," Justice Baqar directed the Sindh Police chief. The Sindh government has decided to launch a law enforcement operation in katcha areas (riverine forests) along the Indus River in upper Sindh districts to curb bandit gangs and other outlaws involved in rampant kidnapping for ransom and other crimes in the region. Sindh Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar last Friday okayed a comprehensive joint operation by Pakistan Army and Sindh Rangers' against dacoits in the katcha area of Sukkur and Larkana divisions.

Pakistan focus on its own interests: PM

— West 'over-obsessed' to contain Pakistan's 'all-weather friend' China

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has said that Pakistan was focusing on its own interests without choosing sides in the great power competition, and that the West was "over-obsessed" with efforts to contain China.

The prime minister, in an interview with Washington Post during his visit to New York to attend the 78th United Nations General Assembly session published on Wednesday, said Pakistan intended to stay "neutral" on Russia's war with Ukraine and saw China as its "all-weather friend" and "strategic partner."

"It's not a Cold War. There is no Iron Curtain here. It's not that opaque. Everybody sees what is happening," the prime minister said. He said that the West was "over-obsessed" with efforts to contain China. He told the interviewer that Pakistan was charting a path, designed to avoid getting caught up in the competition between the West and Russia and China. He said Pakistan had no intention of committing to either camp in the

PM arrives in Madinah

MADINAH MUNAWWARAH (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar arrived here on Wednesday on his private visit to Saudi Arabia. Upon arrival, he was warmly received by Governor Madinah Faisal Bin Salman along with other senior officials of the Pakistani Embassy and Jeddah Consulate General at the Madinah Airport. The prime minister will leave for Makkah Mukarma today to perform Umrah.

growing US-China rivalry.

By siding with the West against the Soviets and again after 9/11, Pakistan paid a high price, Kakar said. "Pakistan in the last 30 years, has been treated unfairly by the West," he told the interviewer. "Every nation for itself... Why should we be worried about this competition? It's between two great powers, two great civilizations, and the implications [affect] 150-plus countries. And Pakistan is just one of them," PM Kakar remarked.

Mentioning Pakistan's "neutral" stance on Ukraine, the prime minister said: "This crisis is creating challenges and at the same time it is creating opportunities also within the region, and we are looking at it both ways." Prime Minister Kakar flatly denied the allegations in a media report of Pakistan moving any munitions to Ukraine saying, "We have not gone for any sale which was directly intended for the Ukraine, not any sort of transactions, even through a third party."

Regarding the arrest of workers of Pakistan Tehree-k-e-Insaf, the prime minister denied the alleged abuses and compared Pakistan's actions to the arrests in the United States of those who attacked the US Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. "Arrests are being made for unlawful actions, somebody who's involved in arson or vandalism," he said. "This is not the kind of behavior which is promoted or vindicated by any liberal democracy. So why is it being even expected of Pakistan that we should condone such behaviors?"

KP taking steps to promote tourism: CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Azam Khan has said that the provincial government is taking steps to promote tourism as an industry.

In a message issued in connection with World Tourism Day being observed across the world including Pakistan on September 27 each year, he said that the provincial government is working under an integrated strategy to provide all facilities to domestic and foreign tourists. The purpose of celebrating this day is to raise awareness about the importance of tourism and its promotion.

He said that millions of domestic and foreign tourists come to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and enjoy its natural beauty and hospitality. He said that so far, more than 11 million domestic and foreign tourists have visited Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the current calendar year. The caretaker chief minister added that the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the province need to be effectively utilized for tourism. He said that Pakistan and especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has immense opportunities for tourism.

Muhammad Azam Khan said that by promoting tourism, not only employment opportunities could be created rather strong foundations could also be laid for the national economy. He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is not only blessed with natural beauty, rather also has centuries old unique cultural heritage and its residents are famous for their traditional hospitality, which needs to be effectively utilized for promotion of tourism.

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Pardon for prisoners announced

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday announced a special remission of 90 days in sentence of prisoners on the eve of Eid Milad un Nabi. The remission will be applicable for male prisoners above 65 years of age and women inmates over 60 years, who have completed one-third of their imprisonment.

The persons under 18 years who have served their one-third sentence will also get the benefit of remission. President Alvi approved the remission for prisoners in accordance with Article 45 of the Constitution, the President's Office said. The reduction in sentence will not apply to the prisoners involved in murder, espionage, and anti-State activities.

The other categories without remission include convicts of adultery, theft, dacoity, kidnapping, and terrorism. Also, the remission will not be applicable on those involved in financial crimes and the ones who incurred losses to the national exchequer.

ECP issues list of new delimitations ahead of polls

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued preliminary list of new delimitations ahead of general polls. The chief election commissioner (CEC) and ECP members approved the preliminary list of new delimitations under the 2023 digital census data.

After CEC's approval, the commission issued the initial list of the delimitations on its website. Yesterday, the delimitation process of for the national and provincial assemblies entered its final phase and the ECP decided to approve initial delimitations. For the National Assembly (NA), the voter quota for Punjab province was fixed at 905,595, 913,000 for Sindh, 907,913 for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), 930,900 for Balochistan and 787,954 for Islamabad.

The voter quota for the Punjab Assembly will be 429,929, 428,431 for the Sindh Assembly, 355,270 for the KP Assembly and 292,047 for the Balochistan Assembly. The election commission will address the objections from

October 28 to November 26, whereas, the objections could be filed against the delimitations from September 27 to October 26.

The hearing on the pleas against the delimitations will be conducted till November 25. The ECP will unveil the final delimitations on November 30. After the publication of the final delimitations, a 54-day election schedule will be announced and general polls will be held in the first week of January 2024.

Based on the initial delimitation, the population distribution in the National Assembly constituencies is as follows: Balochistan has 930,900 voters, followed by 913,052 voters in Sindh, 907,913 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 905,595 in Punjab, and 787,954 in Islamabad.

The National Assembly consists of 266 general seats and 60 seats reserved for women. Ten seats have also been reserved for non-Muslims. Punjab holds the majority of 141 seats in NA, followed by Sindh with 61, KP with 45, Balochistan with 16, and Islamabad with 3.

In the provincial assem-

bly constituencies, the figures show Punjab leads with a total population of 429,929, followed by Sindh with 428,432, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 355,270, and Balochistan with 292,047. As per the delimitation report, a copy of which is available with Dawn.com, the share of seats in the national and provincial assemblies have been worked out on the basis of the final results of the 2023 census.

"The population of the province/area has been divided by the total number of general seats and the average population or quota per National Assembly seat was obtained. Similarly, the population of a province was divided by the total number of general seats allocated to the provincial assembly to obtain a quota per seat. "In calculating the total number of seats, a fraction of 0.5 and above was generally taken as one seat and a fraction below 0.5 was ignored. Due to the peculiar situation in Balochistan, more than one district has been clubbed. Similarly, few clubbings have also been made in other provinces where necessary," it said.

Pink eye infection: Schools closed in Punjab

F.P. Report

LAHORE: In response to a growing outbreak of conjunctivitis, caretaker Chief Minister of Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi on Wednesday announced that all schools in Punjab, including Lahore, will remain closed tomorrow (September 28).

This proactive measure is aimed at preventing the further spread of the highly contagious eye infection among students. In addition to the day off, students up to matriculation classes will undergo screening at school gates, starting Monday.

Those exhibiting signs of the infection will be advised to seek immediate medical attention and will not be allowed to enter the school premises until they are no longer contagious. Conjunctivitis, commonly known as pink eye, is an infectious eye condition that causes redness, itching, and discharge from the eyes.

It can easily spread through direct or indirect contact, making schools a high-risk environment for transmission. The school holiday will apply to all students up to matriculation classes. During this time, school premises will undergo deep cleaning and sanitization to minimize the risk of transmission.

Two arrested as health authorities widen Avastin injection scam probe: Punjab Health Minister Dr Javed Akram said on Wednesday two men had been arrested in connection with the Avastin injection scam. The minister said no leniency would

be shown to any suspect in the case.

A number of diabetic patients in Lahore, Kasur and Jhang districts were administered Avastin injections to address retinal damage, but the doses led to severe infections. The issue first surfaced when several cases of the drug's reaction were reported in Kasur district. Doctors said the patients developed a life-threatening disease, endophthalmitis, an inflammation of the inner coats of the eye, which led to loss of vision.

Officials say the purported contaminated drug severely affected the vision of 68 patients in the province since the scam surfaced. The Punjab government has banned the eye drug for an indefinite period across the province, besides launching a portal to collect data on the patients affected by the drug and provide them with treatment. A high-level inquiry is also under way to find out the prime factors leading to vision loss among patients administered the injection in Punjab, it is reported.

During a media talk on Wednesday, the provincial health minister told journalists that two suspects had been arrested in connection with the injection scam. He said the incident was being probed from all angles and resolved to bring all elements involved in the scam to justice. "The Punjab government is under no pressure in this investigation," Dr Akram clarified.

He said the surgeries of 15 patients out of the 68

cases had been conducted and the authorities were determined to bring back the vision of the patients. He said all points of sale of the adulterated eye drug had been sealed. A day earlier, the Board of Commissioners of the Punjab Healthcare Commission (PHC) directed the senior management to ensure special inspections of the hospitals where eye infection cases were reported due to the administration of Avastin injection to the patients.

The directions were issued at an emergent meeting of the PHC Board of Commissioners (BoC) headed by the chairperson, retired Justice Muhammad Bilal Khan. A representative of the PHC also attended the meeting. He briefed the officials on the proceedings of the meeting convened by both interim provincial health ministers - Prof Javed Akram and Dr Jamal Nasir.

Terror bid in Quetta foiled
F.P. Report
QUETTA: A terror bid was foiled in Quetta on Wednesday by the prompt action of law enforcement agencies. According to the caretaker home minister, explosive material weighing 35 kilogram was recovered from a parked vehicle near Quetta's circular road.

A team of Bomb Disposal Squad defused the explosives and saved the city from a massive destruction.

Arrest warrants for Swati issued

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Special Judge Central Islamabad on Wednesday issued permanent arrest warrants for PTI leader Azam Swati in controversial tweets case. The court said that despite the fact that the PTI leader had been declared a proclaimed offender, he had been skipping court appearances for a long time. Hitherto, the court had initiated proceedings to declare Swati a PO.

Judge Shah Rukh Arjumand, while issuing the warrants, ordered the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to arrest and produce the suspect whenever and wherever they found him. It was on May 30, 2023, that a special court in Islamabad had issued non-bailable arrest warrants for PTI leader Azam Swati at the request of the FIA.

The warrants were issued after Swati failed to appear before the court for indictment in a controversial tweets case. Swati's lawyer told the court that he was not in contact with his client, and opposed Special Prosecutor Rizwan Abbasi's request for the issuance of non-bailable arrest warrants for the PTI leader.

Sikh killing: India would look into any 'specific' info: Jaishankar

NEW YORK (Agencies): India's foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said on Tuesday that India has told Canada it was open to looking into any "specific" or "relevant" information it provides on the killing of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Asked about the allegations at a Council on Foreign Relations event in New York, Jaishankar detailed India's response in diplomatic engagements. "One, we told the Canadians that this is not the government of India's policy," he said. "Two, we told the Canadians saying that look, if you have something specific, if you have something relevant,

you know, let us know — we are open to looking at it."

India last week suspended new visas for Canadians and asked Ottawa to reduce its diplomatic presence in the country, citing what it called a deteriorating security environment. India had been "badgering the Canadians" about its claims that organised criminals are based there, a reference to separatists like Nijjar, he said, adding that India had made "a large number of extradition requests".

"The picture is not complete without the context," he added. "You also have to appreciate that in the last few years, Canada

actually has seen a lot of organised crime, you know, relating to, you know, the secessionist forces, organised crime, violence, extremism, they're all very, very deeply mixed up."

Allies of Canada, including the United States, have cautiously expressed concern over the claims and urged India to cooperate with Canada's investigation. The United States ambassador to Canada told Canadian television that some information on the case had been gathered by the Five Eyes intelligence alliance, which includes the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.

World Maritime Day: Nations urged to work together for sustainable maritime practices

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: World Maritime Day, a significant reminder of maritime safety, security and environmental conservation, is marked annually, urging nations to work together for sustainable maritime practices.

Under the aegis of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), this year holds special significance as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL).

Accordingly, this year's theme 'MARPOL at 50 - Our Commitment Goes On' is intended to pay tribute to our efforts under IMO's long history of protecting the environment from pollution through the impact of shipping via a robust regulatory framework and emphasis on its ongoing commitment to prevention of our oceans from pollution.

MARPOL's legacy stretches over five decades, symbolizing our collective efforts against marine pollu-



tion emphasizing the duty we all hold to protect the lifeblood of our planet. As we reflect on the journey, the statistics remain alarming; marine pollution's ripple effects on ecosystems, economies, and livelihoods of coastal communities urge us to take more concerted actions.

Pakistan Navy stands at the forefront to conserve the maritime environment. In alignment with MARPOL principles, we have instituted

measures to curtail emissions, enhance energy efficiency and, in earnest, implement pollution prevention strategies. Our ongoing efforts against marine pollution bear testimony to our unwavering commitment.

On this World Maritime Day, as we look back to our shared maritime heritage and achievements, let us also look ahead with determination, commitment, and resolve to align our national objectives with the ongoing global shift towards sustainable and green marine practices.

I urge all the stakeholders to embrace these evolving paradigms. Particularly, I reiterate Pakistan Navy's resolve to ensure maritime safety and uphold environmental mandates. In this stride, let us recommit to the principles of maritime safety and marine conservation and reaffirm our solemn pledge to the maritime world that 'our commitment goes on', both in spirit and in action. I look forward to a profound and cumulative response by all stakeholders.

CM reviews progress of flood rehabilitation projects

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (R) Maqbool Baqar while reviewing the progress of Sindh Flood Rehabilitation Projects has

directed the P&D dept to expedite the ongoing works so that not only the restoration of damaged infrastructure could be restored but it would generate economic activities at a local level.

The meeting was attended by Chairman P&D Shakeel Mangnejo, PSCM Hassan Naqvi, Secretary Finance Kazim Jatoti, and Secretary Planning Asghar Memon. Chairman P&D Shakil Mangnejo through a presentation told the CM

that the floods-2022 had submerged 70 percent of the province with water, therefore 24 districts out of 30 were declared calamity-hit areas.

The floods killed 1090, injured 8,422, washed away standing crops over 3,777,272 acres, displaced 12.36 million people, damaged 2.1 million houses, perished 436,435 live-stock, and damaged 8,463 km of roads. An amount of \$1.5 billion was required for the rehabilitation of affected people, crops, and infrastructure, for which \$773 million was arranged, including \$500 million from the World Bank, and the provincial government shared \$227

million.

The World Bank has been approached for \$2.5 million so that requirement could be met. At this, the CM directed the P&D department to prepare a comprehensive case of the flood-affected people and present it to the World Bank so that it could be approved at the earliest.

The CM was told that the progress of the projects launched for flood-affected people includes the launching of multi-hazard resilient housing structures, community engagement and empowerment, environment sustainability, and capacity building and knowledge transfer.

The projects also

include rehabilitating damaged irrigation infrastructure, rehabilitation of damaged roads and water supply infrastructure, livelihood restoration, and expansion of Rescue 1122 Service to the District level.

He directed the P&D dept to ensure quality work and keep their inspections through technical experts so that the funds utilized on the projects could be weather-resilient. The CM reviewed the progress of the rehabilitation of MC Bund, Danister Tail Regulator, Aral head Regulator, Regulator at 44th Mile Desert Canal, and others.

Significant police operation in Faqir Abad yields multiple held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a commendable display of law enforcement and crime crackdown, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Syed Talal Ahmed Shah has overseen a major operation resulting in the unmasking and apprehension of three dangerous gangs in the Faqir Abad area.

The operation, conducted under the vigilant supervision of ASP Syed Talal, along with SHO Faqir Abad Imtiaz Khan and SHO Paharipur Ali Adresh, targeted criminal networks involved in motor vehicle theft, motorcycle snatching, street crimes, and illicit activities across the region.

Eight individuals involved in these criminal activities were apprehended during the operation. These apprehensions revealed the involvement of these suspects in various crimes, including the theft of valu-



able mobile phones, hijacking five cars, snatching 13 motorcycles, and the possession of firearms.

What makes this operation even more remarkable is that the arrested gang members were found to operate not only in Peshawar but also in neighboring areas, indicating the wide reach of their criminal activities.

Further investigation into the arrested suspects unveiled their involvement in altering

received widespread praise from law enforcement officials and the community alike. His commitment to eradicating street crimes and criminal networks from the Faqir Abad division has been commendable.

Kashif Aftab Abbasi, the SSP Operations of Peshawar has directed special operations to combat street crimes and other criminal activities, making this a significant step in ensuring the safety and security of the area.

The arrested suspects are currently under investigation, and further significant revelations are anticipated during the ongoing inquiry.

ASP Syed Talal's dedication to maintaining law and order in Faqir Abad and surrounding areas has been instrumental in this successful operation, highlighting the tireless efforts of law enforcement in combatting crime and ensuring the safety of the public.

DG Rangers visits water board office

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Rangers Sindh Director General (DG) Major General Azhar Waqas on Wednesday visited the main office of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, on Wednesday.

The Managing Director (MD) of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board briefed the DG Rangers on the operations against illegal hydrants in the city, according to a news release issued here. Commissioner Saleem Rajput and other Deputy Commissioners (DCs) were also present in the meeting.

Managing Director (MD) of the Water and Sewerage Board Syed Salahuddin Ahmed informed the participants about the actions against illegal hydrants from June-September and said as a result of immediate action in District East, West, Central, Malir and Korangi, 15 mgd water was saved and six million gallons per day of water supply was restored.

The DG Rangers while hailing the performance of the Water Board emphasized identifying the root causes of water theft in the city and maintaining the benefits derived from it.

Later, the DG Rangers visited the Control Room of the Hydrant Management System of Karachi Water and Sewerage Board where all the participants were briefed about its latest service delivery and monitoring procedures. Major General Azhar Waqas on the occasion issued instructions to continue indiscriminate operations against water theft and illegal hydrants and to take legal action against those involved.

Strict action against street crime on cards

KARACHI (PPI): The Inspector General (IG) of Sindh Police strictly instructed the police officers to file the First Information Report (FIR) of the complainant promptly and take strict action against the criminals on Wednesday.

In order to curb the criminal activities in the province, IG Sindh - Dr. Riffat Mukhtar - presided over a high-level meeting, in which he instructed the officers to take strict measures to control crime in the province.

7-day polio campaign to begin from 2nd Oct



F.P. Report

KARACHI: A meeting of the Provincial Task Force on Polio Eradication chaired by Sindh Chief Secretary Dr Muhammad Fakhre Alam was informed that more than 80,000 polio workers in the 30 districts will be part of this vaccination drive.

The meeting was attended by Home Secretary Muhammad Iqbal Memon, Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Saleem Rajput, Additional IG Karachi Khadim Rind, Coordinator Emergency Operations Center Sindh Arshad Ali Sodhar, and other relevant officials. All district commissioners and deputy commissioners also participated in the meeting via video link.

The meeting reviewed the overall situation of the poliovirus and its containment efforts. Coordinator Emergency Operations Center Sindh, Arshad Ali

Sodhar, informed the meeting that no polio cases have been reported in Sindh for the past 3 years, which is a significant success, and maintaining this success is a significant challenge. He further mentioned that the training of workers for the polio campaign has been completed, and in addition to polio drops, children will also receive extra vitamin A supplementation during the campaign.

During the meeting, Chief Secretary Sindh, Dr. Muhammad Fakhre Alam, emphasized the need to launch the anti-polio campaign effectively in the current high-risk union councils to achieve desired results. He instructed all deputy commissioners to closely monitor the polio campaign and ensure that their respective officers submit daily reports.

Chief Secretary Sindh also directed the Health

Department to ensure that children are administered polio drops at all railway stations and bus terminals. He also instructed education department officials to ensure that polio drops are administered to children in both private and government schools during the campaign.

It's worth noting that in the upcoming polio campaign starting on October 2nd, more than 10 million children will be administered polio drops, with over 80,000 polio workers and supervisors participating.

During the meeting, Chief Secretary Sindh also announced government assistance for the injured polio worker, Huma Ashraf, who was injured in a train accident during duty. He stated that Huma Ashraf would receive one crore rupees from the Sindh government, and he has issued directives to the Health department in this regard.



INVITATION TO BID
REFERENCE N0MS/RPO/WHP/TEND-DIET 2022-23

1. WAPDA Hospital Peshawar invites sealed bids from the eligible bidders/ supplier/Contractor registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Department and who are on Active Taxpayers list of the Federal Board of Revenue to run the cafeteria of the Hospital and for supply of diet to its entitled patients admitted in department on daily basis.

2. Bidding documents containing detailed terms and conditions etc., are available with store keeper (DSO Office) WAPDA Hospital Peshawar and may be obtained during office hours upto 13.10.23 price of the bidding documents is Rs. 500 (Five Hundred only) (Non Refundable).

3. The Bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the bidding documents must reach at Medical Superintendent Office WAPDA Hospital Peshawar at 11:00 AM on 14.10.23 bids will be opened the same day at 11:30 AM.

4. The Bidding will be conducted through single stage two envelope bidding procedure as PPRA rule-2004 (amended) Bids security of Rs. 20,000/- (Twenty Thousand only) in the shape of Call deposit/demand Draft pay order/bank Guarantee, should be attached with Technical procedure.

This advertisement is also available on PPRA website at www.ppra.org.pk and WAPDA Website www.Wapda.gov.pk.

Dr. Shams-Ul- Akbar

Medical Superintendent

Wapda Hospital Peshawar, Phone No. 091-9212466

This notice is also available at PPRA Website: www.ppra.org.pk

PID(I)1051 Website: www.wapda.gov.pk PRD(L)WAPDA/079/2023-24

DONATE FOR DIAMER BASHA & MOHMAND DAMS



No.F.1-2(2)/2023-24/PARC Res. & Dev. Fund/NIGAB

National Agricultural Research Centre

Directorate of Procurement

TENDER NOTICE

National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC), Islamabad intends to purchase following consumable stores under PARC Research & Development Fund for NIGAB, NARC and on free delivery basis at Central Store, NARC, Islamabad as per detail given as under:-

Sr.	Description	Qty	Tender Cost	Remark (s)
1	D1000 Screen Tape for DNA Analysis, Cat No: 50675582, Agilent Technologies or Equivalent	10Samples	Pay Order, CDR or Bank Draft amounting to Rs.3000/- (Non-Refundable) drawn in the favor of "National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC), Islamabad"	Only sole agent, sole distributor, authorized dealer can participate for research consumable stores
2	DNA Screen Tape Analysis, Cat No: 50675583, Agilent Technologies or Equivalent	10Samples		
3	D1000, Cat No: 50675586, Agilent Technologies or Equivalent	10Samples		
4	Qubit ss DNA Assay Kit, Cat No: Q10212 Invitrogen/Thermo Fisher Scientific or Equivalent	4x100Assay		
5	Qubit ds DNA Assay Kit, Cat No: Q32850, Invitrogen/Thermo Fisher Scientific or Equivalent	3x100Assay		
6	Qubit 1xds DNA High Sensitivity & Broad Range Assay Kit Cat No: Q33230 Invitrogen/Thermo Fisher Scientific or Equivalent	3x100Assay		
7	Qubit RNA High Sensitivity, Broad Range & Extended Range Assay Kits Cat No: Q10210, Invitrogen/Thermo Fisher Scientific or Equivalent	3x100Assay		
8	Qubit RNA IQ Assay Kit, Cat No: Q33221 Invitrogen/Thermo Fisher Scientific or Equivalent	3x75Assay		
9	RNA Zape, Cat No: AM9780 Invitrogen/Thermo Fisher Scientific or Equivalent	2x250ml		
10	Ethanol 100% Invitrogen/Thermo Fisher Scientific or Equivalent	3Liters		
11	Qubit Assay Tubes Cat No: Q32856 Invitrogen/Thermo Fisher or Equivalent (500Tubes/Pack)	08		
12	10ul White Tips (1000Tips/Pack), Bio-Seen or Equivalent	05Packs		
13	200ul Yellow Tips (1000Tips/Pack), Bio-Seen or Equivalent	05Packs		
14	15ml Falcon Tubes, 50Pack, Bio-Seen or Equivalent	50		
15	50ml Falcon Tubes, 50Pack, Bio-Seen or Equivalent	50		
16	Lint Free Tissues, KIM Wipes or Equivalent (280/Pack Size)	25Pack		
17	Gloves Latex (Powder Free), NEST Biotechnology or Equivalent (Pack/100)	50Box		
18	200ul Wide Bore Tips, NEST Biotechnology/Bio-Seen or Equivalent (960Tips/Pack)	02Packs		
19	Cold Racks, Carl Roth or Equivalent	05		
20	Tween-20, Liter/Pack, Phytotech or Equivalent	01		
21	NaCl, Kg/Pack, Carl Roth or Equivalent	03		
22	NaOH, Kg/Pack, Unichem or Equivalent	03		
23	1ml Tips, 1000Tips/Pack, Bio-Seen or Equivalent	15		

The detailed specification of items along-with terms & conditions are mentioned in the tender document which can be purchased from the office of undersigned on any working day (Monday-Friday) during the office hours from **28-09-2023** by submitting a written request on the firm/company's letter pad.

The tender documents can be submitted with 4% of the bid value as earnest money including taxes in shape of pay order/demand draft in favor of NARC, Islamabad latest by 11:00am on **16-10-2023**. The tenders will be opened in the office of Directorate of Procurement, NARC at 11:30am on the same day in the presence of the bidders or their representatives. The firms should be registered with sales tax/income tax department. No tender document will be sold on **16-10-2023**.

NARC reserves the right to reject all or any bid in accordance with PPRA Rule No 33. This tender advertisement can also be browsed at PPRA/PARC websites i.e. www.ppra.org.pk & www.parc.gov.pk.

Director (Procurement) NARC

Phone No: 051-90733046-48

PID(I) 1983/23



University of Buner
Sowari, District-Buner,Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

SITUATIONS VACANT (Adv. No. UoB/ 10/2023)

Interested/eligible male/female candidates are invited for walk-in-interview for the following post as per given schedule.

S.No	Subject and No. of Post	Required Qualification	Date	Timing
1	Assistant Professor Urdu (One)	As per HEC Criteria	Wednesday, 4 th October 2023	10:00 AM
2	Lecturer Urdu (two)			10:30 AM
3	Lecturer Mathematics (one)			10:30 AM
4	Lecturer English (Four)			11:00 AM
5	Lecturer Psychology (two)			11:30 AM
6	Lecturer Sociology (one)			12:00 PM
7	Lecturer Pakistan Study (one)			12:30 PM

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- Application forms are available on the University Website:
- Application forms complete in all respect along with attested copies of relevant documents/experience certificates and three passport size color photographs shall be produced at the time of interview.
- Application processing fee of Rs.2000/-for Assistant Professor and Rs.1000/- for Lecturer to be deposited in A/C No. 009327901179701 Habib Bank Limited, Sowari branch, Buner, in favor of the University of Buner.
- Appointment shall be made on Fixed Pay Basis (Assistant Professor @ Rs.75000/-per month & Lecturer @ Rs.52500/-per month) for the ongoing session till the completion of the semester (Fall 2023) or till the arrival of permanent appointee/regular selectee.
- Original documents must be produced at the time of interview.
- No TA/DA shall be paid for interview.
- Any information required may be sought through Email: registrar@ubuner.edu.pk DR@ubuner.edu.pk

Registrar University of Buner

Phone: 0939-555013,211 Email: DR@ubuner.edu.pk, Website: www.ubuner.edu.pk



Road infrastructure development: Minister Communication stresses role of KPHA

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Communications and Works and Irrigation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engineer Ahmed Jan Khan on Wednesday applauded the pivotal role played by the KP Highway Authority (KPHA) in the construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of major highways in the province.

He underscored the authority's commitment to maintaining high construction standards in its projects and urged an increase in its productivity. The minister pledged efforts to bolster this vital institution and enhance its effectiveness.

These remarks were made during a meeting regarding the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Highway Authority held in the committee room of the Department of Communications and Works. The meeting was chaired by Engineer Ahmed Jan Khan and attended by Engineer Adnan Khan,

Project Director of Swat Expressway, Engineer Barkatullah, and other officials.

The caretaker minister received a comprehensive briefing on the ongoing highway construction projects carried out by KP HA in the province, including updates on the status of these projects.

During the meeting, it was explained to the caretaker minister that the government had established this institution to oversee the planning, design, construction, improvement, and maintenance of provincial highways. Currently, the authority has successfully constructed 53 highways across the province, and it has also completed 444 km of highways in the merged districts. Notably, KP HA has generated approximately Rs 218 million in revenue from various sources, including toll tax and other avenues, as of June 2023.

The authority manages

39 ongoing and 6 new projects under the Annual Development Program (ADP), as well as 8 ongoing projects under the Accelerated Implementation Program for the merged districts. Additionally, 2 ongoing projects are part of the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP).

The minister was further informed that KP HA has constructed around 80 bridges in the province, converted 309 kilometres of provincial highways into two-lane roads, and reconstructed 720 kilometres of existing highways.

Furthermore, the first phase of the Swat Motorway has been completed, and work has commenced on planning and designing the 80 km long Phase 2 of this highway under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement.

The authority has also successfully restored flood-affected roads.

In response to these updates, the caretaker min-

ister expressed his satisfaction with KP HA's performance, recognizing it as a crucial provincial institution responsible for the construction, repair, and maintenance of significant highways.

He urged the authority to take effective measures to boost its revenue and enhance its service delivery speed to capitalize on opportunities for long-term planning and development.

The caretaker minister also directed the authority to submit the required staff postings for further processing, acknowledging its vital role in the development sector.

PHC rejects appeal of convicted murderer Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah rejected the appeal of a convicted murderer for lifetime imprisonment, on Wednesday.

According to prosecution, Ganab Ali has killed Miraj Hussain in the premises of police station Orakzai while two persons were injured in the firing opened by another accused Zubair Ali.

The counsel for petitioner argued that allegations placed against Ganab Ali is baseless and added that shreds of evidence didn't support prosecution's claim.

The counsel for complainant Amin Khattak Lachi advocate argued that police had collected evidence from the crime spot while witnesses also nominated applicants directly and requested for rejection of the appeal.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah rejected Ganab Ali appeal while suspended conviction of Zubair Ali in the same case after conclusion of arguments.

Operations launched

PESHAWAR (APP): Capital Metropolitan's grand operation against encroachment, demolition of illegal constructions by instructing the traders to keep their shops within their limits and avoid trespassing.

According to detail, Capital Metropolitan Director West Zone Deputy Director Regulation Zil Hija Ilyas conducted a grand operation against encroachment in different areas of Peshawar including Saeedabad Dalazak Road and other areas.

She directed demolition staff to have a grand operation be conducted against encroachment and more than 30 illegal constructions were demolished, notices were also issued to many shopkeepers.



PESHAWAR: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir addressing women during an interactive session 'CPK Women Symposium – 2023'.

Writ petition file against issuance of tax notices

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A writ petition has been filed against the issuance of Sale Tax and Service Tax notices to only children park in the provincial metropolis named Chahcha Younas Family Park at Peshawar High Court (PHC) by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority.

The writ stated that KPRA has issued sale tax

and service tax notices to Chacha Younas Park which isn't fair because the facility serves marginalized communities and most of children visit for enjoyment.

Also, Chacha Younas Park is located in the densely populated area of Peshawar and there is no entertainment facility, so the facility can't be liable for sale and service taxes, the petition argued.

The writ filed by Ishaq

Ali Qazi Advocate on behalf of park's administration stated that the facility is equipped with entertainment tools for children. Such taxes like sales and services weren't received from Hayatabad with similar facilities.

The writ pleaded that neither in Punjab and Sindh provinces nor in foreign countries such taxes are received as directed Chacha Younas park for submission.

The petition added that taxes wouldn't be received from children-related facilities because minor goes for enjoyment and adults for entertainment under KPRA laws at entry 45.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Director General KPRA have been made respondents in the writ petition while requesting to declare the notices null and void.

Pak-Afghan Expo to open doors of economic uplift: UNHCR

PESHAWAR (APP): Head of Sub-Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Kofi Dwomo has said that Pak-Afghan Expo will certainly open the doors of economic development for both Afghans and Pakistanis.

He expressed these during a meeting, organized under the auspices of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) here on Wednesday. Besides, the Regional Coordinator FPCCI KP Region, Sartaj Ahmad Khan, the officials of UNHCR, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment & Trade (KP-BoIT) and Women

Chamber of Commerce & Industry (WCCI) Peshawar also attended the meeting.

The Head of UNHCR Sub-Office said that they believe in the restoration, strengthening and promotion of bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan. He said that finding an opportunity for joint work will be a matter of joy for them.

The UNHCR official said that the provision of strong support to Afghan refugees and people of Afghanistan is their mission. Such efforts could also open new avenues of economic development for Pakistan.

He appreciated the efforts of FPCCI and

assured extending full cooperation to it on his behalf and maintained that very soon a formal memorandum of understanding (MoU) will also be signed in this regard.

Speaking on the occasion, Regional Coordinator FPCCI, KP Region, Sartaj Ahmad Khan said that the business community of the province have always stood by the side of their Afghan brethren not only during natural disasters, rather have continued taking all possible steps and making efforts for increase in the volume of trade and further strengthening of bilateral trade between both countries.

Sartaj Ahmad Khan said

that the business communities of both countries are determined for holding the expo, saying it will usher in economic revolution and termed it essential for the promotion of the trade interests of both countries and UNHCR has to play a crucial role in this regard.

Election of new cabinet

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In Election of KP Law Colleges Association, Akhter Ali Khan is being elected as President and Irfan Ullah Shinwari as General Secretary. In this regard a meeting was held yesterday in local restaurant in which large number of members participated.

New cabinet was elected under the supervision of Inayat ur Rehman, the owner of Jinnah Law College in which the owner of Frontier Law College Akhter Ali Khan was elected as president and the owner of Islamia Law College Irfan Ullah Shinwari was elected as General Secretary.

Both the president and the General Secretary Aimed to make this association more strong and to improve the legal education and argued that they will solve the problems of Law Colleges with unity. Whereas they will provide quality legal education to bring better lawyers in the society.



PESHAWAR: Chief Traffic Officer Qamar Hayat Khan review traffic system at Khyber Road. — F.P. photo

KPCTA organizes walk to mark World Tourism Day

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) here Wednesday organized a walk and plantation drive to mark World Tourism Day and raise awareness about the importance of tourism.

The walk was attended by a large number of students, official including the Director General of KPCTA, Barkatullah Marwat, General Manager (GM) Investment, Omair Khattak, GM Planning, Hayat Ali Shah GM Culture, Sajjad Hameed and Manager Culture, Hamayoon Khan. The theme of the day was "Tourism and Green Investment."

While speaking to the media, DG KPCTA stated that the provincial government is tirelessly working to promote tourism and establish the province as a famous tourist hub. He said that the aim of World Tourism Day is to create awareness among the local and international community as well as youth about the importance of tourism and its social and economic impacts.

He added that World Tourism Day recognizes significance of tourists and the tourism industry across the globe.

He mentioned measures have been taken to provide adequate resources for strengthening the tourism department so that tourists visiting KP province could be provided with the best services and facilities.

Manager Culture, Hamayoon Khan highlighted that KP province has abundance of tourist places and culture that can be projected to promote a positive image of the province and create opportunities for locals.

Dangerous gang involved in streets crimes arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): Under the supervision of Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Faqirabad Syed Talal Ahmad Shah along with SHO Faqirabad Police Station Imtiaz Khan and SHO Police Station Pahari Pura Ali Idarsh succeeded in arresting three active and dangerous gangs here on Wednesday.

According to details, given by the City Police Control, 8 suspects of gangs involved in motor car, motorcycle snatching and street crimes were arrested. The arrested suspects are also involved in snatching valuable mobile phones from citizens at gunpoint.

The Police have recovered 5 stolen vehicles, 13 motorcycles, 48 valuable mobile phones and weapons from the possession of the arrested accused.

The alleged accused have been arrested from other areas besides Peshawar during various operations.

The arrested suspects of the gang used to tamper with stolen

vehicles and motorbikes by changing engine chassis numbers as well.

The accused are also involved in selling vehicles, motorcycles and mobile phones at exorbitant prices, the official of the Police said here.

Among the accused, there are also experts who restore and change IMEI of stolen mobiles.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Faqirabad Syed Talal Ahmad Shah said while talking to media men. Special operations are going on under the direction of SP Faqirabad Dr. Muhammad Umar to eradicate street crimes and other crimes in Faqirabad division, he informed.

The arrested alleged accused have confessed to several incidents during the initial investigation, he said. More important revelations are expected from the arrested accused during the investigation. Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Faqirabad Syed Talal Ahmad Shah said.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Local Government and Public Health Engineering Engr Amir Nadeem Durrani meeting with WSSP officials.

Caretaker LG Minister visits WSSP Head office

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Engineer Amir Nadeem Durrani, the Caretaker Minister for Local Government and Public Health Engineering, paid a visit to the Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) Head Office. Secretary Local Government, Muhammad Daud Khan, and other officials accompanied him.

During the visit, Dr. Hasan Nasir, CEO WSSP, provided a detailed briefing to the delegation on WSSP's operational, financial, and administrative matters, as

well as its achievements and current challenges. In attendance were GM Planning & HR Syed Zameer-ul-Hasan, Chief Financial Officer Hyder Ali, GM Operations Syed Tarab Shah, and GM Projects Dr. Mahboob Alam.

The Caretaker Minister was informed that technology has been harnessed to enhance the delivery of civic services and improve their quality. Multiple measures have been taken to reduce expenses, with approximately 50 tube wells being transferred to an automated system. Further plans are underway to install sys-

tems in more tube wells.

To address sanitation issues, a sanitary landfill cell has been constructed at the dumping site, which is based on scientific principles. A public awareness campaign is being conducted, and a community outreach wing have been established to foster relationships between traders, educators, students, elected representatives, and the community. In various areas, a house-to-house waste collection initiative has been launched. Efforts are being made to provide clean drinking water to consumers, control leakages, and improve billing processes.

To ensure employee attendance, a biometric system has been introduced, and cutting-edge technology is being used in all sectors. The SCADA system, changes in electricity meters, installation of tracking systems in vehicles, and other initiatives have resulted in significant reductions in administrative and operational costs. The caretaker minister and secretary LG commended WSSP's performance and asked for further recommendations for improvement.

They assured that all possible cooperation would be extended to WSSP to address issues and challenges effectively, with a commitment to providing quality services to the citizens.

Grand anti-encroachment operation in Saeed Abad

PESHAWAR (APP): The officials of the Capital Metropolitan Government under the headship of Deputy Director of Directorate of West Zone, Zilhajja Ilyas on Wednesday carried out a grand operation against encroachments in Saeed Abad and Dillazak Road and removed scored of encroached structures.

The metropolitan office said that during the operation, the BCA and demolishing staff demolished more than 30 illegally constructed shops and issued notices to various other shopkeepers. Scores of ramps and extended portions of the shops were also removed.

On the occasion Deputy Director, Zilhajja Ilyas said prior to the operation all the field work was completed by the staff and the shopkeepers were issued notices. He said the shopkeepers were directed to remove illegal extensions and their goods from the front of their shops.

He said the shopkeepers were also directed to keep the footpaths in front of their shops clear for the pedestrians however some of the shopkeepers failed to comply with the orders leading to an effective anti-encroachment operation in these areas.

Fifty women entrepreneurs from KP, NMDs empowered



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In an effort to uplift women-led businesses and start-ups in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and its Newly Merged Districts (NMDs), USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) organized a two-day training on Business Proposal Writing for women entrepreneurs and startups.

This initiative aims to address the increasing access to finance challenges and gender gaps

faced by women entrepreneurs in the region.

Women entrepreneurs have significant untapped potential in this region, but they face various challenges, including limited access to finance and inadequate business proposal writing skills.

The training empowers women-led enterprises to craft compelling business proposals, thereby enabling them to secure funding to accelerate and expand their ventures and make a significant impact in the private

sector. Vice president of Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries (WCCI), Anila Khalid said that women entrepreneurs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and NMDs have been facing challenges, including limited access to finance. USAID-ERDA's 'Business Proposal Writing' training is a significant step towards bridging this gap and empowering women to overcome obstacles in their entrepreneurial journey.

"Our goal is to enhance the technical knowledge and capacity of women entrepreneurs and startups in KP and NMDs, enabling them to write winning business proposals and secure financial resources. We believe that this training will contribute to economic growth by promoting women's participation in business," Chief of Party, USAID-ERDA, Shad Muhammad said.

The training covered essential aspects of business communication, business proposal writing, and fundraising. Sources of fundraising at national and international level were discussed. A few successful business proposals developed by women entrepreneurs who have received external financial support were also demonstrated.

The training has given us the tools and knowledge to articulate our business ideas effectively. I now feel more confident in approaching financial institutions for support to expand my business, trainee and owner of the Plastibility business Sakina Afridi, said.

Through the impartation of these indispensable skills, USAID-ERDA aspires to empower women entrepreneurs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and NMDs, unlocking their potential and propelling the economic development of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and NMDs.



In brief

Goods train derail in Attock

ATTOCK (INP): Three bogies of a goods train derailed near Fagirabad area of Attock on Wednesday suspending the railway traffic. According to railway administration, three bogies of goods train derailed on Rawalpindi-Peshawar track. The Quetta bound Jaffar Express coming from Peshawar was stopped on Attock railway station due to closure of track. Meanwhile, Rawalpindi-Multan Thal Express was stopped at Hassanabdal railway station. The railway traffic was later restored after clearance of the track.

Teenage girl killed

BAHAWALPUR (INP): A teenage girl was killed when three armed men stormed a house and opened fire in Sanowalan area of Bahawalpur late on Tuesday night, police said. According to details, Shahni Kanjo along with his two accomplices sprayed bullets at house of Rana Qasim with whom they were in an old enmity. As a result of firing, 11-year-old daughter of Rana Qasim identified as Mahnoor was killed and attackers fled the scene. Getting information of the incident, a team of police reached the scene and shifted the body to Bahawalpur Victoria Hospital for postmortem. The police also collected the evidences from crime scene and after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest the culprits.

Man killed, wife injured in firing

MANSEHRA (INP): A man was killed while his wife was injured in firing of steps sons at Pano Interchange of Mansehra on Wednesday, police said. According to details, the culprits opened indiscriminate fire at a couple hailing from Battagram and currently residing in Peshawar who had come to NADRA Mansehra for CNICs registration. As a result of firing, Doulat Khan was killed on the spot while his wife sustained bullet wounds. The attackers fled the scene of crime. The body and injured were shifted to King Abdullah Hospital.

NDMA hold training session

CHITRAL: National Disaster Management Authority NDMA organized a two-day training session in Upper Chitral in order to ensure timely and effective response and strategy during natural calamities in the region. The two-day training program titled "winter contingencies simulation exercise" was held in Bonny in order to disseminate information to minimize losses, in which people from different walks of life participated. In the training program, Manager Dr. Syeda Maria Zaidi, Assistant Manager Hamza Razaq and Assistant Manager Dr. Usman gave a detailed discussion about the principles and measures set by the organization. Proper preparation and promptness for effective management of natural disasters also came under discussion during the seminar. The roles and responsibilities of district, provincial and national level institutions were highlighted to take timely and effective action in time. The program aims to bring together all stakeholders under one roof to discuss the principles and procedures of dealing with disasters and emergencies. Through this program, collaboration, learning experience, exchange of ideas and research followed by conservation measures to reduce casualties during natural disasters and environment-friendly planning in the light of suggestions for post-disaster recovery.

Anti-Narcotics awareness seminar held in Dir Lower

F.P. Report

DIR LOWER: A day-long Anti-Narcotics awareness seminar with the collaboration of District Administration and Director Youth Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa held here at Khyber Medical College Campus Dir Lower with large number of people from different walks of life attended.

Assistant Commissioner and Additional Assistant Commissioner Samarbagh and other senior officers addressed the seminar. On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower Muhammad Fawad and Director Youth Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Arshad Qayyum Barki, a One-Day Anti-Drug and Narcotics against use of ice, heroin and other dangerous drugs was held.

Assistant Commissioner Samarbagh Muhammad Sohail, Additional Assistant Commissioner Nouman Parvez, SDPO Circle Jandul Bakht Jamal Khan, Surgeon Dr. Inamullah,

social personalities Maulana Imran, Akhtar Munir, Azharul Haque Durrani, Malik Hayat, Shah Zir Khan specially participated in the seminar. Lecturer Fazal Shan, Imad Khan and Najibullah took the session on the selected topic from the seminar.

In the awareness seminar, detailed sessions were held on the financial and life, physical, social and mental harms of hashish, ice, heroin, narcotic injection and other addictive substances.

Assistant Commissioner Samarbagh Muhammad Sohail said that the struggle against hashish, heroin and other dangerous drugs is our national, moral and religious duty and in this regard, this type of seminar, awareness sessions, and awareness walk is very important.

Speaking at the seminar, social personalities Maulana Imran, Malik Hayat and Shah Zir Khan said that drug addiction is a scourge and the role of youth and students must be

played to prevent it. He demanded action against those involved in the scourge of addiction. At the end of the awareness seminar, District Youth Officer Malik Shehzad Tariq distributed honorary shields to the students and other participants.

AC Timergara visits DHQ, checks cleanliness: Assistant Commissioner Timergara Dr. Nida Iqbal Wednesday paid a surprise visit to District Headquarter Hospital (DHQ) to check staff attendance, emergency, X-ray room and OPD.

Assistant Commissioner Timurgarh Dr. Nida Iqbal said that the Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower received a public complaint on which she paid a surprise visit to check the overall affairs of the DHQ. She also visited various sections of the hospital like the emergency room, X-ray, OPD, laboratory besides inspecting the canteen of the hospital, checking food, cleanliness, etc.

Upcoming polio campaign preparation meeting held

F.P. Report

MARDAN: In preparation for an upcoming anti-polio campaign set to commence on September 29th, a crucial meeting convened at the Mardan Deputy Commissioner's office, on Wednesday.

Present at the meeting were key figures, including Additional Deputy Commissioner Engineer Syed Shahzeb, Assistant Commissioner Mardan Ayesha Tahir, Takht Bhai's Maheen Hassan, SP Security Fayaz Khan, DHO Dr. Javed Iqbal, along with several other health officials and representatives.

N-Stop Officer Dr. Umar provided a comprehensive overview of the campaign preparations, highlighting that it would kick off on September 29th in Tehsil Katling, Garhi Kapura, and Rustam. Starting from October 2nd, the campaign would extend to Tehsil Mardan and Takhtbhai, running until October 6th. During this period, approximately 466,578 children aged 5 or younger would receive polio drops. To ensure their safety, a con-

siderable workforce of 1872 mobile teams, 95 fixed teams, 93 U CMOs, and 486 supervisory teams would be deployed, supported by local law enforcement.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the importance of this effort in eradicating the contagious disease of polio. He called upon scholars, media representatives, teachers, local body officials, and community leaders to join hands in ensuring no child is missed during this campaign. The Deputy Commissioner also warned against any hindrances and pledged strict legal action against those who disrupt the campaign.

Security measures would be in place, including a ban on double riding, tinted windows, and the display of weapons during the campaign to ensure a safe environment.

To kickstart the campaign, the Deputy Commissioner administered polio drops to children and urged parents to participate actively, emphasizing the safety and impor-

tance of these vaccinations in securing a healthy, polio-free future for the country. Parents were encouraged to cooperate with the district administration and polio teams and ensure their children receive the two drops of the polio vaccine.

Drug-addiction reached to alarming point

F.P. Report

BANNU: Doctor Farid Ullah Shah said that the use of drugs especially Ice-drug in the youth of the society is alarming. Its number is increasing day by day, sucking society like a parasite.

This he said while addressing Drug Detoxification Conference held in Bannu Health Complex.

Doctor Faridullah and Ward In-charge Nouman Khan appealed from the society especially administration to take serious notice of the issue and take strict action in eliminating the ice-drug.



HYDERABAD: Leader of Pakistan Sunni Tehreek Khalid Qadri addressing a press conference.

Syed Asif Salahuddin

THE power sector's circular debt has accumulated to approximately US\$8.3 billion due to inefficiencies and inability to recover the costs incurred on power generation. In Pakistan's ongoing battle to stabilize the energy sector, the government has taken a significant step by allocating Rs450 billion for power sector subsidies in FY2023-24, up from Rs350 billion in the previous year.

Notably, this includes a substantial increase in the subsidy for K-Electric (K-E), the power utility serving Karachi, from Rs80 billion to a staggering Rs315 billion. Additionally, during the current fiscal year, the government disbursed Rs180 billion in subsidies for the independent power plants (IPPs), and an extra Rs48 billion for the Kisan Package, which was not originally included in the budget estimates.

The rationale behind this

surge in the power sector subsidies is multifaceted. It stems from the rising cost of fuel imperative to support the power sector during the economic recovery, relentless circular debt crisis, and the government's commitment to providing affordable electricity to its citizens. A critical issue at the heart of Pakistan's energy woes is the circular debt, which is essentially a vicious cycle of unpaid bills and increasing liabilities.

The Central Power Purchasing Agency of Pakistan has revealed that the growing circular debt is the primary driver behind the rising power sector subsidies. The accumulated payables from July to April in FY2023 reached an alarming Rs2,631 billion, marking a 7.38% increase compared to the previous year.

Moreover, the average monthly increase in circular debt during July-February period of FY2022-23 was a staggering Rs52.4 billion. A significant contributor to this mounting debt

is the payment of trillions of rupees towards Tariff Differential Subsidy (TDS), which predominantly benefits the urban affluent section of the society constituting over 90% of the total subsidies. It is evident that eliminating the TDS subsidy not only reduces the fiscal deficit but also alleviates the financial difficulties faced by the government.

Reducing the TDS could have a substantial impact on reducing the fiscal deficit and relieving financial burdens. Despite substantial price hikes and additional subsidies, the circular debt continues to soar, raising serious concerns for the nation's power sector and, by extension, its overall economy. The circular debt surged to Rs2.31 trillion by the end of FY2023, and it continues to rise in the Fiscal Year 2024. Revenue gains from increased electricity prices were lost to inefficiencies, theft, and losses faced by the power distribution companies.

One of the primary challenges



ABBOTTABAD: SSP Traffic Arif Javed giving away prize to a position holder of HSSC examination during a ceremony.

Naat Khwani competition arranged

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: On the special direction of the Provincial Minister for Information and Public Relations Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel and Director General Information Muhammad Imran, Pakhtunkhwa Radio Kohat FM 92.4 organized a Naat Khwani Competition on Tuesday in connection with the Eid Milad-ul-Nabi (SAW), on Wednesday.

In the competition Naat Khwans from different SCHOOLS Madrasahs of Kohat and Peshawar participated. According to the results, Abdul Matin Shah of Jamiat Al-Madinah Abdullah bin Masood, Hazrat Umar of Government High School No. 3 Kohat and Misbahullah of Al Noor Iqra Education System Peshawar won the first, second and third position respectively in the Naat Khawani boys, while among female Naat Khawans.

Asia of Sina Education System Kohat, Asma of Alnoor Iqra Education System Peshawar and Arisha Jahan of Sina Education System Kohat won the first, second and third positions respectively. In competition 28 Naat Khawans from 14 schools of District Kohat and Peshawar participated. The competition was held in 2 categories. In the first category, there was a competition among Naat Khwan boys from Class V to X, while in the second category, there was a competition between Naat Khwan girls from Class V to X.

District Khatib Kohat Mufti Shafiullah was the special guest of Naat Khawani competition. Broadcaster Anwar Orkzai was the host of the event while the panel of judges included well-known Naat Khawans Asif Tarabi, Hafiz Asif Anwar and Zameer Ahmed. At the end, awards, certificates and cash prizes were distributed among the position holders in both categories. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Guest District Khatib Kohat Mufti Shafiullah while congratulating Pakhtunkhwa Radio Kohat Station Manager Irshad Muhammad Afridi and his other staff for organizing Naat Khwani, said, no doubt, the holding of such gatherings was encouraging and would have positive impacts on the society.

Meanwhile, district administration is taking a firm stance to protect the rights of children deprived of education and eradicate social evils like child labour and especially child begging. Additional Deputy Commissioner, Samiur Rahman, emphasized this commitment during a meeting of the District Vigilance Committee.

The meeting, chaired by Samiur Rahman, brought together various officials, including District Planning Officer Alamgir Khan, District Social Welfare Officer Jamal Shah, Child Protection Officer Umeir Khan, and others, along with representatives from the police and other departments. The primary focus of the discussion was on child labor and children who are not receiving an education.

Samiur Rahman stressed the importance of joint efforts between the administration, the public, and social organizations to tackle these issues. He mentioned that the administration is prepared to take all necessary measures for the rehabilitation of such children.

Rahman announced that a crack-down would be initiated against professional donkey dealers operating in the city's intersections and other locations.

This move aims to clean the city of this practice, which often exploits children and poses a risk to their safety. He underscored the shared responsibility to promote education and urged everyone to work towards ensuring that no child remains out of school. Rahman encouraged the community to use various platforms to address social problems and advocate for the rights of children.

The District Administration's proactive stance signifies a commitment to protect the vulnerable, promote education, and eliminate harmful practices, such as child labor and the exploitation of children in professional donkey dealing.

Moreover, in a concerted effort to address irregularities, district administration, in collaboration with the labor and petroleum department, has taken decisive action by confiscating ten petrol dispenser units and sealing four unauthorized filling stations.

Under the directives of Deputy Commissioner Mardan, Captain Retired Abdul Rehman, Additional Assistant Commissioner Headquarters, Junaid Khalid, partnered with

5000 liters counterfeited drinks disposed off

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety & Halal Food Authority (FS & HFA) on Wednesday disposed-of over 50,000 liters of counterfeited and substandard cold drinks, nearly 4,000 kilogram of China salt, over 6000 packs of low quality pops along with 1200 kg of mislabeled reels seized in operations during the last three months.

The Deputy Director FS & HFA Mardan Division, Kamran Khan told journalists that over 50,000 liters of counterfeited cold drinks of multinational brands along with substandard beverages were seized in 13 raids across the Mardan district. He said 172 sacks of China salt weighing nearly 4000 kg were recovered from several warehouses in eight different operations adding that mislabeled reels amounting to 1200 kg were seized from 21 ice-cream and pops industries.

DD said the low-quality pops were seized from dozens of shops and pops industries located across Mardan. The official said the disposing-off took place at a designated spot. He said the FS & HFA field teams were committed in provision of safe and hygienic food to the general public and the quality of food was being monitored regularly by daily inspections.

President All Sweets and Bakers Association Mardan Division, Ghulam Habib Salazarai and President Khawaja Gunj Baazar, Jehanzeb Khan along with other traders and officials of FS&HFA were present on the occasion to witness the disposing-off activity.

The traders highly appreciated the struggle of FS&HFA in ensuring the provision of quality food. They also vowed to support the Authority against any culprits operating in the guise of traders and playing with the health of the masses for meagre profit.

Meanwhile, district administration is taking a firm stance to protect the rights of children deprived of education and eradicate social evils like child labour and especially child begging. Additional Deputy Commissioner, Samiur

Rahman, emphasized this commitment during a meeting of the District Vigilance Committee.

The meeting, chaired by Samiur Rahman, brought together various officials, including District Planning Officer Alamgir Khan, District Social Welfare Officer Jamal Shah, Child Protection Officer Umeir Khan, and others, along with representatives from the police and other departments. The primary focus of the discussion was on child labor and children who are not receiving an education.

Samiur Rahman stressed the importance of joint efforts between the administration, the public, and social organizations to tackle these issues. He mentioned that the administration is prepared to take all necessary measures for the rehabilitation of such children.

Rahman announced that a crack-down would be initiated against professional donkey dealers operating in the city's intersections and other locations.

This move aims to clean the city of this practice, which often exploits children and poses a risk to their safety. He underscored the shared responsibility to promote education and urged everyone to work towards ensuring that no child remains out of school. Rahman encouraged the community to use various platforms to address social problems and advocate for the rights of children.

The District Administration's proactive stance signifies a commitment to protect the vulnerable, promote education, and eliminate harmful practices, such as child labor and the exploitation of children in professional donkey dealing.

Moreover, in a concerted effort to address irregularities, district administration, in collaboration with the labor and petroleum department, has taken decisive action by confiscating ten petrol dispenser units and sealing four unauthorized filling stations.

Under the directives of Deputy Commissioner Mardan, Captain Retired Abdul Rehman, Additional Assistant Commissioner Headquarters, Junaid Khalid, partnered with

Petroleum, Wahab Khan, to conduct a comprehensive inspection of various filling stations in the Hota, Par Hota, and Sheikh Multoon areas.

During the inspection, it came to light that certain stations were involved in the sale of Iranian petrol and diesel without the necessary legal documentation. Consequently, Additional Assistant Commissioner Headquarters took custody of ten dispensers and ordered the sealing of four stations.

The confiscated stations were found to be in possession of approximately 20,000 liters of Iranian petrol and 8,000 liters of diesel, lacking the required documentation. Legal actions will be taken against those individuals involved in these irregular activities, as affirmed by the Additional Assistant Commissioner Headquarters.

Walk on World Tourism Day

F.P. Report

MINGORA: On the eve of World Tourism Day, Frontier Corps North joined hands with the District Administration to host a remarkable event at the picturesque Ski resort of Malam Jabba. The event brought together students from various schools, tourists and nature enthusiasts in an effort to promote tourism, engage in healthy activities and nurture a greener environment.

The day's activities included an exciting array of events, offering something for everyone. Students had the opportunity to experience the thrill of the chair lift, bounce on trampolines, contribute to the environment through tree plantation, explore the scenic beauty of Malam Jabba through hiking, and join in a peaceful walk. The event drew a large number of tourists, who were captivated by the natural beauty of Malam Jabba and the warmth of the local community.

The primary objective of this celebration was to encourage tourism in the area while fostering a sense of responsibility towards the environment.

Circular debt trap

Syed Asif Salahuddin

THE power sector's circular debt has accumulated to approximately US\$8.3 billion due to inefficiencies and inability to recover the costs incurred on power generation. In Pakistan's ongoing battle to stabilize the energy sector, the government has taken a significant step by allocating Rs450 billion for power sector subsidies in FY2023-24, up from Rs350 billion in the previous year.

Notably, this includes a substantial increase in the subsidy for K-Electric (K-E), the power utility serving Karachi, from Rs80 billion to a staggering Rs315 billion. Additionally, during the current fiscal year, the government disbursed Rs180 billion in subsidies for the independent power plants (IPPs), and an extra Rs48 billion for the Kisan Package, which was not originally included in the budget estimates.

The rationale behind this

surge in the power sector subsidies is multifaceted. It stems from the rising cost of fuel imperative to support the power sector during the economic recovery, relentless circular debt crisis, and the government's commitment to providing affordable electricity to its citizens. A critical issue at the heart of Pakistan's energy woes is the circular debt, which is essentially a vicious cycle of unpaid bills and increasing liabilities.

The Central Power Purchasing Agency of Pakistan has revealed that the growing circular debt is the primary driver behind the rising power sector subsidies. The accumulated payables from July to April in FY2023 reached an alarming Rs2,631 billion, marking a 7.38% increase compared to the previous year.

Moreover, the average monthly increase in circular debt during July-February period of FY2022-23 was a staggering Rs52.4 billion. A significant contributor to this mounting debt

is the payment of trillions of rupees towards Tariff Differential Subsidy (TDS), which predominantly benefits the urban affluent section of the society constituting over 90% of the total subsidies. It is evident that eliminating the TDS subsidy not only reduces the fiscal deficit but also alleviates the financial difficulties faced by the government.

Reducing the TDS could have a substantial impact on reducing the fiscal deficit and relieving financial burdens. Despite substantial price hikes and additional subsidies, the circular debt continues to soar, raising serious concerns for the nation's power sector and, by extension, its overall economy. The circular debt surged to Rs2.31 trillion by the end of FY2023, and it continues to rise in the Fiscal Year 2024. Revenue gains from increased electricity prices were lost to inefficiencies, theft, and losses faced by the power distribution companies.

One of the primary challenges

faced by the power sector is rampant electricity theft and non-payment of bills, which results in annual losses of approximately Rs589 billion. These losses are exacerbated by regional disparities in electricity recovery and losses among the various distribution companies. The situation worsened during the last fiscal year, with an average monthly rise of nearly Rs66 billion in the circular debt. Despite imposing debt servicing surcharges and increasing electricity prices twice within a year, the government struggled to address the root causes of the circular debt crisis.

While the government has allocated substantial funds for power subsidies, these subsidies are unsustainable in the long run and exacerbate the budget deficit. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank have urged Pakistan to implement reforms in the energy sector to address these deep-seated issues. However, there is hope on the horizon in

the form of renewable energy, particularly solar power. Pakistan boasts significant solar potential, with regions like southern Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan receiving abundant sunlight throughout the year.

Currently, solar energy constitutes only 1% of Pakistan's energy mix, lagging behind countries like Germany and China. Pakistan currently has 43GWs of installed electricity generation capacity, of which 40.5GW is considered dependable. However, the National Transmission and Dispatch Company system can only handle a peak of 28GWs, while the peak summer demand is over 30GW. This means Pakistan is at risk of blackouts during the high demand periods.

The World Bank report found that Pakistan could meet its current total electricity demand by using just 0.071% of its available land for solar photovoltaics. Pakistan also has significant wind resources, especially in Balochistan and Sindh. The gov-

ernment has set a target of generating 60% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. This would require 13.6GWs of additional solar and wind capacity. However, work on these new renewable energy projects has yet to begin.

In conclusion, Pakistan's energy sector is at a critical juncture, trapped in a circular debt that threatens its economic stability. To break free from this cycle, the government must implement targeted policies to reduce subsidies and tackle electricity theft. Simultaneously, harnessing the nation's abundant solar energy potential can provide a sustainable solution, creating economic opportunities and reducing the burden on the budget. It is time for Pakistan to embrace renewable energy and lead the way toward a cleaner and more prosperous future.

The writer is President of Independent Policy and Research Centre, an Islamabad-based think tank.



US Senate announces stopgap step to avert impending govt shutdown

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Leaders in the United States Senate have agreed to a stopgap measure designed to prevent an imminent government shutdown over budget legislation. The deal, hashed out between Republicans and Democrats, would keep the government open for six additional weeks. It would also earmark approximately \$6bn in short-term funding for Ukraine as it fends off a Russian invasion.

But should the deal pass the full Senate, it will likely face significant hurdles in the House of Representatives, where far-right Republicans have promised to shoot it down if it reaches the floor. Seeming to anticipate criticism from the headline flank of his party, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell defended the short-term solution in a speech.

"Delaying action on short-term government funding doesn't advance the ball on any policy priorities," the Republican senator said. "Shutting the government down over a domestic government dispute doesn't strengthen anyone's political position. It just puts important progress on ice, and it leaves millions of Americans on edge." The US government is less than five days away from its deadline to pass budget legislation at midnight on September 30. Should it fail to do so, much of the government will stop all non-essential functions, leaving federal services in limbo and millions of employees without their paycheques.

That prospect could also further dent the US's credit rating, thereby forcing the government to pay higher interest rates. Already, in August, one of the major credit ratings agencies, Fitch Ratings, downgraded the US's score from AAA - the highest - to AA+, citing a "steady deterioration in standards of governance". Analysts with another credit agency, Moody's, issued a warning that it could follow suit if the budget standoff is not resolved. But Republicans, particularly on the far-right, have balked at current levels of government spending, calling for stiff cuts to expenditures like aid for Ukraine. "This will certainly lead to a government shutdown," Republican Senator JD Vance of Ohio said in response to the \$6bn for Ukraine in the stopgap proposal.

If the stopgap measure passes the full Senate in the coming days, as is expected, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy - the top Republican in the lower chamber - can choose to bring the legislation to the floor. But he faces a split party, with some in the far-right threatening to remove him from his leadership position if he partners

with Democrats to pass budget legislation. When asked by reporters whether he felt his speakership was on the line, McCarthy issued a punchy response. "Oh man, that should make me worried, huh?" McCarthy said theatrically. "It's the same thing you asked me before I got elected speaker. I'm not worried about whether there's a speakership place or not. The only thing I care about is fighting for the American people." In January, it took McCarthy five days and a historic 15 rounds of voting to gain the speakership, amid staunch opposition from the far-right.

But in his remarks, McCarthy embraced some of the priorities espoused by far-right members of his party. He told reporters he felt aid to Ukraine and the stopgap funding for the government should be "two separate things". The Republican speaker also called on Democrats to instead invest in more security along the US's southern border. "I don't think Ukraine aid should be taken up in the supplemental," McCarthy said. "I don't quite understand, when you have all these people across the country talking about the challenges happening in America today, that people would go and say, 'Oh we need to do Ukraine and ignore what's happening along our border.' I think that would be the wrong approach."

Republicans hold a very narrow 221-member majority in the House, out of 435 seats. That means McCarthy would either need to pass bipartisan legislation to avert a government shutdown - or rally nearly every member of his party. In a video statement, Democratic President Joe Biden, a frequent target of conservative complaints over budgeting, accused "a small group of extreme House Republicans" of attempting to shut down the government to further their priorities. "I'm prepared to do my part but Republicans in the House of Representatives refuse," he said. "They refuse to stand up to the extremists in their party. So now, everyone in America could be forced to pay the price."

The Senate recessed after a procedural vote to advance the stopgap deal concluded with overwhelming support: There were 77 votes in favour of starting work on the bill, and only 19 against. "The only solution for avoiding a harmful government shutdown is bipartisanship," Senate Majority leader Chuck Schumer, a Democrat, said, counting the dwindling number of days until the potential shutdown. "We are now right at the precipice."

'Drills to combat arrogance of separatists'

BEIJING (Agencies): China has said its recent military activity around the self-ruled island of Taiwan was intended to "combat the arrogance" of alleged separatists. Beijing claims the democratic island, which lies about 160 kilometres (100 miles) from China's eastern coast, as its own and has not ruled out the use of force to achieve its goals.

It claims President Tsai Ing-wen and her Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) are "separatists" and has sought to isolate the island internationally since she was first elected in 2016, mounting large-scale drills after her meetings with prominent United States politicians Nancy Pelosi and Kevin McCarthy. In recent weeks, Taiwan has detected almost daily activity by China's military, including fighter jets, drones, warships and the aircraft carrier Shandong. There have also been land exercises on the closest part of China's eastern coast to the island, according to Taipei.

Asked at a regular news

briefing in Beijing about the country's Taiwan Affairs Office spokeswoman Zhu Fenglian said China's People's Liberation Army had carried out a "series" of drills. "The purpose is to resolutely combat the arrogance of Taiwan independence separatist forces and their actions to seek independence," Zhu said. "The provocation of Taiwan independence continues all day long and the actions of the People's Liberation Army to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity are always ongoing," she added.

China's army has not explicitly mentioned or commented on the drills. Taiwan's government says only the island's people can decide their future and has repeatedly offered talks with China, which Beijing has rejected. On Wednesday, Taiwan's defence ministry reported more Chinese military activity, saying that in the previous 24 hours, it had detected and responded to 16 Chinese aircraft enter-

ing the island's air defence identification zone. Of those, 12 crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait, which had served as an unofficial barrier between the two sides until China began regularly crossing it in August last year. On Thursday, Taiwan is due to launch the first of eight domestically-made submarines as part of its plans to bolster defences against China.

Asked about the submarines, Zhu claimed efforts by the DPP to "seek independence with force" would only exacerbate tensions and "push the Taiwanese people into a dangerous situation". Taiwan has said it needs to modernise its military to better defend itself from an attack by Beijing. The new submarines will rejuvenate a fleet that currently consists of two World War II-era vessels and two Dutch-made submarines built in the 1980s. Taiwan's defence ministry last week took the unusual step of announcing it was monitoring Chinese drills in Fujian province, opposite Taiwan.

Hillary taunts Putin on NATO growth

WASHINGTON (AFP): Former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton taunted her old nemesis, Russian President Vladimir Putin, over the expansion of NATO since his invasion of Ukraine. "Too bad, Vladimir. You brought it on yourself," Clinton said in an aside as she returned to the State Department for the unveiling of her official portrait.

"It was such a point of contention. And we always said, people are not forced to join NATO, people choose and want to join NATO," she said. Finland and Sweden sought to join NATO after Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which had unsuccessfully sought to join the Western alliance whose members pledge to defend one another if attacked. Putin has cited Ukraine's flirtation with NATO as a reason for the invasion, which has been met with strong Western support for Kyiv including billions of dollars in weapons.

Clinton took office in 2009 as the top diplomat in Barack Obama's administration and quickly sought to "reset" relations with Russia, which had been damaged by Moscow's attack the previous year of another former Soviet republic, Georgia. But relations sharply deteriorated by the end of her tenure as an increasingly authoritarian Putin in 2012 accused her personally of fomenting protests by opposition leaders who rejected the results of parliamentary elections in which his party cruised to victory. Clinton was the Democratic presidential nominee who lost to Donald Trump in 2016. A US Senate panel concluded afterwards that Moscow sought to interfere in the election to help Trump win.

Navalny loses appeal against 19-year jail term

MOSCOW (Agencies): Russia's most prominent opposition leader has lost his appeal against a 19-year prison term that was added to his existing sentence last month, a Moscow court judge said. The court ruled "to uphold the decision" by Moscow City Court against Alexey Navalny after a hearing.

The proceedings were closed to the media apart from the reading of the verdict, despite protests from his lawyers. The defendant took part by video link wearing a black prison uniform. Navalny, 47, is by far the best-known figure in Russia's splintered opposition, with supporters casting him as a Nelson Mandela-style figure who will one day be freed from jail to lead the country.

His political movement has been outlawed and its key figures have been jailed or fled abroad as part of a Kremlin crackdown on dissent that has intensified since Putin sent his troops into Ukraine last year. The latest sentence was imposed on August 4 after Navalny was convicted on six charges related to alleged "extremist activity", all of which he denied. The latest sentence was on top of 11 and a half years he was already serving at the IK-6 penal colony at Melekhovo, about 235km (146 miles) east of Moscow, on fraud and other charges, which he also rejected as politically motivated and designed to silence his criticism of President Vladimir Putin.

Daniel Kholodny, a TV technician who worked for Navalny, was sentenced to eight years in jail in August as part of the same trial. His appeal was also rejected. "Alexey, see you!" Kholodny shouted before the video feed ended. Navalny waved his hand in response. The Kremlin has sought to portray Navalny as politically irrelevant, and Putin makes a point of never speaking his name. Russian officials portray him as an extremist and, without providing evidence, as a puppet of the United States' Central Intelligence Agency.

Navalny earned admiration around the world for voluntarily returning to Russia in 2021 from Germany, where he underwent treatment for what Western laboratory tests showed was an attempt to poison him with a nerve agent in Siberia.

Asteroid 'dust, debris' likely found as returned NASA space capsule opened

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Scientists at the United States space agency NASA found "black dust and debris" when they opened the space capsule that recently returned to Earth with the largest asteroid sample ever brought back from space. NASA said that researchers discovered "dust and debris on the avionics deck of the Osiris-Rex science canister when the initial lid was removed today".

The space agency did not specify whether the materials discovered on opening the lid of the probe definitely belonged to the asteroid, though NASA said on social media that "scientists gasped as the lid was lifted from the [Osiris-Rex] asteroid sample return canister". "A scientific treasure box," NASA Astromaterials said in a social media post. "Dark powder and sand-sized particles" were found on "the inside of the lid and base", NASA said.

The residue on the avionics deck found was likely a result of issues during the collection phase of the space mission, which NASA said were eventually solved, allowing for the secure transfer of the sample from the asteroid to the probe's storage canister. The probe's lid was opened in an airtight chamber at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. "The aluminium lid was removed inside a glovebox designed to enable working with the large piece of hardware," NASA said in a statement, accompanied by images shared on social media showing scientists in full protective wear working with the probe sitting inside a reinforced glass and steel box. NASA scientists are



now waiting eagerly to begin analysing the bulk of the sample scooped from the asteroid, which will require "intricate disassembly" of the probe, the space agency said.

A news conference is scheduled for October 11 during which information about the bulk of the sample will be revealed to the public. The robotic spacecraft OSIRIS-REx was launched in 2016 and collected its specimen three years ago from Benu, a small, carbon-rich asteroid discovered in 1999, which is classified as a "near-Earth object" because it passes relatively close to our planet every six years. The retrieval marked only the third asteroid sample, and by far the biggest, ever returned to Earth for analysis, following two similar missions by Japan's space agency ending in 2010 and 2020. Landing on the asteroid, Osiris-Rex collected roughly 250 grams (9 ounces) of dust

from its rocky surface. Analysis of the material taken from the asteroid, scientists believe, will help researchers better understand the formation of the solar system and how Earth became habitable. NASA said the sample will also "help us better understand the types of asteroids that could threaten Earth".

Though the odds of Benu hitting the Earth are considered remote, such a possibility has not been ruled out. Roughly one-quarter of the Benu sample will be immediately used in experiments and a small amount will be sent to mission partners in Japan and Canada, while the remainder will be conserved for study by future generations. The space probe ended its 6.21-billion-kilometre journey (3.86-billion-mile) after parachuting down in the desert in the western state of Utah, following a fiery descent through Earth's atmosphere.

Biden sues Trump ally Giuliani over data breach allegations

WASHINGTON (Agencies): United States President Joe Biden's son Hunter has sued Rudy Giuliani and another attorney, saying the pair wrongly accessed and shared his personal data after obtaining it from the owner of a computer repair shop in the US state of Delaware.

The lawsuit is the latest in a new strategy by Hunter to strike back against Republican allies of former President Donald Trump, who have traded and passed around his private data - including purported emails and embarrassing images - in their effort to discredit his father.

The lawsuit accuses Giuliani and attorney Robert Costello of spending years "hacking into, tampering with, manipulating, copying, disseminating, and generally obsessing over" the data that was "taken or stolen" from Hunter's devices or storage. The campaign has led to the "total annihilation" of his digital privacy, the claim alleges. The lawsuit also claims the younger Biden's data was "manipulated,

altered and damaged" before it was sent to Giuliani and Costello, and has been further altered since then.

They broke laws against computer hacking when they did, according to the lawsuit, which seeks unspecified damages and a court order to return the data and make no more copies. Costello used to represent Giuliani, but recently filed a lawsuit against the former New York City mayor saying he did not pay more than \$1.3m in legal bills. A spokesperson for Giuliani did not immediately return a message from The Associated Press (AP) seeking comment. Costello declined to comment to the news agency. In February, he told AP that a letter from Hunter's lawyers that requested a Justice Department investigation of him and others related to the laptop was a "frivolous legal document" that "reeks of desperation because they know judgment day is coming for the Bidens".

The lawsuit marks the latest turn in the laptop saga,

which began with a New York Post story in October 2020 that detailed some of the emails it says were found on the device related to Hunter's foreign business dealings. It was swiftly seized on by Trump as a campaign issue during the US presidential election that year. Hunter does not explicitly acknowledge that the laptop left at the computer shop was his, but says "at least some" of the data was on his iPhone or backed up to iCloud. A Justice Department special counsel is also separately pursuing an investigation into Hunter's taxes, and has filed firearm possession charges against him, and he plans to plead not guilty. He has also been charged with tax crimes.

House Republicans, meanwhile, have continued to investigate every aspect of Hunter's business dealings and sought to tie them to his father as part of an impeachment inquiry against President Biden. A hearing on Thursday is expected to detail some of their claims again. Meanwhile, after remaining

silent as the images are played across the country, Hunter has changed his tactic, and his allies have signalled there is more to come. Over the past few months, the younger Biden has sued a former aide to Trump over his alleged role in publishing emails and embarrassing images. Hunter also filed a lawsuit earlier this month against the US tax agency, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), saying his personal data was wrongly shared by two agents who testified as whistleblowers as part of a probe by House Republicans into his business dealings.

The US president's son has also pushed for an investigation into Giuliani and Costello, along with the Wilmington computer repair shop owner who has said Hunter dropped a laptop off at his store in April 2019 and never returned to pick it up. Giuliani provided the information to a reporter at the New York Post, which first wrote about the laptop. Hunter's attorney said in a letter pushing for a federal investigation.

Nigeria's labour unions call indefinite strike over cost of living

ABUJA (Agencies): Nigeria's two biggest workers' unions plan to start an indefinite strike next week to protest against a cost of living crisis after the government scrapped a popular but costly petrol subsidy, union leaders have said. The National Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC), the biggest unions, said they would begin the strike on October 3.

"It's going to be a total shutdown ... until government meets the demand of Nigerian workers, and in fact Nigerian masses," the union leaders said in a joint statement. "The Federal Government has refused to meaningfully engage and reach agreements with organised labour on critical issues of the consequences

of the unfortunate hike in price of petrol which has unleashed massive suffering on Nigeria workers and masses." Unions have been pushing President Bola Tinubu to reverse his decision in May to scrap the decades-old subsidy that had kept fuel prices low but was draining government finances. The government had urged unions to continue negotiations instead of resorting to strikes, saying this would hurt an economy grappling with double-digit inflation, foreign currency shortages and low oil production.

Prices have risen sharply, including the cost of food, transport and power as most businesses and households rely on petrol generators for electricity. Tinubu has defended

his two biggest reforms - removal of the subsidy and foreign exchange controls - saying although this would lead to hardships in the short term, they were necessary to attract investment and boost government finances. Africa's largest economy has seen living and transport costs heavily impacted after the government ended a petrol subsidy and also freed the naira currency, leading to a sharp devaluation of the local money. Inflation is at 25 percent while fuel costs have tripled since Tinubu came to power in May.

Tinubu's administration acknowledges the difficulties and says it distributed funds to state governments to help offset the impact of the economic reforms. Other measures include

providing transport options and small business loans. The NLC brings together unions for many industries from nurses to road workers and printers while the TUC represents senior bank workers and high school teachers among others. It was not clear how much traction next week's industrial action would gain. The NLC and TUC called a strike in August over the same issues, with many businesses, government offices, markets and banks closed for a day in the capital Abuja. Strike impact in the economic capital Lagos was more mixed. Nigeria, a member of the OPEC oil exporters' organisation, is a major crude producer but lacks refining capacity and is forced to import most of its fuel requirements.

US hopes Europe will join 'race to top' on green subsidies

BERLIN (Reuters): The United States hopes Europe will take similar measures to its Inflation Reduction Act to drive a "race to the top" on support for green technologies, a senior US official said in Berlin ahead of economic talks with German counterparts.

The two sides will hold broad-ranging discussions on issues like managing the risks of artificial intelligence, diversifying supply chains, and Ukraine's reconstruction. Jose Fernandez, under secretary for economic growth, ener-

gy and the environment at the State Department, told a news briefing. The United States understood European Union concerns about the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which provides massive subsidies for the domestic manufacturing of green tech, he said. But it had pointed out the technology would benefit all and the green transition required all hands on deck.

"We can't do this alone. We hope Europe will take similar measures to encourage a race to the top," he said, noting that

Washington was still working with Brussels on a critical minerals deal that would enable EU companies to better take advantage of US green subsidies. Asked about concerns about weakness in the German economy, Fernandez said its track record as an engine of the European economy for decades with a competitive export industry should give observers reason to be optimistic about its long term prospects.

"You've heard the statement don't bet against the United States? I would say

the same thing about the German economy," said Fernandez, who will attend the talks in the chancellery on Wednesday. Asked about the extent to which the United States and Europe are converging in their approach towards China, Fernandez said there was a consensus on certain issues like the need to diversify supply chains. "But you are always going to have views that may not necessarily be opposing but just different nuances," he said. "So I can't point to anyone but the Europeans make up their own minds."

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,
Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Austerity drive and leaders’ legacy

CARETAKER Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar toasted on Tuesday that his foremost priority to fix the problems of the country during his term in office would be to cut the government's expenditure and increase national revenue. During an interview with the foreign media, the interim Prime Minister noted that the economy is extremely pressing right now and these are the problems which are hitting the common man very hard. According to him, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) deal was an opportunity for the country to focus on how economic behaviour was influencing the life of the common man in the country. He promised to provide a blueprint for the future elected government that can take some benefit of it, stay the course, and deliver to the people of Pakistan.

After touring a week-long trip in the United States and enjoying elite-class living in New York and London, the Premier remembered his poor masses as his plane touched back in Islamabad. Simple living, austerity, contentment and cuts in government expenses are the popular terms of the rulers which they employ on poor masses, low cadre government employees, but those highly advertised arrangements always failed to curb huge incentives, massive protocols, luxurious style of living of Pakistani government leaders and bureaucrats throughout history. The announcements of reducing meals, auction of homes, sale of attire and eating grass like famous sloganeering once had been raised by previous rulers from the PTI, the PML-N and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the past but unfortunately, those words remained unimplemented by so-called nation saviours so far. Being an interim leader, Mr Kakar's UN trip was a vain effort aimed at self-projection and image building because appearing at the world forum and squealing on the Kashmir dispute would not move Indian hegemon to resolve the issue but surely enrolled the Kakar's name in the list of Champions of Kashmir cause. In the current scenario, Pakistan's permanent Envoy or Foreign Minister Jilani's presence was sufficient to argue Pakistan's case at the global forum.

Realistically, unethical and politically motivated governance had always been a major issue in the country, which not only resulted in the wastage of national resources but proved to be disastrous, leading to further degradation of the economy. Ranging from mega development projects to constitutional and electoral reforms, privatization of state entities to the distribution of development funds, all decisions were fundamentally based on the political interests of the ruling elite and mostly ended up in failure but cost billions of rupees to the national exchequer. The latest wave of price hikes seriously hurts all segments of society and equally affects the prices and availability of all daily use commodities, transport fares, tuition fees, essential medicines, healthcare expenses etc. The crisis of hefty electricity bills had not been resolved yet and the unelected leaders weighed another round of petrol bombs, electricity and gas hikes that pushed the masses into poverty and miseriness. According to the World Bank report, the poverty rate has surged to 39.4 % with almost a 5% increase in the previous year, posing serious challenges to over 240 million masses, pushing 12.5 million below the poverty line.

Even then the Pakistani elite was not serious about taking stringent economic measures to broaden the country's tax base by bringing influential feudal, real estate and property tycoons into the tax net and slashing unimaginable amenities and incentives of politicians, bureaucrats and military generals which were previously legalized through anti-public and anti-state legislation in the past. The caretaker ruler is tirelessly beating the drum for austerity on one hand and expanding his army of advisors and ministers on the other, foreign visits, statesman's legacies and widely publicised investment agenda are being pursued by the unelected leaders, that evaluation is pending so far. In fact, the public does not believe in leaders' verbosity, until and unless it has some practical impact on their living. Therefore, interim rulers must initiate an austerity drive from the top so lower ranks and the common public follow them in achieving this important national agenda at this crucial time.

West’s demands teamwork from Slayer

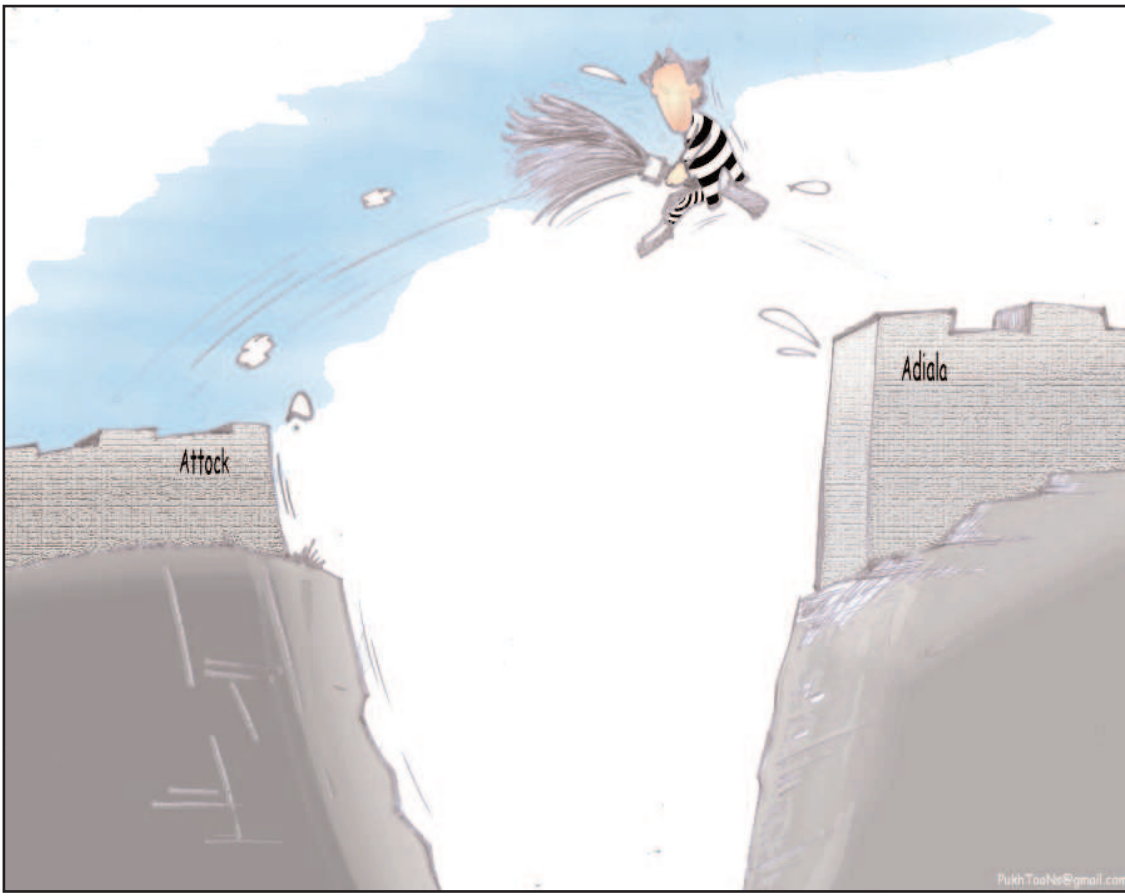
THE US State Department Spokesperson, Matthew Miller has urged the Indian government publicly to cooperate with the Canadian investigations to reach a final conclusion about the circumstances that led to the killing of a Sikh freedom activist whose death shook the bilateral relations between Canada and India. According to the US diplomat, the US was deeply concerned about the allegations leveled by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and that Washington is in close with Ottawa regarding this issue.

The bilateral relations between Canada and Hindia touched historic low over the recent weeks, after Canadian investigators dug out leads indicating involvement of an Indian diplomat in the murder of a famous Sikh Leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was gunned down on June 18 outside a Sikh cultural centre in British Columbia, Canada. In a reaction to India's undiplomatic maneuver, the Canadian government blatantly trashed a long-talked trade deal commonly known as Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with India and cancelled a preplanned visit of Canadian delegation to New Delhi. There had been exchanges of tough messages between the top leadership of both countries while reciprocal measures had been taken on a tit-for-tat design in Ottawa and New Delhi over the past days. Canada expelled the Indian diplomat allegedly involved in the killing of a Canadian citizen while India stopped issuing visas to Canadian citizens visiting its country.

Currently, a majority of western nations put their weight on the Canadian side and urged the Modi regime to cooperate with Police investigators in their ongoing investigation into assassination of Sikh leader. The Modi government has come under global pressure from friends and foes, while India's so-called secularism and rising Hindu fascism has been exposed to the world. Currently, the BJP government and its vanguard RSS platoons have made the lives of Indian minorities miserable in Hindustan while Indian covert agents fearlessly haunt Indian dissidents, and human rights defenders in other nations around the globe. The innocent western scholars continuously demand Modi's cooperation with the Police knowing the fact that whether any murderer has put the rope around his neck in this world, ever before.

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More than democracy is at stake in polls in Slovakia and Poland

Sona Muzikárová

IN recent years, populism, nationalism and illiberalism have increasingly come to dominate politics in Central Europe. The epitome of this trend has been Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who, along with his conservative populist Fidesz party, has been in power since 2010. Poland has also gone down the illiberal path, with the nationalist-conservative Law & Justice (PiS) party maintaining its grip on power for the past eight years.

On October 15, Poles will vote in parliamentary elections, which could prolong PiS's rule. Two weeks earlier, Slovakia, which has been governed by a technocratic government since mid-May after the early demise of a chaotic, centre-right coalition, will head to the polls as well. The country may also bring a populist conservative Smer-Social Democracy to power. If PiS and Smer-Social Democracy win in Poland and Slovakia, respectively, this would strengthen the populist, illiberal trend in Central Europe and erode post-communist democratisation in the region. Worse still, it could affect the European Union's common foreign policy towards Ukraine, weakening support for Kyiv.

Smer's leader Robert Fico is Slovakia's longest serving prime minister, having held the prime ministerial seat three times. During his previous terms, the democratic development of the country was repeatedly sabotaged. Fico's previous governments have been accused of interfering with the independence and integrity of the judiciary and the prosecution. During his tenure, several judges, prosecutors and other officials were alleged to have been involved in bribery, abuse of power and collusion with organised criminal groups. Fico and his party often attacked and intimidated journalists who criticised their policies or exposed their wrongdoing. He and his political allies also promoted discrimination against minorities and migrants.

It was commonly believed that the 2018 killings of investigative journalist Jan Kuciak and his fiancée and the serious criminal charges brought

against many high-profile former members of Fico's cabinet relating to establishing and leading criminal groups, abuse of public office, and corruption, sealed the prime minister's political fate. But he made a comeback last year, launching a particularly crude and tasteless public campaign to boost his popularity. For example, just before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Fico criticised NATO's military presence in Slovakia, riding on a wave of pro-Russian sentiment. He also attacked the Slovak President, Zuzana Ľaputová, labelling her a "US agent" to score political points with his anti-establishment constituency. A return to power for Fico would not bode well for Slovak democracy. Another premiership for

him would entrench the misuse of public resources to reward political supporters and maintain power. It would promote nepotism and corruption, including within the judiciary, which would lead to further erosion of public trust in state institutions and the legal system.

Clientelism and institutional favouring of certain oligarchs, which was pervasive during Fico's previous terms, would limit economic opportunities for others, and worsen the already significant problem of brain drain, with much-needed structural reforms taking a back seat altogether. Poland's democracy is also on the line.

Under the leadership of the conservative PiS, the country has failed to meet EU requirements for judicial independence. As a result, Brussels has blocked it from drawing on some 35 billion euros (\$37bn) in EU Recovery and Resilience Facility funds. The Polish government has also under-

mined media freedom and restricted the rights of minorities, women and LGBTQ+ people. One of the most controversial issues that has sparked protests in Poland is the near-total ban on abortion imposed in January 2021.

The PiS has also tried to instrumentalise the law against its opponents. In May, the Polish parliament passed legislation aimed at purportedly investigating Russian influence in the country between 2007 and 2022. But critics have pointed out that it could be used against members of the opposition ahead of the parliamentary election. The law further strained relations with Brussels, which triggered an infringement procedure against Warsaw. If PiS wins the October elections and leads another government in Poland, it

Under the leadership of the conservative PiS, the country has failed to meet EU requirements for judicial independence. As a result, Brussels has blocked it from drawing on some 35 billion euros (\$37bn) in EU Recovery and Resilience Facility funds.

would continue pursuing its undemocratic agenda, undermining the legitimacy of the judiciary, strengthening its grip on the media, and curtailing fundamental rights and protections of minorities, women and LGBTQ+ people. At risk this fall is not just democracy in Central Europe, but the region's standing in Europe and even Ukraine's future. Smer-Social Democracy and PiS's public rhetoric on Ukraine have increasingly raised red flags.

Fico built his electoral campaign on spreading false pro-Kremlin narratives about the war in Ukraine. He has called Ukrainians "fascists" and ruled out any potential NATO membership for Ukraine, saying that the country should remain a "buffer between Russia and NATO". He has threatened to withdraw Slovak government support for Kyiv and called the EU "suicidal" for slapping sanctions on Russia. Whether Fico will

act on any of these threats if he takes power is not clear. In the past, he has made similar statements without following up on them with solid policies. For example, in 2016, he called for the EU to lift sanctions against Russia only to support them in EU forums. But a Slovak government led by him would certainly not be good news for Ukraine.

While Poland's pro-Ukrainian stance has appeared steadfast, in recent weeks, Kyiv and Warsaw have traded jabs over the import of Ukrainian grain. The dispute emerged after the EU decided to lift a ban on such imports into the common European market. Warsaw indicated that it wanted to reinstate the ban in order to protect the interests of Polish farmers, whose profits are threatened by the lower prices of Ukrainian grain. Kyiv criticised these protectionist policies and said they work in favour of Russia. The dispute escalated into a full-blown diplomatic crisis, with Poland announcing that it would stop supplying weapons to Ukraine and threatening to ban other imports from its neighbour.

The hostile rhetoric by the Polish government may indicate PiS's desire to secure the support of rural and far-right voters in order to improve its chances of winning an effective majority at the polls. In this context - and given Poles' longstanding and deep-seated aversion towards Russia - the disagreement with Kyiv is unlikely to result in a dramatic turnaround in Polish foreign policy. But the spat with Ukraine could see the erosion of trust between the two countries, weakening the EU's common stance against Russia. It could have negative consequences for Kyiv financially, as well as politically and strategically, should it continue.

Such developments make the elections in Slovakia and Poland consequential not just for the domestic affairs of the two countries. The choices Slovaks and Poles make at the polls this fall will reverberate well beyond their borders. They will not only determine the future of democracy in Central Europe, but also may affect the delicate equilibrium in the region and the EU's steadfast support for Ukraine.

Aljazeera

What Netanyahu got wrong in his UN speech

Osama Al-Sharif

BE N J A M I N Netanyahu, once the golden boy of the Israeli hard right, appears to have been stripped of his Midas touch. A sly orator, a populist manipulator and a rabble-rouser, the 73-year-old has now lost his flair for grandstanding. At the UN General Assembly last week, speaking to a near-empty hall, Netanyahu's usual gaslighting, while attempting to do his signature smoke and mirrors show, foundered. He used everything in his repertoire of tricks and yet he failed to impress. All that was missing was for him to throw a tantrum. Maybe that will come once he gets back to Israel and faces reality.

His enamor for showing graphs and maps was pitiful. His "new Middle East" offering had nothing new. The idea goes back to the era of the Oslo Accords, when a different brand of Israeli - and Arab - politician contemplated the vision of a time when Arabs and Israelis could live in peace and use their vast human and natural resources to turn the region into a potent powerhouse. But there was an essential condition to that vision: an end to the decades of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the emergence of an independent Palestinian state. That prerequisite never happened.

One of the main culprits for the derailment of Oslo and subsequent attempts to resuscitate an ailing peace process was none other than Netanyahu himself. Whether in opposition or at the helm, he has done his best to wreck the peace process and later bury the premise of a two-state solution in historical Palestine. He used everything in his arsenal to empty the Oslo Accords of any substance. The Palestinian Authority became a placebo self-rule pill that the Palestinians were duped into swallowing for years. Slowly, the goal of negotiating final status issues - a preface to finally ending the occupation and delivering on the Oslo promises - was stripped of any content.

Having changed the narrative, Netanyahu then proceeded to undermine the PA, unleashing waves of settlement buildings that strangled the Palestinians and robbed them of their homes, lands and natural resources. The biggest land grab since the occupation of the West Bank took place after Oslo. Netanyahu was always there to give the green light as he nurtured the Kahanists, the ultrareligious and the ultranationalists. Under his successive governments - he became the longest-serving premier in Israeli history - the left fell on its proverbial sword and the right lost its bearings as the far right hijacked its platform.

His penultimate political sin was to bring those far-right fanatics out from the cold when he struck a deal to end an election stalemate and win a majority in the Knesset. His toxic coalition unveiled an ugly face of Israel; one that even its

most loyal supporters in Washington, London and elsewhere could not tolerate. He has divided Israel more than it ever has been since the country's bloody birth. His assault on Israel's democratic institutions has little to do with its incurable hold on the West Bank. He has triggered a civil war that threatens to tear the country apart. But he avoided the issue at the UN. Facing criminal charges of graft, Netanyahu's legacy is at stake - and he could go to prison. Thus his unholy alliance with the maniacs who want to make Israel a Daesh-like state. He is willing to risk chaos in Israel to save his own skin.

But the far-right's conflicting agendas go beyond the outer limits of Netanyahu's political avarice. Aside from ending Israel's secular nature through racist, misogynistic, religiously extreme objectives, they also want to end any hope of peaceful coexistence with the Palestinians. The alternative? Who knows? Mass transfer, genocide, ghettos - everything has been normalized and is now on the table. This is what Bezael Smotrich, Itamar Ben-Gvir and others are spewing out with no shame. But Netanyahu says he is in control. However, his enemies, even the conservative Israeli media, do not believe him. While avoiding all this, Netanyahu still believes he can sell something to the world, when in fact his coffers are empty. His final act at the UN was to claim he was delivering a new Middle East, aptly his last show and legacy. The reality is that his government is so radioactive that even his Abraham Accords partners are in disgust. Support for the accords has dipped, according to various surveys.

At the UN, he brandished a map that underlined a total denial of the existence of the Palestinians. But he offered no solution. The big question today in Netanyahu's Israel is what to do with more than 3.5 million Palestinians if "Eretz Israel" is to become a reality. His new Middle East premise is missing one giant component, and he is in denial. Netanyahu avoided mentioning how Israel is changing under his watch and he skirted mentioning the peace process altogether, as if normalizing ties with the Arab world would make the Palestinian issue disappear. He again tried to play the Iran card but was a few steps behind in the latest geopolitical shifts. The region's countries now agree that they must deal with Iran as a neighbor and possibly a partner.

Netanyahu was rash to celebrate possible rapprochement with Saudi Arabia - the big prize - while ignoring Riyadh's crystal-clear and principled position on what needs to be delivered before such a historical breakthrough is ripe for the picking. In short, Netanyahu got everything wrong at the UN; just as it appears he is getting a lot wrong back home in Israel.

Arab News

US presidential election 2024

Kerry Boyd Anderson

THE Republican process of choosing a nominee for president is well underway, with a second televised debate scheduled for Wednesday. However, former President Donald Trump currently is far ahead in polls, raising the question of whether it is time to just acknowledge that he will be the party's nominee.

A core part of US elections is the selection of each political party's nominee. The Republican and Democratic parties, as well as some smaller parties, hold elections to choose a candidate for many political positions, including president. The specific rules and procedures vary by party and state. For the presidential nominee, most states hold "primary" votes to choose the candidate, while a few hold a "caucus."

If a party has a president in the White House who can run for a second term, then usually it is assumed that the president will be the party's nominee. President Joe Biden technically faces two competitors, but he is highly likely to be the

Democratic nominee. The Republican Party is holding a primary contest to choose its nominee, following the usual pattern for the party that is out of power. However, one of the Republican candidates is a former president - a historically unusual situation.

Currently, Trump is far ahead of his competitors. In national primary polls, Trump polls at 55.2 percent, according to the FiveThirtyEight model. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis is a distant second at 13.2 percent, followed by entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy at 7.4 percent, former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley at 5 percent and all other candidates polling lower. At the start of 2023, Trump and DeSantis were much closer in the polls, but DeSantis has lost ground since then. Another useful indicator is the number and type of endorsements that a candidate receives from other party leaders. FiveThirtyEight's endorsement tracker (which counts

and weighs endorsements) shows Trump far ahead with 360 endorsement points compared to 43 for DeSantis and all other candidates at 16 or fewer. Fundraising is another important indicator but is very difficult to accurately track. Candidates' principal campaign committees are legally required to disclose fundraising numbers. Trump's campaign reported that it had raised \$17.7 million between April 1 and June 30, behind DeSantis' \$20.1 million. However, Trump and other candidates receive financial support from multiple other sources that are not reported in the same way, which makes it difficult to know which candidate is truly ahead in fundraising. Trump has significant fundraising abilities, but media reports suggest that he also is spending a lot, including in response to four legal indictments against him.

Trump's huge lead in polls and endorsements, combined

with his massive name recognition and fundraising apparatus, put him far ahead in the race for the Republican nomination. The reality is that he is very likely to be the Republican nominee. Indeed, Trump is behaving as though he does not have serious competition - and he might be right. He skipped the first official debate among Republican candidates, opting to do an interview with right-wing media figure Tucker Carlson instead. He also plans to skip the second debate; instead, he plans to give a speech to auto workers in Detroit. Nonetheless, Trump faces some potential risks on the road to nomination. His legal problems might drain some of his funds and distract him from campaigning. It is very unusual for a leading candidate to face serious indictments in the middle of a campaign. However, while some of Trump's opponents might have hoped that his legal woes

would undermine support for him, the Republican base is so far undeterred. Polls suggest that, while a slight majority of Americans support the indictments, a strong majority of Republicans do not. Conservative media tends to either downplay the legal accusations against Trump or portray them as part of an unjust conspiracy against him. Trump's legal problems are more likely to be a challenge in a general election against Biden than in a primary election against other Republicans.

While Trump has a devoted base of supporters and high approval ratings among Republicans, he also has opponents within the party. He easily leads in terms of major endorsements, but he also faces some high-profile Republican critics. Trump's recent comments on abortion have been more moderate than many religious conservatives support, which might chip away at his support among that cohort; but on the

other hand they have previously supported him despite a lifestyle and comments that are far from a Christian ideal. It remains possible that Republicans who do not want Trump to run again for president might rally around one competitor, such as DeSantis or Haley.

However, they would have to do so soon in order to have time to build support, endorsements and fundraising for one candidate to match or beat Trump's figures. A few months ago, DeSantis seemed the likely choice, but some Republicans who object to Trump also object to DeSantis and he has not performed well in national campaigning. The Republican race for the presidential nomination is not over yet - but almost. If Republicans rally around one competitor to rival Trump and if other risks damage the support for Trump and increase concerns about his electability, then the race for the nomination might heat up. If that does not happen soon, Americans are very likely to face a Trump-Biden rematch.

The West has a moral responsibility to help build peace in Nagorno-Karabakh

FOR the third time in 30 years - and the second in three - the international community has failed to prevent conflict between Azerbaijan and the ethnic Armenians of its breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region. The most recent conflict, which began on September 19 as Azeri forces embarked on a new major offensive to recapture the enclave, concluded relatively swiftly.

Within the first 24 hours of the "anti-terror" operation, the leaders of the self-declared Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) agreed to lay down their arms and Azerbaijan claimed victory. Three days later, as Azeri forces moved to take control of many villages, mines and strategic heights across Nagorno-Karabakh, positioning themselves right outside ethnic Armenian population centres, the NKR agreed to disband its army.

It may have lasted just a few days, but the conflict still claimed many lives, enabled mass displacement and triggered turmoil across the wider region. And another major humanitarian crisis is looming on the horizon. There are some 120,000 ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. After successfully reclaiming the region, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev said he would be willing to integrate them into Azeri society. Yet decades of conflict and atrocities mean there is no trust and significant animosity between the two sides. The ethnic Armenians already started to move towards Armenia in large numbers. The NKR leaders say they expect almost all Armenian residents of the restive region to eventually make their way to their ethnic homeland. This mass exodus is predicted to trigger more instability and conflict in the region.

International inaction paved the way for this grave state of affairs. Russia is Armenia's official "security guarantor" under the Collective Security Treaty Organisation

(CSTO) that was cobbled together after the Soviet Union's collapse, so it should be doing much more to protect Armenian interests in Nagorno-Karabakh than mediating flimsy ceasefires after each conflict. But the Kremlin, which does not want to make an enemy of Baku, has never been too keen to intervene in the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It consistently ignored Yerevan's requests for help in dealing with Azeri attacks on its territory over the years and refused to act even when five of its peacekeepers were killed in the latest round of fighting.

Russia is not alone in turning its back on the region either. The European Union and the United States, despite their stated commitment to deepening democracy in the ex-Soviet landscape, have also shown little interest in preventing further bloodshed and building sustainable peace in Nagorno-Karabakh over the past three decades. After Armenian forces won the first Nagorno-Karabakh war in 1994, taking control of Azeri-majority regions surrounding the enclave and displacing thousands of ethnic Azeris in the process, for example, the international community did nothing to pressure the Armenians to hold talks with the Azeris and work towards a sustainable peace deal that would be acceptable to both sides. Rather than offering a helping hand, both the EU and the US turned a blind eye to simmering tensions, and they even profited from Azerbaijan's preparations for the next war by selling it weapons. Israel and Turkey also benefited from Azerbaijan's increased military spending, while Russia sold arms to both sides.

When Azerbaijan won in 2020 (in no small part due to the technological advantage it gained from all those foreign arms purchases) once again no major power showed any interest

Maximilian Hess

in providing a push for sustainable peace. Sure, there were negotiations, talks and statements, but very little was done to prevent more violence.

The ineffectiveness of international mediation efforts became especially clear when in 2022 Azerbaijan blocked the Lachin Corridor that connects Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. The blockade lasted for more than 250 days without any meaningful pushback from the international community and saw even the International Committee for the Red Cross denied access to the enclave. It did not have to be this way. Both sides of this conflict have long been and still are highly susceptible to pressure from the international community, and especially from the West.

The Armenian side is clearly seeking new allies as the hollowness of Russia's supposed protection became increasingly clear. Azerbaijan also has every reason to keep the West happy as its hydrocarbon wealth is largely derived from Western investment. Western nations also make up the leading market for its gas sales, which it is keen to expand to replace revenue lost from its declining oil production. The inaction of the West appears to be the result of a fundamentally flawed understanding of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Many in the West still seem to perceive Armenia as a loyal Russian ally that would not provide meaningful returns for any diplomatic, political or indeed military investment. However, "Russian ally" is clearly not an accurate label for a country that earlier this month launched joint military exercises with the US and moved to join the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court, subjecting Russian President Vladimir Putin to its arrest warrants if he were to visit.

The perception that Azerbaijan

plays a key role in Europe's energy security has been another excuse put forward by Western powers to not intervene, though in 2022 it made up just three percent of European natural gas demand, less than 10 percent of what Russia supplied before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine last February and under half of what Russia still supplies. The potential displacement of the entirety of Nagorno-Karabakh's 120,000-strong ethnic Armenian population threatens a repeat of the humanitarian emergency the region suffered in the 1990s, but in reverse.

The crisis could also have major ramifications for Armenian democracy. Azerbaijan's definitive victory in Nagorno-Karabakh brought public support for Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who came to power on the back of a pro-democracy revolution in 2018, to an all-time low. Azerbaijan has been victorious on the battlefield, but the seemingly perpetual conflict between Baku and Yerevan is far from over. Mass displacement is imminent, and guerrilla conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, civil strife and democratic backsliding within Armenia as well as additional interstate conflict are all very real risks. The international community should be ashamed of its track record on this conflict. Its failure to take timely and meaningful action has led to three wars and paved the way for more conflict and bloodshed. It should urgently stop hiding behind myths about energy security and Russian influence and belatedly make a commitment to do whatever is necessary to prevent further conflict and displacement in the region. If the West is to convince the world of its commitment to the international liberal order and to the prevention of displacement and ethnic oppression - so central to sustain continued support for Ukraine - it must act now to ensure this war is the last.

Biden, Trump vie for workers' votes by expressing support for Unions

Rob Garver

IN what could be a preview of their strategies for the 2024 presidential election, both President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump will visit Michigan in the coming days, in connection with the ongoing strike by the United Auto Workers union.

Biden will travel to Michigan on Tuesday to meet with UAW workers who are picketing facilities owned by the Big Three automakers: Ford, General Motors and Stellantis. Trump is expected to be in the state the following day for a rally that his campaign has said will be attended by current and former labor union members, though not necessarily members of the UAW. Both men have complicated relationships with the labor movement. Although Biden has been a longtime supporter of unions in general and has appointed a union-friendly majority to the National Labor Relations Board, some of his actions as president have angered union members. Trump's administration was distinctly less friendly to labor, but the former president still received significant support from union members in both of his previous presidential runs.

With the UAW strike now in its second week, the president and the man most likely to be his opponent in next year's election are focused on signaling solidarity with working-class Americans, whose political loyalties have been malleable in recent years. Although union members were long considered a Democratic monolith when it comes to US politics, the modern-day truth is more complicated.

When Trump won the presidency in 2016, he did so with 43% of votes from households that included at least one labor union member, according to the Roper Center for Public Opinion Polling. Against the vocally pro-union Biden in 2020, that percentage fell to 40%, but still represented a significant slice of the union vote. "There has been a trend of union workers becoming identified more often as Republican over the last 10 to 15 years," said Kevin Reuning, an assistant professor of political science at Miami University of Ohio. "There is a lot more diversity among union members than people think."

Reuning told VOA that even though Trump had scant history of backing unions when he first ran for election, his willingness to tear up trade agreements that union members blame for shifting manufacturing jobs overseas probably played a big role in attracting a signif-

icant share of the union vote. For example, Trump has been able to appeal to many union voters by blasting deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement, which was signed by former Democratic President Bill Clinton.

"Trump doesn't have the baggage that Democrats - at least some Democrats - have of NAFTA. It's important to remember that a majority of Democrats voted against NAFTA back in the '90s. But it was signed by a Democratic president, and it kind of hangs over their heads still," Reuning said. After Trump's team made his intention to travel to Detroit public, UAW President Shawn Fain released a blistering statement indicating that the former president would not be welcomed by his organization.

"Every fiber of our union is being poured into fighting the billionaire class and an economy that enriches people like Donald Trump at the expense of workers," Fain said. "We can't keep electing billionaires and millionaires that don't have any understanding what it is like to live paycheck to paycheck and struggle to get by and expecting them to solve the problems of the working class." By contrast, the UAW head explicitly invited Biden to visit striking union members when he announced an expansion of the strike on Sept. 22.

"We invite and encourage everyone who supports our cause to join us on the picket line from our friends and families all the way up to the president of the United States," Fain said. Still, Biden's position with unions in the US may not be as strong as it once was. Some union members were upset last year when Biden signed legislation compelling railroad workers to accept a contract that their union had voted against, preventing a strike.

Among the members of the UAW, Biden's push to speed the transition from gasoline-powered vehicles to electric vehicles is seen as a threat to jobs. Some of the skilled workers who are needed to build conventional automobiles might find themselves less in demand in a world where cars run on electric motors. While on paper Biden may be the more pro-union candidate, there is historical precedent for candidates of the Republican Party - historically more hostile to labor - being able to peel off union votes in certain circumstances.

In a recent article in

Compact magazine, journalist and author Michael Lind observed, "[P]eople work in particular industries, and even an anti-union politician can appeal to some wage-earners by promising to preserve or create jobs in the sectors in which they toil. For this reason, in the late 19th century, most factory, mine, and railroad workers supported the protectionist, pro-industry Republican party of William McKinley, in spite of the hostility to unions shared by many Republican politicians and business elites." Even former President Ronald Reagan, whose decision to fire striking air traffic control workers in 1981 earned him the enmity of many in the labor movement, was still able to secure 46% of the vote of union households when he ran for reelection three years later.

On Monday, Trump used his social media network, Truth Social, to attack Biden and to claim that the president's decision to go to Michigan was only an attempt to play catch-up with the Trump campaign. "Crooked Joe Biden, who is killing the United Autoworkers with his WEAK stance on China and his ridiculous insistence on All Electric Cars, every one of which will be made in China, saw that I was going to Michigan this week (Wednesday!)," so the Fascists in the White House just announced he would go there tomorrow," Trump said.

The former president went on to attack his successor for his trade policies, his electric vehicle program, and to make evidence-free allegations of corruption, and he called on UAW members to demand that the union's leadership endorse him in the upcoming presidential election. Asked if Biden's trip to Michigan was related to Trump's announced visit, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre on Monday said, "Absolutely not. This is a decision to visit the picket line, and it was based off his own desire. This is what the president wanted to do, to stand with auto workers."

Her comments echoed those of Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, who appeared on CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday. "President Biden is doing what he has always done, which is to stand with American workers," he said. "He is proud of being the most pro-union, pro-worker president, not only compared to the Trump administration, with its anti-union policies, but really compared to any modern president."

VOA

This time around Brazil can and must do the anti-hunger fight right

Elisabetta Recine

THE global hunger crisis is flashing red on all fronts, exacerbated by the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and the war in Ukraine. The United Nations confirms global progress on hunger is lethally in reverse - with the Food and Agriculture Organization registering the worst numbers of food insecurity in eight years, and the global goal of ending hunger by 2030 appearing beyond reach.

Food prices are stuck at historic highs and low-income countries face an intensifying debt crisis. The Black Sea Grain Initiative, which was supposed to ensure Ukrainian grain exports could depart from the country's Black Sea ports, has collapsed, thus eliminating a lifeline for poor food-importing countries. International summits have come and gone with a dearth of ideas or action on hunger. Brazil, an agricultural superpower and the world's largest net exporter of food, has also seen hunger and poverty rise in recent years, after the administration of Jair Bolsonaro dismantled social policies, amid an economic downturn. Heartbreakingly, almost three in every five households do not always have enough to eat, while 33 million people (about 15 percent of the population) are going hungry.

But now President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who was inaugurated in January, has stepped up. "I am obsessed with fighting hunger ... I want workers to once again be able to have three meals a day in a dignified manner and to provide quality food for their children," he said as he launched the Brasil Sem Fome (Brazil Without Hunger) plan in late August. Arguably the most comprehensive set of anti-hunger policies the world has ever seen, this bold plan opens a new front in the

global war on hunger, just as hope was beginning to fade.

The Brasil Sem Fome - on which the National Food and Nutrition Security Council (CONSEA), the organisation I chair, advised - has far-reaching but simple goals. It aims to wipe Brazil off the UN Hunger Map by 2030 - no ifs or buts - and to ensure that more than 95 percent of households are food secure by the end of the decade. It also aims to improve access to healthy diets and kick-start a transition to sustainable agriculture. Some 32 programmes and policies will be leveraged to achieve these goals - from cash transfers to poor households to the purchase of healthy school food from smallholder farmers; from agroecological transition payments to support for Black and rural women, to bolstering protection of the Amazon. All of this will come under an apparatus that is purpose-built to bring the voices of food-insecure and marginalised people into the decision-making process.

If this plan sounds familiar, that is because it is a recast of the Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) policies introduced by Lula's first administration in 2003 - but with an extra dose of ambition on democratic governance and sustainably produced food, reaching the most marginalised groups. That original policy halved food insecurity in Brazil and took the country off the UN's Hunger Map - making Brazil a poster child for international development. By linking cash transfers to school attendance and healthcare, leveraging government purchases to support smallholders, and, crucially, building inclusive decision-making bodies, Lula's government succeeded where many had failed. But the subsequent demolition of Brazil's anti-hunger apparatus was just as dramatic.

After coming to power in 2019, Bolsonaro's far-right government imposed grinding austerity and dismantled the foundations of food and nutrition security policies. Brazilians found themselves without a safety net, just as the country was hit by the COVID pandemic. This teaches us a key lesson: it is possible to significantly reduce poverty and hunger indicators, but if we do not shift the structural determinants of inequalities, the results are easily and quickly undone. This time, the legacy must be longer-lasting and deeper.

This requires the plan to go even further in rolling out concrete actions to address the root causes of hunger - inequality and injustice. That means enabling access to land for the landless, fairer distribution of incomes, and confronting pervasive gender inequality and racism. There is also a need for deep participation, mobilisation and dialogue with Brazilian civil society. The promise of coordinated implementation across every ministry, and every level of local, regional and federal government will be key. Hunger is not homogeneous; it does not express itself uniformly. Really, we should talk of many hungers: hunger in the city, in the countryside, of children, of women, of Black and Indigenous peoples, etc. It is too big to tackle with just one programme or fragmented government department. But if Brazil is able to follow through on these comprehensive policies and beat back hunger again, the significance will resonate far beyond our borders. In the struggle against hunger, the world is in drastic need of answers. This plan could be a shot of hope and a highly significant global role model. Many hurdles remain, but Brazil is back, and the fight against world hunger is back on.

Europe's 'mini-Trumps' survived his fall. Now they're hoping for his comeback

Paul Taylor

WHEN Donald Trump lost the White House in 2020, Europe's strongmen, populists and climate change deniers lost a powerful ally and a protector. Yet most of Europe's mini-Trumps have survived his fall, his denial of defeat and the storming of Congress by his supporters, and are now hoping that a comeback for the Republican frontrunner in next year's US presidential election will put fresh wind in their own sails.

In his four years in office, Trump described the European Union as a "foe" and Nato as "obsolete". He had earlier openly applauded the UK's vote for Brexit and encouraged other countries to follow suit. He pulled the United States out of global agreements to fight climate change, tore up arms control treaties, slapped tariffs on his allies and picked fights with Germany over trade and defence spending. And he rolled out the red carpet for the populist leaders of Poland and Hungary just as they were defying EU censure over moves to snuff out judicial independence, civil rights and media pluralism.

No wonder senior officials in mainstream EU governments are quaking at the prospect that Trump may win in 2024 despite facing several impending trials over his efforts to overturn the results of the election he lost to Joe Biden. With Trump holding a commanding early lead in the race for the Republican nomination, European fears are exacerbated by his refusal to back Ukraine against Russian aggression and his vow to slap tariffs on EU imports. Continental European practitioners of Trump's attack-dog politics such as the Hungarian prime minister, Viktor

Orbán, and the de facto Polish leader, Jarosław Kaczyński, are still in power and continuing to fight Brussels over the rule of law, migration and LGBTQ+ rights.

Indeed, they may gain a new illiberal ally if Slovakia's former prime minister Robert Fico, who has lifted tactics straight out of the Trump playbook, achieves a comeback in the general election on 30 September. Fico claims the incumbent liberal government is trying to steal the election because some of his associates, including a former police chief, have been arrested in corruption investigations. Fico, whose Smer party is a member of the European Socialists and Democrats group, blames the west for Russia's war on Ukraine and says he'll stop all aid to Kyiv if he wins. Slovakian analysts fear he will dismantle the country's judicial independence and purge corruption fighters, as Orbán and Kaczyński have done, and that he will join them in fighting the EU's migration pact, which requires member states to either take a share of asylum seekers or contribute financially to their reception in other countries.

After Bratislava, the big test for Europe's Trumpists will be in Warsaw, where Kaczyński's conservative nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party is bidding for an unprecedented third term on 15 October by relentlessly demonising liberal centre-right opposition leader Donald Tusk and bashing Russia, Germany, Brussels and now even Ukraine, accused of ruining Polish farmers with grain imports. Hungary's Orbán, who last year hosted the US far-right Conservative Political Action

Conference (Cpac) in Budapest and is a buddy of former Fox TV host Tucker Carlson, used his grip on the media, social media and state apparatus to see off a challenge by a united opposition last year. He tarred his challengers as stooges of an EU depicted as trying to thrust gay and transgender propaganda on Hungarian schoolchildren.

PiS is trying to pull a similar trick in Poland by staging a referendum on the same day as the election with four slanted questions including: "Do you support the admission of thousands of illegal immigrants from the Middle East and Africa, in accordance with the forced relocation mechanism imposed by the European bureaucracy?" Former Slovenian prime minister Janez Janša, who jumped the gun and tweeted congratulations on Trump's "victory" in 2020 while votes were still being counted, was beaten by liberal opponents in 2022. But the veteran populist still leads the largest opposition party and may yet rise again from the political graveyard.

Trump's tactics of attacking and bypassing the mainstream media while favouring rightist news outlets that spread "alternative facts" have caught on in Europe. Kaczyński and Orbán have brought public broadcasters under their thumb. The sprouting of Fox News-style hard-right broadcasters in some countries, such as CNews in France, has given politicians of the radical right a platform to propound their narratives without facing the scrutiny of independent journalists. Elsewhere, populists are going direct to their followers on social media. However, efforts

by Steve Bannon, a former Trump strategist, to forge a unified European hard-right front to wield influence in the European parliament and undermine the EU from within have had little success. Bannon's attempt to found an academy for young rightist "gladiators" in an Italian monastery ended in legal eviction. Europe's mini-Trumps remain divided among themselves, notably over whether and how strongly to support Ukraine.

Some pre-war Putin sympathisers, such as Marine Le Pen's French National Rally and Italian deputy premier Matteo Salvini's League, sit in the hard-right Identity and Democracy (ID) group in the EU legislature. Others, who have backed Ukraine, sit in the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group, including Kaczyński's PiS and Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy. Yet others, such as Orbán's pro-Russian Fidesz party, are not attached to any political family. This has so far marginalised their influence in European affairs. The manifest damage of Brexit to the UK's economy has led Europe's radical right to mostly dump manifesto pledges to leave the EU or the euro, and to pledge instead to work for a "Europe of nation states" in which national law would take primacy over EU rules, unravelling the European legal order. Whether a Trump return to the White House would galvanise his European friends and admirers into building a united Eurosceptic movement is far from certain. But it would create a host of political, diplomatic and potentially military headaches for which Europe's governments are ill-prepared.

The Guardian

Republican Party's divisions on Ukraine could prove costly

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

DURING a busy week in New York at the UN General Assembly, the topic of Ukraine took center stage. However, in terms of US domestic politics, it created controversy. While Democrats advocated for more help for Ukraine, many Republicans were more reluctant and suspicious, claiming that they do not see an end to the conflict or to US aid. However, this is unprecedented, as the Republican Party is usually known as the one that is bullish on national security matters.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a passionate speech at the UN, saying that Russia cannot be trusted. He added that the fight for Ukraine is the world's fight. However, some Republicans are skeptical. They do not see any plan to end the conflict and no exit strategy for the US. They see it as an open-ended conflict. They also question the value of US taxpayers' money being spent on the conflict and wonder whether Ukraine is making any progress against Russia. This Republican attitude reflects the views of many of their voters, who are becoming less supportive of Ukraine. In August, Fox News found that 56 percent of Republicans thought the US should be doing less to help Kyiv.

If we look back 20 years, it was the Republicans who were adamant about going to war in Iraq, citing national security and the potential threat of the weapons of mass destruction allegedly possessed by

Iraq, while the Democrats were generally against the war. This was one reason Barack Obama won the Democratic nomination for president in 2008 ahead of Hillary Clinton. The latter voted in favor of authorizing the Iraq war and refused to admit that it was a mistake, which was viewed negatively by the Democratic base. Today, while the Republicans do not have a favorable view of Russia, a large faction does not want to confront the Kremlin. So, why the change of heart? The Republican Party is becoming dovish, while the Democratic Party is becoming hawkish. Is this a legacy of the isolationist streak of Donald Trump? It is no secret that Trump molded the Grand Old Party from the conservative party of America. Mitt Romney, who this month announced he would be retiring from politics next year, was seen as the Republican who best preserved the basic values of the party. But he became an anomaly after the party was taken over by the Trump effect. Is this change in the spirit of the Republican psyche an expression of guilt over the wars of George W. Bush? Maybe. However, this change is unlikely to help the Republican Party in next year's presidential and congressional elections.

Given that the general view of Russia and Vladimir Putin is negative, being soft on them will not resonate well with most voters. Independent voters are the ones who

tip the balance in US elections, not those committed to either party. While the Democrats are known for pursuing greater civil liberties and social services, the Republicans are known to be adamant on preserving national security. In times of threat, people generally favor national security, while in times of stability they favor social services and civil liberties. This is why Bush got reelected in 2004. The average American felt that the US was a nation at war and it was not the time to adopt a softer stance. Today, the average American does not want to see Ukraine lose its fight. Trump's entry into politics has created confusion on the Republican side. He has promoted the notion of isolationism. Though the former president is the front-runner in the Republican race, we cannot really gauge his effect on the average American's perception. In the last congressional elections, the Trump-endorsed candidates did not do as well as expected. That tells us that the Trump-driven narrative is not as convincing as it was before. In a time of conflict, the average American might not feel that isolationism is appealing.

We still do not know exactly what drove the change in Republican mindset. Have the voters' preferences changed and the politicians are tagging along, or is it the other way around? However, this indecision and split in the Republican Party is probably not going to help it in the next elections. Republicans are expressing

discontent and skepticism regarding US aid to Ukraine, saying that there is no end in sight. However, they offer no alternative. Unfortunately, both Russia and Ukraine have made so many sacrifices that any concessions would be viewed as a betrayal and an admission of defeat. Hence, ending the fighting through negotiations does not seem like a plausible solution, at least for now.

Also, while the Democrats are united and aligned with Joe Biden, the Republicans are divided and hesitant. This is a show of weakness that will probably turn off voters in the upcoming elections. Veteran Republicans like Mitch McConnell and Lindsey Graham think showing weakness to Putin will compromise America's position and even buttress China, while the more Trumpian republicans like Rand Paul are adamantly against funding aid for Ukraine. A proposed new \$24 billion aid package for Ukraine has exposed the divisions among Republicans, highlighting their lack of decisiveness and a unified vision. The funding for Ukraine is also tied to a government shutdown. If Congress fails to pass the funding legislation that includes the aid to Ukraine by the end of the month, the government will shut down and the Democrats will use the opportunity to blame the Republicans. Ukraine represents an issue that will show to the American public which is the party that has vision and decisiveness. The Republicans should not take that lightly.



Fiscal year 2022-23:

Digital transactions sustained its growth

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Annual Payment Systems Review for the fiscal year 2022-23 is released today by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The review presents growth and trends in banking transactions accompanied by the usage of payment systems' infrastructure and instruments in the country.

Digital transactions continued its growth trajectory owing to the increased consumers' preference for digital channels of mobile and internet banking for meeting their financial needs. Overall, mobile and internet banking transactions witnessed an annual growth of 57% by volume and 81% by value. Further, e-Banking transactions through Banks and Microfinance Banks (MFBs) grew by 29% while value increased

by 21% during the year. Similar growth pattern was also observed in Branchless Banking (BBs) transactions with number of transactions increasing by 28% and value by 45% during FY23.

Number of e-banking users also increased significantly. The year saw an increase of 15% in internet banking users, 30% in mobile banking users and 42% in BB mobile app users. Electronic Money Institutions (EMIs) also contributed meaningfully to the inclusion of digital banking users by opening more than 2 million e-wallets since their inception.

The e-banking is attracting more customers due to its efficient and instant payment solutions, and its transactions are growing at a steady pace over the years. In contrast, paper-based transactions have

declined by more than 4% during FY23 and cumulatively around 20% in last five years. However, value of paper-based transactions increased by 20% in FY23.

Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system of Pakistan and Raast - Pakistan's Instant Payment System, owned and operated by SBP, facilitates financial institutions and banking customers in processing and settling the transactions. During the year, RTGS processed 4.9 million transactions amounting to PKR 640.4 trillion, while 155 million transactions were processed on Raast amounting to PKR 3.2 trillion during this fiscal year.

Financial institutions are also strengthening their e-banking infrastructure by expanding Point-of-Sale terminals, Automated Teller Machines, Cash/Cheque

Deposit Machines (CDMs), e-commerce merchants and agents' network to meet customers' needs. As of June 30, 2023, there were 115,288 POS terminals, 17,808 ATMs, 520 CDMs and 6,889 e-commerce merchants for providing payments services to the customers. During the fiscal year, number of transactions through POS (199.3 million) and ATMs (809.7 million) grew annually by 45% and 17% respectively. Domestic e-commerce transactions using payment cards were 31.8 million which amounted to PKR 142 billion during the year.

As of June 30, 2023, there were 58.1 million payment cards in circulation of which 44.5 million were issued by banks and MFBs, 10.8 million by branchless banks, and 2.8 million by EMIs.



LAHORE: President & CEO BOP Zafar Masud performing first transaction using BOP Smart Merchant solution.

PSX gains 87.38 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Wednesday and gained 87.38 points, showing positive change of 0.19 per cent, closing at 46,365.04 points against 46,277.66 points the previous day.

A total of 177,497,178 shares valuing Rs.6.928 billion were traded during the day as compared to 259,046,624 shares valuing Rs. 6.688 billion the previous day.

As many as 325 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 172 of them recorded gains and 124 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 29 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Maple Leaf with 11,085,943 shares at Rs.30.18 per share, Pak Petroleum with 9,115,995 shares at Rs.74.47 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 7,096,855 shares at Rs.1.14 per share.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.450.00 per share price, closing at Rs.20,550.00, whereas the runner-up was Pak Hotels with a Rs.15.45 rise in its per share price to Rs.251.99.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.47.21 per share closing at Rs7,142.79, followed by Pak Services with a Rs.29.85 decline to close at Rs.701.15.

Rupee gains Rs1.05

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday witnessed the 17th consecutive recovery session as it gained Rs1.05 against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs288.75 against the previous day's closing of Rs289.80.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs287.6 and Rs290.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 1.86 to close at Rs305.03 against the last day's closing of Rs306.89, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paisa to close at Rs1.93, whereas a decrease of Rs 2.29 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs350.74 as compared to the last closing of Rs353.03.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal declined by 28 paisa each to close at Rs78.61 and Rs76.97 respectively.

GPI critical for Pakistan's economic sustainability

LAHORE (APP): Agriculture sector still holds significant prospects and opportunities for investors to revitalize the ailing economy of Pakistan.

Green Pakistan Initiative (GPI), an effort under the newly formed Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), would prove to be catalyst for the most attractive investment opportunity in Pakistan.

Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) President (Lahore Chapter) Momin Ali Malik told APP here on Wednesday that over the last couple of months, most of the local business groups which they met were all set to invest in corporate farming that means momentum and support for the initiative was very strong. PBF strongly believed the Green Pakistan Initiative was not only an opportunity but also critical for the sustainability of the domestic economy, he remarked. "In our opinion, triggered by Green Pakistan Initiative, the agricultural sector can be the eye catching theme in Pakistan over the next five to ten

BOP launches Merchant Acquiring Business

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Bank of Punjab (BOP), recognized as one of the nation's premier commercial banks, has embarked on a pioneering journey by unveiling its cutting-edge Point of Sale (POS) payment solutions and online payment gateway services. BOP is the 7th Bank offering this service out of the total of 41 commercial and specialized banks in the country. This strategic move reinforces BOP's commitment to enriching its digital retail offerings and expediting the evolution of the nation's digital ecosystem.

In pursuit of this ambitious endeavor, the Bank of Punjab (BOP) has forged a strategic alliance with PayNet Private Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Omega IT Solutions United Arab Emirates renowned for its expertise in Digital Payment business solutions. This collaboration signifies a pivotal milestone in BOP's mission to introduce Point-

of-Sale (POS) payment services to the market, with plans to expand its reach through additional Independent Sales Organizations (ISOs) for comprehensive nationwide coverage.

The Bank will act as a link between merchants, issuers and payment networks by offering them state-of-the-art POS machines and make cashless transactions available over the counters, enabling retailers to benefit from the adoption of digital payments. The POS machines support acceptance of all types of cards.

To commemorate this momentous occasion, a ceremony was held at a prominent local hotel in Lahore.

The event served as a platform to recognize the invaluable contributions of key individuals who played pivotal roles in this project. Dignitaries present at the ceremony included Mr. Zafar Masud, President & CEO of BOP, and other esteemed members of the senior management team.

Speaking on this occasion, Mr. Zafar Masud remarked, "The Bank of Punjab is diligently spearheading the modernization of retail services within the country by enhancing our digital offerings and promoting economic documentation. We are already committed to providing top-notch services to SMEs, corporate entities, and government sectors. With the launch of our Merchant Acquiring business, we aim to fortify these strategic partnerships, empowering BOP to deliver innovative and industry-leading payment solutions to customers nationwide."

As the Bank of Punjab embraces the future with its Merchant Acquiring Business, it underscores its dedication to fostering a digitally advanced and financially inclusive landscape in Pakistan. The bank's unwavering commitment to excellence and innovation promises a brighter and more accessible future for all.

Minister commitment to support steel industry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Dr. Gohar Ejaz on Wednesday reiterated his commitment to support the steel industry and ensure its growth for industrial growth in the country.

Minister Dr. Gohar Ejaz firmly stated that the path forward for the steel industry and other sectors in Pakistan lies in relying on indigenous raw materials, which aligns with the government's broader vision of self-sufficiency and economic growth, said a press release issued here.

Zaigham Adil Rizvi, CEO of National Steel along with a delegation from the steel industry called on the Federal Minister for Commerce, Industries & Production, Dr. Gohar Ejaz at the Commerce Ministry.

The purpose of this meeting was to address and resolve impediments to the growth of the steel sector, a vital component of Pakistan's industrial landscape.

In the context of safeguarding local industry, the Commerce Minister also discussed the possibility of tariffs on imported steel products, indicating a willingness to explore this option. He stated, "I will help you find marketplace solutions for your problems."

The Minister stressed the importance of sourcing raw materials locally to reduce the financial burden on the national exchequer and promote self-reliance in the steel industry.

Dr. Ejaz further emphasized the need for value addition in all sectors and outlined plans to enhance the competitiveness of Pakistan's exports. "We will make our exports highly competitive and focus on

industries in which Pakistan has a comparative advantage," he stated. Additionally, he pledged to explore new export markets to foster growth within the steel industry.

One noteworthy highlight of the meeting was the commitment to promote business-to-business (B2B) trade within the steel sector. Dr. Ejaz assured the delegation that facilitating growth through B2B interactions with other countries would eliminate the necessity for subsidies or preferential taxation, fostering self-sustained growth.

The representatives of the steel industry underscored the significance of affordable energy for their operations. Minister Dr. Ejaz responded positively, assuring the delegation of his close collaboration with the Minister for Energy to address this concern effectively.

SECP urged to setup facilitation desk for business community

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry acting president Ijaz Khan Afridi urged the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) to establish a facilitation desk for the business community at chamber house.

He urged the government and relevant authorities to take pragmatic steps for ease of doing business and special incentives and facilities should be offered to businesspersons to improve the national economy.

Ijaz Afridi was speaking at an awareness seminar on 'Ease of Doing Business and Inclusion of Women in Business' jointly organized by Sarhad Chamber in collaboration with Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) at

SCCI's house.

The seminar was attended by members of the SCCI executive committee Ms Qurtul Ain, S Minhaj-uddin, Hamza Ibrahim Butt, former vice president Abidullah Yousofzai, Faiz Rasool, Saddam Gul, Fazal Wahid, Ihsanullah, Faiz Rasool along with traders, industrialists, importers and exporters in a large number.

Deputy Registrar Incharge Company Registration SECP Peshawar Division Saqib Aslam during the seminar enlightened the participants through his multi-media presentation regarding registration, licensing process, stock market along with reforms and amendments in laws and regulations made by SECP for ease and facilitation of business community.

The senior official said reforms had been brought

regarding company registration, licensing through amending relevant laws and regulations for ease of doing business.

Saqib Aslam said the process of digitization and automation has been initiated to ease the difficulties of the business community.

He claimed approximately 200,000 companies had so far registered with SECP under the automatic and swift system.

The Deputy Registrar said human intervention has been reduced by a digitization and automation system. He said Pakistan's position in the world ranking index with regard to Ease of Doing Business has been improved.

He said SECP will soon introduce a one window policy to facilitate the business community. He said Senior official said

SECP's project for end-to-end digital transformation and automation is called "Leading Efficiency through Automation Prowess (LEAP)" will be launched by the end of October this year.

Earlier, SCCI's acting president Ijaz Khan Afridi thanked the SECP for conducting an awareness seminar on such an important theme. He appreciated the government, SECP and other relevant institutions for the reform initiatives because of which Pakistan's position had been improved in the 'Ease of Doing Business' Index globally.

Ijaz Afridi on the occasion eulogized the role of women in development of the national economy and stressed the need for providing equal opportunities to them for playing their consistent role in economic development of the country.

IIL holds interactive 75th Annual General Meeting

F.P. Report

KARACHI: International Industries Limited (IIL), Pakistan's largest manufacturer and exporter of pipes & tubes, held its 75th Annual General Meeting (AGM), followed by a Corporate Briefing Session at the Beach Luxury Hotel in Karachi on Wednesday.

The AGM witnessed the presence of shareholders, board members, executives, and other esteemed stakeholders of the Company. During the meeting, participants had the opportunity to review IIL's performance, receive a briefing on its strategic goals, and discuss the annual financial report, showcasing the organization's financial results and achievements over the past year.



In tandem with the

AGM, IIL hosted a Corporate Briefing Session for financial analysts and other members of the banking & finance community, wherein key company executives presented a comprehensive overview of the organization's operations, strategic initiatives, and business outlook. The session aimed to enhance

transparency and provide stakeholders with a deeper understanding of the company's direction and aspirations. "We are delighted to engage key stakeholders at our Annual General Meeting and Corporate Briefing Sessions," stated Sohail R. Bhojani, IIL's Chief Executive Officer.

Efforts on to broaden tax base, says Chief Commissioner IR

FAISALABAD (APP): Chief Commissioner Inland Revenue (IR) FBR Faisalabad Zubair Bilal said on Wednesday the FBR had expedited efforts to broaden tax base by utilizing data of 30 major departments and banks.

Addressing a meeting of business community in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that in the first phase, notices would be issued only to the individuals executing big transactions which would ultimately convince other potential taxpayers to join the tax net.

He said there was a trust deficit between the taxpayers and the tax collectors which could be dispelled by promoting reliable and friendly linkages.

He acknowledged the importance of taxpayers and said that they were actually partners in national uplift and we must remove their apprehensions so that they could enter into the tax net with their own sweet

will. About trust deficit, he said that its root cause was lack of transparency and accountability.

"Every Muslim fulfills his religious obligation of Zakat by calculating and paying it in-time without any coercion as he has confidence that this amount would be utilized judiciously. "On the other hand, while paying tax, he feels pain as he has suspicions about the spending of his hard earned tax money", he added. He said: "Tax evaders are also part of our society and we must convince them to fulfill this national obligation with full responsibility and thus play their role in the national uplift".

He said that technology would be used to pick the richer sections of the society still out of the tax net.

He said that prospective taxpayers might file their return under self-assessment scheme and his declared income would be accepted without raising any objection.

He said the FBR was

fully cognizant of the unprecedented price hike and notice would not be issued to the individuals with income of less than one million and this practice was operational all over the country.

Zubair Bilal said that tax was actually a by-product of businesses as people paid just a peanut from their income to be re-spent on have-nots by the government.

He said that in the prevailing trust deficit, it was very difficult to broaden the tax base but we were doling out 99 per cent facilitation and only harsh steps were taken in case of 1 per cent.

Responding to a question about the recovery targets, he said that there was no scientific formula to calculate it and generally these were based on estimates only. About separate recovery targets for the new filers, he said that there might be a rush of buyers in a shop but there was hell of difference in his returns.

"Its reason may be that he

preferred tax evasion instead of tax planning", he said and added that 90 per cent tax was paid by the banks and ten other major corporations.

Commenting on the payment of refunds, he said that during this month Faisalabad Tax Office (FTO) paid refunds to the tune of Rs 4.5 billion while during this period our recoveries were almost half of it. About super tax, he said that a case was pending with the court, however he would clear the refund of advance taxes liberally.

He disclosed that last year FTO had received 110,000 returns but this year its numbers had jumped to 135,000 showing a satisfactory increase of 20 percent. Out of these numbers, 40,000 were new filers, he added.

Earlier, FCCI President Dr Khurram Tariq addressed the meeting. Later, he presented FCCI shield to the Chief Commissioner Inland Revenue (IR) FBR Faisalabad Zubair Bilal.



In brief

Nepal hit record 314-3

H A N G Z H O U (Agencies): Nepal became the first team to score 300 in a men's T20 as records tumbled in their thrashing of Mongolia at the Asian Games in China. Nepal scored 314-3 before dismissing Mongolia for 41 to win by a men's record margin of 273 runs. Kushal Malla hit a 34-ball hundred, the fastest T20 international ton, and Dipendra Singh Airee the fastest fifty. Airee made his half-century in nine balls and ended unbeaten on 52 from 10 while Malla scored 137 not out from 50. The previous record for the fastest T20 international hundred was 35 balls, jointly held by South Africa's David Miller, India's Rohit Sharma and Czech Republic's Sudesh Wickramasekara. Airee's knock featured eight sixes and two twos, including sixes from each of his first five deliveries. He ended with a strike-rate of 520 runs per hundred balls - the first time a batter has ended an innings of 10 balls or more with a strike-rate over 500. Malla struck eight fours and 12 sixes after coming in at 42-1 in the fifth over. In total there were 26 sixes in Nepal's innings giving them another record. The previous international record was jointly held by Afghanistan and West Indies while Balke Legend hit 23 in the Afghanistan Premier League in 2018. Mongolia became an International Cricket Council (ICC) associate member in 2021 but were competing in their first international match. Nepal are 17th in the ICC rankings.

Tamim out of World Cup

DHAKA (Agencies): Bangladesh will be without their most prolific one-day batter Tamim Iqbal at the World Cup after a persistent back injury dashed the opener's hopes of playing in the showpiece event in India beginning on Oct. 5. The 34-year-old had said in July he was retiring from international cricket but reversed his decision a day later after meeting with the country's prime minister. The back injury forced him to step down as the team's 50-overs captain and he then missed the Asia Cup. Tamim returned for this month's home series against New Zealand month but complained of discomfort, prompting team management to leave him out of the 15-man World Cup squad, which is led by all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan. "We are all aware that Tamim Iqbal is a long-term injury concern," chief selector Minhajul Abedin told reporters on Tuesday, adding that the player complained of discomfort after the first match against New Zealand. "We discussed it with the team management, and didn't want to take a risk in a long World Cup campaign. It is a very important event." Tamim's scored 8,357 ODI runs the most by a Bangladesh batter. He has played in 243 one-day matches. In his absence, Tanzid Hasan will partner Litton Das at the top of their batting order, followed by Najmul Hossain Shanto at number three. Shakib and his men will reach Guwahati later on Wednesday and play two warm-up matches in the east Indian city before moving north to Dharamsala for their tournament opener against Afghanistan on Oct. 7. Bangladesh squad: Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Mushfiqur Rahim, Litton Das, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Towhid Hridoy, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Nasum Ahmed, Mahedi Hasan, Tanzid Hasan, Tanzim Hasan, Mahmudullah.



HYDERABAD: Shaheen Afridi and Babar Azam arrive in Hyderabad ahead of the ODI World Cup.

Tight security as Pakistan arrive in India for Cricket World

H Y D E R A B A D (Agencies): In a momentous event that has ignited the passion of cricket enthusiasts on both sides of the border, Pakistan cricket team has finally arrived in Hyderabad ahead of the mega event on Wednesday. Pakistan's men's cricket team is visiting India since 2016. As the aircraft door swung open, Pakistani fans, who had been eagerly waiting at the Hyderabad airport, erupted in cheers and waved the beloved green and white flag, creating a spectacle of unity and sportsmanship.

Among the jubilant crowd was the iconic figure known as "Chacha Bashir," a renowned Pakistani supporter whose spirited

chants have echoed through stadiums around the world.

However, it was reported that Chacha Bashir was momentarily silenced, as authorities prevented him from raising the volume on his passionate Pakistan slogans. The arrival of the Pakistani cricket squad has injected new life into Hyderabad, as cricket fever begins to grip the city.

After a well-deserved rest, the players are set to dive headfirst into intensive training sessions in preparation for the highly-anticipated ICC World Cup.

After the conclusion of the three-match series against Australia, Pakistan's arch-rivals India are set to host the One Day

International (ODI) edition of the ICC World Cup which is scheduled to get underway on October 5.

The Green shirts departed from Lahore early morning on Wednesday to touch down in Hyderabad later in the night. Champions in the 1992 edition of the ICC World Cup, Babar's Pakistan side will play their first warm-up game against 2019 runners-up New Zealand on September 29.

The Asian giants will then meet five-time champions Australia on October 3. Babar's men will kick-start their campaign in the World Cup against the Netherlands at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium on October 6.

Afghanistan's Naveen-ul-Haq to retire from ODIs after World Cup

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Afghanistan fast bowler Naveen-ul-Haq has announced that he will retire from ODIs following the conclusion of the upcoming World Cup in India.

Naveen, who made his international debut in 2016, has represented Afghanistan in seven ODIs, and taken 14 wickets at an average of 25.42.

While he continues to be a key player for the country in T20Is - he has played 27 matches in the format - Naveen has not played an ODI since 2021. That also prompted him to take a break from the 50-over format in 2022, so he could prepare "mentally and physically" for last year's T20 World Cup.

Besides internationals, Naveen has also been a regular fixture in T20 leagues around the world, including the IPL, LPL, BBL and PSL.

Earlier this month, Naveen was named in Afghanistan's 15-member squad for the World Cup, marking the first time he was included in the ODI fold in more than two years.

He is expected to form a part of their pace attack along with Fazalhaq Farooqi, Abdul Rahman and allrounder Azmatullah Omarzai.

Naveen, 24, said in a message on social media that it wasn't an "easy decision" to retire, but one that he made in order to "prolong my playing career".

"It has been an absolute honour to represent my country and I would like to announce my retirement from the ODI format at end of this World Cup and will continue to wear this blue jersey in T20 cricket for my country," he said.

"It hasn't been an easy decision to make but to prolong my playing career, I had to take this tough decision would like to thank the Afghanistan Cricket Board and all my fans for their support and unwavering love."

Afghanistan are set to begin their World Cup campaign against Bangladesh on October 7 in Dharamsala.

PCB announces three-year central contracts list

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) confirmed that it has successfully negotiated a three-year central contracts deal with its senior players that will run from July 1 2023 to June 30, 2026.

As many as 25 cricketers will be offered a momentous deal that will include a portion of ICC revenue.

Unlike last year, red-ball and white-ball national contracts have been merged. This decision was proposed by the central contract committee as a way to evaluate players in terms of winning matches and aimed at promoting fairness, a transparent selection process.

The list of players will be divided into four categories with significant increases in monthly retainers. Revenue from ICC will be incorporated in overall monthly remuneration.

Category A (3 players):

Category B (6): 144 %

Category C (2): 135 %

Category D (14): 127 %

Below is the list of players with categories who are being offered contracts:

Category A: Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Shah Afridi

Category B: Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Imam-ul-Haq, Mohammad Nawaz, Naseem Shah and Shadab Khan

Category C: Imad Wasim and Abdullah Shafique

Category D: Fahim Ashraf, Hasan Ali, Iftikhar Ahmed, Ihsanullah, Mohammad Harris, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Sarfaraz Ahmad, Saud Shakeel, Shah Nawaz Dahani, Shan Masood, Usama Mir and Zaman Khan

Players' match fees will also see a major hike: 50% increment in Test, 25% in ODI and 12.5% in T20I.

Centrally contracted players who are playing domestic cricket will be paid 50% of international match fee. In addition, players will be allowed to play two foreign leagues in each season.

The three-year tenure of the contracts will have its financial model locked for the term. Player performance however will be reviewed after every 12 months. The previous central contract cycle expired on 30 June and the new deal will be deemed effective from 1 July, 2023.

PCB Management Committee Chairperson, Zaka Ashraf said: "I am pleased to announce that after lengthy negotiations, the PCB has come to a financial agreement with the players. We believe that our players are the true assets of Pakistan cricket, and it is our utmost priority to ensure their well-being

and provide them with the best possible services.

"This deal signifies our commitment to improving the financial health of our players, acknowledging their hard work and dedication to the game. We firmly believe that a financially secure and motivated team is more likely to excel on the field.

As we move forward, the entire nation stands behind these players to do well in the upcoming ICC Men's World Cup. We have faith in their abilities, and we are confident that they will make the nation proud with their outstanding performances."

Pakistan captain, Babar Azam said: "It is by far a historic deal. I am extremely happy and satisfied that we have reached an agreement with the PCB. It has been a lengthy and, at times, challenging negotiation process, but I believe we have reached a fair and beneficial agreement for both parties.

I would like to extend my special thanks to chairman Zaka Ashraf for personally overseeing and facilitating these negotiations. He took personal interest and his commitment to Pakistan cricket are truly commendable. This agreement signifies a new chapter in players' career and in Pakistan cricket. It is a testament to the hard work and dedication of all players towards the game and now we are all geared up ahead of the ICC Men's World Cup."

Pak athletics team reaches China for games

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan athletics team arrived in China on Wednesday to participate in the athletics competitions of ongoing 19th Asian Games at Hangzhou.

In athletic competitions of the Asian Games, 13 men and four women will be seen in action, while the team officials include Olympian Sadaf Siddiqui, Fayyaz Hussain, Sajjad Mahmood and Muhammad Sajid.

Olympian Sadaf Siddiqui who is the team official of athletic team said, "We are thankful to the Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) and Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) for the participation of a large number of Pakistani athletes in the Asian Games."

Sadaf Siddiqui further stated, "We are hopeful that the national athletes will make the country pride in the athletic competitions."

She said that China, the host country for the Asian Games, has made the best arrangements for hosting the Asian biggest event.

While Asian Games athletics events will be held

from September 29 to October 5 and country's premier javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem along with Mohammad Yasir will be in action in the javelin throw event. The other athletes include Gohar Shahbaz, Shajar Abbas (100 and 200 meters race), Muhammad Asad ur Rehman (400m), Waqas Akbar (800m), Muhammad Akhtar (5000m), Farhan Ilyas, Abid Razzaq (110m and 400m hurdles), Sohail Amir (10000m race), Jafar Ashraf (pole vault), Muhammad Afzal (Long Jump), Shehroz Khan (High Jump), Tameen Khan (100M), Ghazala Ramzan (100 Meters Hurdles), Rabila Faraz (1500M), Farhat Bano (10,000 Meters Race) will be seen in action for medal race.

On the other hand, the Athletics Federation of Pakistan (AFP) surprisingly stopped two female athletes Sahib E Asra and Arooj Kiran from going to China a few hours before the departure, on which the athletes have expressed deep disappointment.

Pakistan beat India in Asian Games

HANGZHOU (Agencies): Pakistan Wednesday defeated arch-rivals India 2-1 in team event of Squash at the Asian Games being played in China. Noor Zaman gave Pakistan a winning start by defeating his Indian opponent Abhay Singh 3-1 in 51 minutes.

Zaman won the first game 11-8. However, he went down fighting in the second game that Singh won 12-10. However, Zaman kept his cool and wrapped up the match by winning next two games with identical 11-8, 11-8 scoreline.

India's star player Saurav Ghosal then pulled it off for his team to level the tie as he proved too much to handle for Pakistan's Asim Khan. Ghosal won in straight games with scoreline 11-3, 11-5 and 11-1 showing his dominance on the court.

It was down to Nasir Iqbal and Mahesh Mangaonkar to decide the tie. Nasir Iqbal prevailed in a hard-fought four games match as he defeated his rival 3-1 to seal the fate of the Pakistan-India match. Iqbal won first two games 11-6 and 13-11. However, Mangaonkar won the third game 11-9.

Australia end losing streak with consolation win over India

RAJKOT (Agencies): Mitchell Marsh led the batting onslaught with his 96 as Australia posted 352-7, a total their bowlers defended by bowling out India for 286 in Rajkot.

The hosts took the three-match series 2-1 but Australia finish on a high ahead of the World Cup starting October 5 in India.

Maxwell, who returned to the team alongside Mitchell Starc after the two players recovered from injuries, scored just five with the bat but made an impact with his impressive off-spin.

"I feel like I've come into this World Cup nice and fresh and I'm excited to hit the ground running," Maxwell said after being named man of the match. "Nice to get a nice result tonight." The all-rounder added: "It's nice to chip in, if Mitch Marsh was there on the field, we would have chopped and changed (on the bowling). Since he was not there, had to bowl more.

That will be the role of the allrounders in this World Cup." Maxwell got the first three wickets including skipper Rohit Sharma, for 81, and star batsman Virat Kohli, for 56, after a brisk start by

India. Rohit raised his fifty in 31 balls and seemed to have the chase in control but Maxwell got the captain with a stunning caught and bowled in his second over.

He then sent back Kohli soon after the former captain's 66th ODI fifty and, despite a fighting 48 by Shreyas Iyer, the Indian batting folded in 49.4 overs. Pace bowler Josh Hazlewood took two wickets as Australia ended the losing streak which started in South Africa earlier this month.

Top-order fires
Batsmen set up victory after Marsh tore into the Indian bowlers in attacking partnerships that included a second-wicket stand of 137 with Steve Smith, who hit 74. The top four batsmen stood out with Marsh, David Warner (56), Smith and Marnus Labuschagne (72) all contributing to a mammoth total that looked like going beyond 400 before India hit back.

Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah took three wickets while left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav took two. India had only 13 players to pick for their XI with some rested and a virus in the camp that made Ishan Kishan miss out.



RAJKOT: Virat Kohli brings out the cover drive.



In brief

ANF seizes 118kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) seized 118 kilogram narcotics and arrested four drug peddlers in crackdowns conducted in various cities of the country. The spokesman of ANF said that 86 cocaine filled capsules with total one kilogram cocaine recovered from stomach of a foreign national woman at Jinnah International Airport Karachi. The woman arrived Karachi from Brandy, an Eastern African country. During a raid in Shikarpur Sukkur, a drug peddler hailing from Qambar Shahdadkot was arrested with seven kilogram hashish. The ANF during search of a suspected vehicle at Peshawar's Ring road recovered 24 kilogram hashish and 18 kilogram opium from secret cavities of the vehicle. A drug peddler hailing from Narowal who was attempting to smuggle drugs to Punjab was also arrested. Owner of a private courier company was apprehended after recovery of 3,613kg methamphetamine (Ice) from a parcel present in his car near Wapda Town Lahore. The recovered drug was tactfully concealed PRC pipes placed in the parcel and detainee in preliminary investigation revealed of facilitating drug pusher abroad. The ANF on a tip off recovered 65 kilogram hashish hidden in unpopulated area of Gwadar for smuggling. The recovered narcotics were confiscated and after registering separate cases under Drugs Act, investigations were kicked off.

502 cases registered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have taken proactive measures to address serious traffic violations by registering cases against offenders and also cancelled multiple driving licenses. A police spokesman said that a total of 502 First Information Reports (FIRs) have been filed across various police stations under the jurisdiction of the Islamabad Capital Police against individuals involved in diverse traffic violations. Additionally, the driving licenses of 649 drivers have been revoked as a consequence. In addition to these actions, 106 permits have been temporarily suspended, and 43 individuals have been served with notices for their involvement in traffic infractions. To ensure the enforcement of traffic rules and regulations, specialized teams from the Islamabad Capital Police have been deployed strategically at key boulevards throughout the city. Furthermore, Islamabad Capital Police FM radio 92.4 is currently broadcasting a dedicated program on traffic rules to educate and inform the public. Citizens are earnestly urged to fulfill their civic responsibilities in this regard, with the ultimate aim of safeguarding the lives of our valued residents.

Personnel briefed

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Following the special directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the security personnel deputed at High Security Zone were briefed to perform effective duties and be ready to deal with any untoward incident in a timely manner, a public relations officer said. He said that SP Security visited the pickets of the high security zone and briefed the Islamabad Capital Police personnel who were deputed to security duties. The high security zone encompasses pivotal government and private establishments, diplomatic missions, and other vital assets, necessitating an unwavering focus on their safeguarding, he added. The security personnel were briefed by avoiding the use of mobile phones and ensuring the bulletproof jackets and helmets.



ISLAMABAD: Ms Florence Rolle, Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Pakistan called on Dr. Kausar Abdullah Malik, Caretake Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research.

Pakistan announces to digitize hajj operations

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication in collaboration with the religious ministry has announced to fully digitize next year's hajj operations. The decision was taken during a special committee meeting constituted under the prime minister's directive earlier this month.

The meeting was chaired by caretaker IT Minister Dr Umar Saif, Religious Affairs Minister Aneeq Ahmed. During the meeting, the IT minister told participants that a smartphone application and web portal would be developed to digitize entire Hajj operation.

The IT minister directed the National Information

Technology Board (NITB) to immediately upgrade the existing system of Hajj operation.

Meanwhile, the caretaker government has prepared the Hajj policy 2024. The Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs Aneeq Ahmed said in a statement that the federal cabinet will approve the Hajj policy within 10 days as the delay in approval of the Hajj policy resulted in several problems.

He said that the policy also includes 40 days and short-duration Hajj. Pakistan Hajj pilgrims will not get lost now as the ministry will provide them with two suitcases with specific colour and designs, he

added. The Minister further said that the documents of Hajj pilgrim including passport, residence and other details will be available in the QR code on the suitcase. Additionally, the pilgrims will be able to talk on call to Pakistan with unlimited call time.

Earlier, Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed said that the Saudi Arabia government would provide additional facilities and improved services to Pakistani pilgrims during the Hajj 2024. He said accommodation, meals, and transportation for pilgrims would be improved with a more comfortable and convenient experience.

37 more dengue cases reported

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 37 more dengue cases were reported in Rawalpindi during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 1,093 in the district.

District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control (DCEPC), Dr Sajjad Mahmood, Wednesday said that, among the new cases, 21 cases had arrived from Pothohar town urban, 11 from Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi, four from Chaklala Cantonment and one from Gujjar Khan.

He said 135 patients were admitted to district hospitals of which 109 were confirmed cases while 984 were discharged after treatment. Dr Sajjad informed that the district administration had registered 49 FIRs, issued tickets to five, sealed two premises, and a fine of Rs 49,250 was imposed against the violations of dengue SOPs during the last 24 hours. During indoor surveillance, in the last 24 hours, the teams checked 17,664 houses and larvae were found in 1,076 homes. Similarly, he added that while checking 6,628 places, the teams found larvae at 121 sites during outdoor surveillance.

IRSA releases 185,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 185,000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 132,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1544.91 feet and was 146.91 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 72,000 cusecs and 100,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1228.70 feet, which was 178.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet.

The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 13,900 cusecs and 38,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 180,300, 103,500, 104,600 and 48,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 19,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 4,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

2000 cops to perform security duties on Eid Milad-un-Nabi

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police have chalked out a comprehensive security plan for the main procession of 12th Rabiul Awal according to which, strict patrolling would be ensured during processions and other religious gatherings in the city.

According to the security plan, more than 2000 police personnel including Zonal DPOs, SDPOs Islamabad Capital Police including Rangers and personnel of other law enforcement agencies would perform patrolling and security duties.

The main procession of the city would be completely cordoned off through heavy deployment. Procession would start from sector G-7 Jamia

Masjid Al Raza and culminate near the shrine of Hazrat Sakhi Mahmud at Aabpara market after passing through various routes.

The monitoring of processions would be ensured through drone cameras and CCTV cameras. Zonal DPOs, SDPOs, Officer Incharge Police Stations and other police officials would visit the routes of procession and ensure effective coordination among the security personnel performing duties.

Senior police officials would guide the subordinates and boost their morale in accomplishing duties in a responsible manner. The teams of CTD, police commandos would perform security duties on the occasion while special teams of Rangers and other law enforcement departments would assist in smooth performance of their

duties.

The police officers including DPOs would also visit various police posts lying in the route of procession, check security duties and brief cops on how to ensure effective security.

Close liaison would be maintained with organizers of procession and other gatherings in the city. Cooperation of organizers would be ensured with the police and law enforcing officials. Walk through gates would be installed at all the entry points of procession and metal detectors would be used for checking of participants.

ICCPPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan said that it is the prime responsibility of police to ensure protection to the lives as well as property of the citizens and Islamabad police would make utmost effort to fulfill it.

Health minister meets Saudi ambassador

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan met with the ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki on Wednesday and discussed matters related to the health sector.

The minister said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have historically strong brotherly relations. The Saudi ambassador assured that Saudi Arabia will fully cooperate with Pakistan in the welfare projects of its people.

The minister shared that Pakistan is all set to host the first-ever Global Health Security Summit later this year in Islamabad reflecting the strongest commitment of the country at the highest level to the Global Health Security Agenda.

The Saudi ambassador highly appreciated the initiative of holding the Global Health Security Summit.

The minister shared that coordinated steps are being taken to ensure an uninterrupted supply of medicines across the country on a permanent basis.

The ambassador was informed that although Pakistan is manufacturing vaccines there is a need for transfer of technology to enhance capacity. He added the ministry is looking forward to starting collaboration with friendly countries. The minister said that steps are being taken to establish Pharma Park in the country. He said that through the transfer of technology, the production of molecules will improve the supply of medicines.

Dr Nadeem directs to take action against unregistered drugs: Caretaker Federal Minister

for Health Dr Nadeem Jan issued an order to start a crackdown against counterfeit, unregistered and smuggled drugs.

According to a spokesperson of the Ministry of Health, the minister directed that the sale storage and distribution points of all such medicines should be stopped immediately. Dr Nadeem Jan said that strict legal action should be taken against the elements involved in these unregistered fake medicines.

He said that the scope of surveillance in the market should be increased with checks on distributors, medical stores and wholesalers in the markets. The minister said that effective measures are being taken for the uninterrupted supply of quality and safe medicines to the people.

Govt all set to launch 'tourism app' soon

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Tourism Wasi Shah Wednesday on 'World Tourism Day' announced that the ministry would soon launch a 'tourism app' for the convenience of the public to provide one-click information related to tourism destinations and focus on promoting medical tourism in the country.

In an exclusive talk, the minister said that the caretaker government would promote eco-tourism under a private-public partnership in areas abundant in tourist attractions. "Tourists visiting Pakistan will very soon have an official application providing authentic information and access to the state tourism department," he added.

He said, "The app will be made available on the Google Play Store for Android users, adding, the app will have all information pertaining to tourist spots, means of transport, and other services."

Replying to a question, he said, "Governments

will create a favorable environment for the growth of the medical tourism industry through the implementation of various policies."

He said, "These long-term policies can directly or indirectly impact the attractiveness of a destination for international patients, adding, that we will engage public-private partnerships with healthcare organizations to jointly develop and promote medical tourism initiatives." "Our plan is to make tourism an engine of economic growth and employment generation for the youngsters in coming years," he added.

To another question, he said, "Pakistan has different climatic zones and numerous untapped tourist spots which can be promoted and projected to the world." He said, "His government is focused on eco-tourism to ensure environmental conservation while managing tourist spots."

The minister further said that media should play an active role in promoting tourism sites,

adding, that filmmakers and play writers should focus on exploring more tourist destinations." He said all stakeholders should not only run awareness campaigns regarding cleanliness but also ensure effective cleaning arrangements at the tourist spots on a daily basis.

He also hailed the work of the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation in the promotion of tourism in the country. "We are pushing green initiatives to promote responsible tourism in the country and the ministry has various plans to ensure small businesses have the resources for green investments and to create local jobs," he added.

Wasi Shah while admiring the natural beauty of Pakistan said, "We are blessed with a country that is home to some of the world's most fascinating tourist attractions, including the highest mountain peaks, stunning coastlines, beautiful lakes, lush green valleys, ancient civilizations, and a rich cultural heritage."

CDA initiates crackdown on encroachments

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a determined effort to combat encroachments and illegal constructions, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has launched a comprehensive crackdown across various areas of the federal capital.

Following the directives of Chairman Captain (R) Anwar ul Haq, the Building Control Directorate of the CDA, in collaboration with the Enforcement Directorate, local administration, and Islamabad Police, executed a stringent operation targeting several locations, including GT Road, T-Chowk, Sohan Ada, and

adjacent areas. The operation resulted in the demolition of multiple commercial buildings found in violation of building by-laws.

During this operation against building by-law violations, a total of 14 structures constructed without CDA approval were demolished, and notices were issued to the property owners.

The crackdown extended to other areas across Islamabad, such as H-12, Pothohar Road, Kuri Road, Park Road, Bari Imam, and Rawal Town. These operations led to the removal of unauthorized constructions using heavy machinery.

In addition to demolitions, eight trucks loaded with confiscated materials were seized from public roads and green belts as part of the campaign to maintain Islamabad as a city free from encroachments.

It's worth noting that federal authorities have been actively conducting operations against unauthorized encroachments, illegal constructions, and building by-law violations in Islamabad for several months as part of their ongoing efforts to ensure compliance with regulations and enhance the city's urban landscape.



ISLAMABAD: CDA worker busy in watering plants on greenbelt near H-9 flyover. —APP Photo

Afghani currency recognized

KABUL (Agencies): DAB has announced that Afghani currency has proven to be one of the most stable currencies globally. This achievement is attributed to excellent management and the implementation of sound monetary policies within the country, which have resulted in the Afghani currency's stability over the past three months. DAB stated that making business transactions in the domestic currency mandatory within the country has significantly contributed to this stability.

Bilateral meeting conducted

KABUL (Agencies): In collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, a bilateral meeting was conducted between representatives of private sectors of Afghanistan and Kazakhstan. The primary objective of the meeting was to encourage increased investment in Afghanistan. The meeting, as per a statement issued by Ministry, facilitated a platform for representatives from both countries to discuss and exchange ideas on potential investment opportunities.

Kabul's relations with world countries growing: Muttaqi

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, said that the current Afghan government has diplomatic ties with a number of countries, and that those relations are growing daily.

Muttaqi, who traveled to Russia to take part in the Moscow Format meeting, said that security in the nation is presently ensured and that world concerns have also been addressed.

"Diplomatic ties with numerous nations are very good and expanding day by day. The fact that Allah Almighty gave security to Afghanistan after 45 years, both Afghanistan itself and its neighbors now reached security," Muttaqi noted.

Muttaqi in a meeting with President Vladimir Putin's adviser, Ruslan Edelgeriyev, emphasized



strengthening political and economic relations between the two countries and taking practical steps in the trade sector.

The Foreign Ministry wrote in a statement that in the meeting Saeeduih said that Moscow is ready to cooperate with Afghanistan.

"It is the duty of our embassy in Russia to facilitate businessmen so that we can achieve more in this field and bring Afghan products to

Russia," the acting foreign minister noted.

"The expansion of political, economic, commercial, and educational cooperation was highlighted in the conversation with the adviser to the Russian president, and it was believed that Afghanistan and Russia have common interests in the region, so it is necessary to develop cooperation in various fields," said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy of the Ministry of Economy.

During his trip to Moscow, acting foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi also visited the Embassy of the Islamic Emirate in Russia.

Earlier, the Russian special envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, said that the new Moscow Format meeting on Afghanistan will take place on September 29 in Kazan.

Book exhibition held at KMU

KABUL (TOLONews): A three-day book exhibition that had started on September 24th and ended on Tuesday at the Kabul Medical University (KMU).

According to organizers of the exhibition, the event, which was held on the occasion of the second anniversary of the start of the Islamic Emirate, displayed more than one thousand books.

The exhibition was also aimed at institutionalizing the book-reading tradition in Afghanistan.

The displayed books at the exhibition were brought by 40 different publishers and were welcomed by the visitors and readers.

"The culture of book reading should be increased among the youth, and the organizers ought to hold these exhibitions in the capital and provinces," said Hedayatullah, the head of the library at Kabul University.

"We have brought more than 1,000 books and we sold more than 100 books. The books are focused on psychological topics," said Massihullah, a book seller.

In the meantime, publishers are happy with the sale of their books in the exhibition but call on the Islamic Emirate to make a permanent market for books.

"The book sellers don't have a central market in Kabul or any other province. The book sellers are staying in various areas in Kabul. When someone wants to purchase a book, they should go through the whole of Kabul," said Masihullah, a book seller.

The students who had taken part in the exhibition said that organizing such an exhibition was key for institutionalizing the tradition of reading books in the country.

"This exhibition is very beneficial. The people of Afghanistan don't have much familiarity with the books," said Maiwand, a student.

The three-day exhibition was jointly organized by the Ministry of Information and Culture and Kabul Medical University.

Distance between varsities and Madrasas removed

KABUL (TOLONews): The Acting Minister of Higher Education, in a public meeting in Badakhshan, said that there were "imaginary students" in the educational institutions of the previous government, and the children of some government officials obtained academic certificates without attending the classes.

"Many students sign attendance in university, and they were in London and America; they were in Dubai or elsewhere, they appeared once or twice a year; When four years were completed, they would graduate with the first grade in the name of engineer and doctor," said Neda Mohammad Nadim. The acting minister said that in the past, there was a distance between universities and madrasas, but now the distance has been removed.

"There was a hatred between the university and



the school and between the university professor and the school professor..." said Neda Mohammad Nadim.

Meanwhile, some residents of Badakhshan in the meeting demanded that the current government increase the privileges of professors at schools and universities, and establish a faculty of medicine and tourism at the University of Badakhshan.

"School teachers and university professors should be given a self-sufficient

income so that they can do well in the field of education," said Abdul Momen Hazim, head of Scholar in Badakhshan. "A medical faculty should be created, we have the capacity, we have the place, and we are ready for any task for it," said Rahimullah Noori, a Badakhshan resident.

In the meeting, the Acting Minister of Higher Education once again asked lecturers living abroad to return to the country.

Kabul women's market:

Female entrepreneurs says businesses doing well

KABUL (Agencies): A number of female entrepreneurs at the special women's market in Kabul say their businesses are improving day-by-day and that they have also set up online shopping opportunities for women.

These women say they are happy to have their own market where they can sell their own goods.

"Our clothes are Afghani Gand (traditional dress). Our sellers and buyers are both women. We are happy that such a market has been established in Kabul," said Ferozah Qasimi, a woman entrepreneur.

"The good thing about this market for women and girls is that they can easily and calmly use the green space here, relax their minds and buy the things they need from one place," said another woman entrepreneur.

"My request to government and foreign institu-



tions is to join hands with us, to cooperate with us so that we can make further progress in our work," said another businesswoman.

Meanwhile, the Women's Chamber of Commerce says there is no limit to women entrepreneurs.

"We are seeing very good developments in this chamber which is creating markets and creating expos," said Salma Yousafzai, head of the Women's Chamber of Commerce.

The Ministry of Industry

and Commerce (MoIC) spokesperson Abdulsalam Jawad Akhundzada stated that the ministry supports businesswomen.

"The Ministry of Industry and Commerce has always supported women entrepreneurs and has always supported them in all aspects of trade and industry," said Akhundzada.

"Thousands of women in 34 provinces of Afghanistan are actually working in various sectors of industry and investment," he added.

Uruzgan rival families end enmity thanks to mediators



TIRINKOT (Pajhwok): Two rival families have ended their enmity thanks to mediation from local officials, religious scholars and tribal elders in central Uruzgan province.

According to officials, the two families are residing in Pooti Qalachi vil-

lage of Tirinkiot and the enmity surfaced last year with the killing of one person. Another person was injured after elders jumped into a fight between children of the families.

Qari Agha Wali Qureshi, Uruzgan information and culture direc-

tor, told Pajhwok Afghan News the two families reconciled on Sunday evening after mediation of local officials, religious scholars and tribal elders.

He said: "The Islamic Emirate is striving to eliminate differences among families and bring unity among them and many such enmities have been converted into friendships in the province."

Qureshi thanked those who mediated between the two families and strived to end other such rivalries.

Maulvi Akhtar Mohammad, a cleric in Uruzgan, said it was a pleasure that they succeeded in ending enmity between the two families. He also asked other families to end their hostilities and reconcile.

Mufti Abdullah Rabbani, a member of the mediation team, said:

"Last week, an eight-member team launched mediation between the families of Mullah Abdul Ghafoor and Rahmatullah."

He said both the families accepted the request of the mediation team and ended their enmity and reconciled.

He said the enmity began after the killing of Rahmatullah's cousin and injuring of Mullah Abdul Ghafoor's nephew.

According to him, both the sides promised to forget the enmity and will live like brothers anymore.

Mullah Abul Ghafoor also expressed happiness that their enmity turned into friendship.

77pc of districts lack properly-equipped hospitals

KABUL (Pajhwok): Residents of some areas complain about the lack of specialist doctors, health centres and necessary facilities, saying they have to travel long distances to access medical services.

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) acknowledges problems in the key sector, but says that efforts are underway to address them.

People of some remote areas of the country say they are deprived of the necessary health facilities and are facing a variety of problems in this area.

The Yafatla area of north-eastern Badakhshan province has four health centres, but its residents say they have to travel up to 25 kilometres on bumpy road for six to seven hours to take patients to Faizabad, the provincial capital.

Residents want problems resolved

Syed Jafar, a resident of Yafatla area, said: "A few days ago, I took my pregnant wife to the clinic, where there were few facilities. Finally, after a long travel on a bumpy road, we reached hospital. However, she did not receive proper treatment and we had to take her to Faizabad."

Saighoor, of Yafatla area also said: "We are in living

in a remote area and the road leading to our area is bumpy. It takes about six to seven hours to reach the clinic."

Some residents of Laja Mangal district say although there are two health centres in this district, they cannot cope with meeting the health needs of all patients, with many forced to go to Gardez, the provincial capital.

Gul Sabz, a resident of Lajal Mangal, said: "Our main problem is the lack of a proper road, and that's why we can't get our patients to the clinic or to the city centre in time."

Abdul Wahid, who hails from Khas Uruzgan district, said: "We have a clinic, but it has four rooms. We need doctors and medicine. Serious patients cannot be treated here."

"Additionally, the road is in bad condition and we cannot transfer patients elsewhere. Three women have even lost their lives because of this."

Shortage of specialist doctors

Pajhwok Afghan News findings' show 299 male and 68 female specialists are working at health centres in 16 provinces of the country. But nine of these provinces need more than 100 other specialists.

Pajhwok asked the public health departments in 16 provinces of the country (Kapisa, Parwan, Faryab, Badghis, Kunduz, Farah, Kunar, Badakhshan, Takhar, Nuristan, Paktika, Baghlan, Laghman, Ghazni, Panjsher and Maidan Wardak) how many specialists were working at government hospitals there and how many were needed.

Information collected from them shows a total of 367 specialist doctors are working in these provinces, 299 men and 68 women.

Twenty male and six female doctors are on job in Kapisa, 16 men and six women in Parwan, 17 men and three women in Faryab, nine men and three women in Badghis, 10 men and one woman in Kunduz.

Sixteen male and two female specialists are on duty in Farah, 17 men and two women in Kunar, 22 men and eight women in Badakhshan, 35 men and 12 women in Takhar, seven men in Nuristan, 23 men and two women in Paktika, 26 men and six women in Baghlan, 21 men and three women in Laghman, 25 men and four women in Ghazni, four men in Panjsher and 31 male and 10 female doctors are working in Maidan Wardak.

Based on this informa-

tion, Nuristan and Panjsher are the provinces where no female doctor is available.

107 specialists needed in 9 provinces

According to information from public health departments of these provinces, 71 male and 36 female specialists are needed in nine provinces of the country to provide proper health services to the people.

Local sources say there are 23 male and seven female doctors in Kapisa, 10 male and five female in Parwan, two male and five female in Faryab, two male and one female Kunduz, six female in Takhar, six female and one male in Nuristan, two male in Paktika, 26 male and nine female in Ghazni and two female in Panjsher.

But officials in Badghis, Farah, Kunar, Badakhshan, Laghman, Maidan Wardak and Baghlan the existing hospitals in these provinces do not need more specialist doctors.

Dr Sharafat Zaman, spokesman for MoPH, informed there were about 5,000 specialist doctors working under the ministry. Of them, 30 percent are women.

In response to a query, he said a survey had been conducted to ascertain how many doctors were needed

in public-sector hospitals.

He recalled the MoPH had 30,000 staff members at the beginning of the solar year 1401. About 7,000 more people have been hired, half of them women.

Dr Qalandar Ebad, acting minister of public health, told the nation recently about the recruitment of 5,500 new employees this year. He said efforts were being made to hire more women workers.

Over the last two years, the minister added, a large number of female doctors had been appointed to provide adequate health services to the people.

After the fall of the previous government, some doctors and specialists fled Afghanistan. But MoPH has asked Afghan doctors living abroad, especially specialists, to return to their homeland.

Lack of essential drugs and equipment

The residents of some districts have said they had no option but to transfer their patients to the district centres for treatment due to non-availability or lack of necessary health equipment in the districts.

Abdul Majid, the resident of Chaharboluk district in Balkh province, brought his ill wife to the provincial capital for treat-

"The Prophet PBUH is a role model for people in the political, economic and cultural fields," said Haqparast, a religious cleric.

"Sirat-Un-Nabi (Life of the Prophet) should be taught to boys and girls, and they should study it," said Ahmadullah, another religious cleric.

Some residents of Kabul

said that every year they celebrate this day with charity.

"People arrange religious programs on this day because the Prophet was born and also passed away on this day," said Abdullah, a resident of Kabul.

"On this day, brotherhood should be established between Muslims and between Islamic religions,

and it is the duty of the clerics to unite people and to remove the differences between Muslims," said Abdul Rahman, another resident of Kabul.

Prophet Muhammad was born in 570 CE in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and became a prophet at the age of 40. Muhammad led the people for 23 years and died at the age of 63.

received no medicines, the hospital is going through real troubles, most of patients themselves pay for the drugs because we have no medicines," he said.

Parviz Ahmad Faizi, spokesperson of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said due to economic issue at the international level they stopped drugs supply to some hospitals, including the Herat Zonal Hospital, in April this year.

Efforts underway to overcome challenges

Acting Public Health Minister Dr. Qalandar Ebad during accountability press conference last month said: "There is no doubt about this and no one can ignore this. Some of our projects are related to international donors therefore we sometimes face problems. The basic reason is that we want to provide quality services to our people, but sometimes we observe that quality is compromised by the donors, we have had these problems for twenty years and now we have not come out of these problems completely, we also considered the development budget for this problem and sooner the problems of lack of health services in the provinces will be addressed."

He said: "We have 400

districts and in the past only 90 districts got a district level hospital, now you can think about the state of health service in the remote areas, when you don't have a district level hospital for 300 districts where would its residents go to address their problems, we are committed to quickly start the construction of district level hospitals for the 300 districts in two phases, four important wards — surgery, internal diseases, gynecology and children — would be available in these hospitals."

He said 4,258 health centres are available nationwide while the ministry has 111,000 human resource strength in which 22 percent were women.

Health Ministry Spokesperson Dr. Sharafat Zaman, said: "Officials of the past regime acknowledged that 40 percent Afghanistan's geography is deprived of basic health service, if we closely watch 50 percent Afghanistan's geography is deprived of basic health service but now 300 health clinics had been built and public access to health services had improved."

He added areas totally deprived of basic health services are covered by 500 mobile health teams to provide health services to the masses.

Funerals held as more than 100 killed in Iraq wedding fire

BAGHDAD (Agencies): At least 113 people have been killed and more than 150 injured in a fire that ripped through a wedding celebration in Iraq's northern Nineveh province, local officials and emergency services said. Nineveh Deputy Governor Hassan al-Allaq confirmed the death toll, which may yet rise. The fire was reported to have started at approximately 10:45pm local time (19:45 GMT) on Tuesday night.

The fire engulfed a wedding hall in Nineveh's Hamdaniya district, where the celebration was taking place. Hamdaniya, also known as Qaraqosh, is a majority Christian town, and is located outside of the northern city of Mosul, some 400km (about 250 miles) northwest of the capital Baghdad. "All efforts are being made to provide relief to those affected by the unfortunate accident," Iraq's health ministry spokesman Saif al-Badr said.

On Wednesday, funerals were already taking place for the victims of the fire, as mourning relatives gathered outside a morgue in Mosul. "This was not a wedding. This was hell," said Mariam Khedr, crying and hitting herself as she waited for officials to return the bodies of her daughter Rana Yakoub, 27, and three young grandchildren, the youngest aged just eight months.

Iraq's civil defence said initial reports indicated that fireworks may have been the cause of the fire. "Preliminary information indicates that fireworks were used during a wedding, which triggered a fire in the hall," civil defence authorities said in a statement early on Wednesday. Al Jazeera's Mahmoud

Abdelwahed, reporting from Baghdad, said that fireworks are a common feature of wedding celebrations in Iraq and that some 1,000 people were reported to have been present at the celebration when the fire broke out.

Flammable material used in the construction of the event hall is suspected to have contributed to the huge blaze, Abdelwahed said, adding that the building did not appear to have "proper safety measures in place", including emergency exits. Iraq's civil defence also reported the presence of prefabricated panels at the event hall that were "highly flammable and contravened safety standards". "The fire caused some parts of the ceiling to fall due to the use of highly flammable, low-cost construction materials," civil defence authorities said in their statement.

The danger was compounded by the "release of toxic gases linked to the combustion of the panels", which contained plastic. Images from the aftermath of the fire showed emergency workers clambering over rubble and a collapsed roof with twisted and charred metal at the gutted event hall. "We saw the fire pulsating, coming out of the hall. Those who managed got out and those who didn't got stuck," said Imad Yohana, a 34-year-old who escaped the inferno.

Another woman also lost several members of her family. "I lost my daughter, her husband and their three-year-old. They were all burned. My heart is burning," a woman said outside the morgue, where bodies lay outside in bags. Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani ordered an investigation into the fire

and asked the country's interior and health ministry officials to provide relief, his office said in a statement online.

Iraq's interior ministry has said that it has issued four arrest warrants for the owners of the wedding hall, state media has reported. The majority of the injured are suffering from burns and asphyxiation, the health ministry's al-Badr said, adding that there had also been crowd crushes at the scene. Video clips posted on social media and purportedly taken in the moments before the fire takes hold show burning pieces of paneling falling from the ceiling of the hall. Wedding guests are also seen jumping up from tables and attempting to flee to safety.

Kurdish television news channel Rudaw later broadcasted video footage apparently shot by a guest at the wedding, which showed fireworks shooting up from the floor and setting a chandelier overhead ablaze, to the horror of those gathered inside. Other footage appeared to show the bride and groom on the dance floor when the fire began, stunned by the sight of the burning debris. Al Jazeera's Abdelwahed said that the couple are alive, but had suffered burns.

Wedding attendee Rania Waad, who sustained a burn to her hand, said that as the bride and groom "were slow dancing, the fireworks started to climb to the ceiling, the whole hall went up in flames". "We couldn't see anything," the 17-year-old said. "We were suffocating; we didn't know how to get out." Iraq's ministry of health said that "medical aid trucks" have been dispatched to Nineveh from Baghdad and other provinces.

IHC extends suspension of FIA summons

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday extended the duration of suspension of the summons issued by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to the wife of former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan Bushra Bibi for voice matching in Toshakhana fake receipts case.

Justice Babar Sattar of the IHC heard former first lady's petition against the summons issued to her by the FIA. The court also lumped her case with her petition against audio leaks. Speaking on the occasion, the additional attorney general (AAG) said that the police had asked the FIA to obtain voice sample of Bushra for her voice matching. "And it was on the police's request that the FIA had summoned her," he added.

The court then adjourned the case's hearing until October 30. Five days back, on September 22, 2023, the IHC judge Justice Babar Sattar had suspended the summons issued by the FIA to Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi for voice matching in the Toshakhana case.

Bushra, in her petition, had said that despite the fact that the case was sub judice, the FIA still issued summons to her on September 19. She prayed to the court to suspend the Agency's notice. "If the FIA continues the proceedings, it will affect rights of the petitioner," Advocate Sardar Latif Khosa, representing PTI chief's wife, told the court.

Pemra withdraws review plea

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court (SC) for the withdrawal of its review petition against the judgment delivered in the Faizabad sit-in case. Pemra has filed a petition in the apex court, stating that it did not want to pursue the case anymore.

The development comes a day after the Intelligence Bureau (IB) expressed before the Supreme Court its intention to withdraw a petition asking the top court to revisit the 2019 verdict against the sit-in by the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakis-tan (TLP) in Faizabad, Islamabad. The application from Pemra came just two days before the hearing of the review petitions by a three-member bench led by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Aminuddin Khan and Justice Athar Minallah.

A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa including Justice Aminuddin Khan and Justice Athar Minallah will hear the Faizabad sit-in review case on September 28.

On February 6, 2019, the Supreme Court (SC) ordered action against extremist elements in the written verdict issued for the suo-moto case pertaining to Tehreek-e-Labbaik's (TLP) 2017 Faizabad sit-in.

The Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) held a weeks-long protest at Islamabad's Faizabad Interchange in November 2017 against a little change in the oath lawmakers take. The court had taken suo motu notice soon after the protests.

NAB reopens LNG reference against Khaqan

KARACHI (PPI): In the light of the Supreme Court's orders, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has reopened 28 references including Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) reference against former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. As per details, the DG NAB Sindh has forwarded 28 references to the accountability courts after the decision of Supreme Court in the NAB Amendment case.

The accountability court will hear the LNG case against Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, former managing director of PSO Imranul Haq and others on October 24. Notices have been served to the respondents in this regard. Earlier, the NAB sent back references against politicians to accountability courts after Supreme Court struck down some sections of the amendments made to the NAO last year.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Bangladesh Ahmad Maroof in a meeting with President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Ukraine strikes deep inside Crimea

KYIV (Agencies): Ukraine scored devastating deep strikes against Russian-occupied Crimea in the 83rd week of the war, as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy toured Europe and the United States picking up pledges of new long-range weapons and financing.

At the same time, Ukrainian and Western sources confirmed that Ukrainian troops had broken through the first and strongest line of Russian defence on the southern front, known as the Surovikin Line after the general who devised it. That success could accelerate their march towards the cities of Tokmak and Melitopol. Ukraine attacked three targets in occupied Crimea in as many days, honing its signature tactic of using a wave of drones to destroy or distract air defences, followed by a wave of missiles. Satellite images showed that attacks destroyed half of the Black Sea Fleet's communications command centre in Verkhnosadove, 16 kilometres (10 miles) northeast of the fleet base in Sevastopol, on September 20.

The following day Ukraine attacked the Saky airfield – the second time it has done so during the war. The Ukrainian broadcaster Suspilne reported the attack caused "serious damage" and that 12 Russian combat aircraft were present, including Su-24 and Su-30 fighter-bombers. The most crippling attack came on September 22. Ukraine hit the Black Sea Fleet command headquarters and claimed to have killed 34 officers, including fleet commander Admiral Viktor Sokolov. A further 105 were reportedly wounded.

One Sevastopol resident filmed the moment when the second missile struck. Russia's defence ministry attempted to deny the attack, and later denied Sokolov was dead, circulating a video purporting to show him taking part in a teleconference on September 26. Ukraine's military intelligence chief said the attack also seriously wounded the commander of Russian forces on the southern front, Colonel General Alexander Romanchuk.

Russian occupation authorities said Ukraine targeted Sevastopol again the following day, but air defences neutralised the attack. Improved intelligence to "understand when the Russian leadership is getting together" was one reason for Ukraine's success, Colonel Seth Krummrich, who has led special forces detachments in Afghanistan and the Middle East, and currently serves as vice president for Global Guardian, a security consultant, told Al Jazeera. The second was improved weapons systems from the West. Ukraine used Storm Shadow missiles provided by the United Kingdom and France.

The political result was that "people are going to feel vulnerable," said Krummrich. "You have a lot of wounded coming back to Russia who are disillusioned or resentful and you have a lot of people who are not coming back at all," he

said. "The truth is definitely on the Russian street ... this is like radiation or toxicity, slowly building up in the population, and over time it could become lethal to a government."

Ukrainian knowledge of the terrain was also important, US special forces commander Dimitries Andrew Grimes told Al Jazeera. "They know the territory; they know where the targets are. They know Crimea and Sevastopol and how to achieve the effects they want to achieve," he said. The attacks in Crimea coincided with a series of visits abroad by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, designed to pick up diplomatic, military and financial aid.

The tactic apparently worked, US media, citing government sources, confirmed Washington would provide Army Tactical Missiles, or ATACMS, which Ukraine has been seeking. The 300km-range (186-mile) weapon has significantly greater reach than the 250km-range (155-mile) Storm Shadow missile, but independent weapons analyst Colby Badhwar said the ATACMS' key advantage was speed.

Storm Shadows are launched from aircraft, meaning a two-hour delay between identifying a target and striking it, allowing for time to mount the missiles and flying the aircraft within range of the target. "Ground launched ballistic missiles on the other hand, can be fired from a launcher already near the front line, and hit their target within a matter of minutes, thanks to their speed," wrote Badhwar. "This responsiveness is critical for engaging Time Sensitive Targets." These include missile launchers, aircraft and battlefield armour.

ATACMS would also boost Ukraine's thin inventory of sophisticated missiles. The Washington Post said the administration of US President Joe Biden was considering only the cluster version of ATACMS, but retired Lieutenant General Ben Hodges said this was unsuitable for Ukraine because it has a shorter range than the single warhead version. It would "not [be] as effective at destroying large Russian facilities in Crimea," he told Newsweek. "The [Biden] administration still seems to have a fear of providing long-range precision strike capability, which Ukraine might use against targets inside Russia," Hodges said.

Ukraine has been using only weapons of its own manufacture to hit Russia, and on September 24 it struck the Kholino Airfield near Kursk, reportedly killing aviation officers. Geolocated footage placed Ukrainian armoured vehicles behind the Russian first line of defence in Verbove, western Zaporizhia, on September 21. The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War, a think tank, said this was the first instance of Ukrainian forces operating beyond the tri-layered defence – part of what is known as the Surovikin Line.

Soldier who crossed into N Korea, back in US custody

W A S H I N G T O N (Agencies): A United States soldier who was detained after crossing into North Korea two months ago is back in American custody, US officials have said, after Pyongyang said Travis King would be deported.

In a statement on Wednesday confirming earlier news reports, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said US officials had "secured the return" of the American soldier. "We appreciate the dedication of the interagency team that has worked tirelessly out of concern for Private King's wellbeing," Sullivan said. "In addition, we thank the government of Sweden for its diplomatic role serving as the protecting power for the United States in [North Korea] and the government of the People's Republic of China for its assistance in facilitating the transit of Private King."

The Associated Press news agency first reported on Wednesday morning that King was in US custody, hours after North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said authorities had finished questioning him. An unnamed US official told AP that King was transferred to US custody in China. KCNA's earlier report said that King had

confessed to illegally entering the North because he harboured "ill feeling against inhuman maltreatment and racial discrimination" within the US Army. After completing its investigation, the "relevant organ of the DPRK decided to expel Travis King, a soldier of the US Army who illegally intruded into the territory of the DPRK", the news agency reported, using the formal name for North Korea. King bolted into North Korea in July while on a tour of the southern side of an inter-Korean truce village. He was serving nearly two months in a South Korean prison for assault.

King was released on July 10 and was being sent home to Fort Bliss, Texas, where he could have faced additional military discipline and discharge from the service. He was escorted as far as customs but left the airport before boarding his plane. It was unclear how he spent the hours until joining the tour in the border village of Panmunjom during which he ran across the border.

On Wednesday, Jonathan Franks, a spokesperson for King's mother, Claudine Gates, said: "Ms Gates will be forever grateful to the United States Army and all its interagency partners for a job well done." Al Jazeera's Kimberly Halkett,

reporting from the White House on Wednesday morning, said King's release came as the result of "months-long work" by the United Nations and Sweden.

"Sweden in particular took a major role in helping with these negotiations because of course, the United States does not have any formal relations with North Korea," Halkett said. "What the primary goal of the United States military right now is making sure that he is in good health, and also that he gets the support he needs." It remains unclear when King will be transferred back to his home country.

The border between the two Koreas is heavily fortified but at the Joint Security Area, the frontier is marked only by a low concrete divider and is relatively easy to cross, despite the presence of soldiers on both sides. King's border crossing came as relations between South and North Korea were at one of their lowest points, with diplomacy stalled and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un calling for increased weapons development, including tactical nuclear warheads. Seoul and Washington have ramped up defence cooperation in response, staging joint military exercises with advanced stealth jets and US strategic assets.

PHC seeks reply from ECP

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) directed Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the provincial government for submission of reply regarding stopping Tehsil chairmen in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from contesting provincial and national assembly elections, on Wednesday.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Abdul Shakoor and Justice Syed Arshad Ali heard Tangi tehsil chairman Fayyaz Ali while Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate appeared before the court on behalf of the applicant.

The counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate argued that the provincial government had amended Local Government Act 2013 and stopped tehsil chairmen from contesting election for provincial and national assembly. The petitioner is tehsil chairman Tangi area of Charsadda and wants to participate in the upcoming general election, the counsel argued. He added that amendment in LG Act 2013 is unconstitutional and against the Election Rules.

The counsel argued that amendments in LG Act only applicable for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while constitution protects right of every citizen. He further added that MPA and MNAs are eligible for contesting LG elections in the same Act of 2013 which discriminatory and requested for declaring null& void.

PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice Abdul Shakoor and Justice Syed Arshad Ali ordered Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and ECP for submission of reply after conclusion of argument while adjourned further hearing.

Pak secures \$3.2b in loans in two months

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has secured \$3.206 billion in loans in the first two months of the current fiscal year 2023-24, compared to \$439.32 million borrowed during the same period of 2022-23, according to data from the Economic Affairs Division (EAD).

The government budgeted \$2.4 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the current fiscal year and has received \$1.2 billion as the first tranche of the \$3 billion Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) in July. However, the EAD data does not reflect this. Additionally, there is no mention of \$1 billion disbursed by the UAE. If the IMF and UAE inflows are added, total inflows are \$5.405 billion during the first two months of the current fiscal year.

The \$3.206 billion includes \$2 billion from Saudi Arabia under the head of time deposit in July 2023. The data further shows that the government had budgeted \$4.5 billion from foreign commercial banks. However, no money was borrowed under this head in July and August. The government budgeted \$1.5 billion from issuance of bonds, and here too the country is yet to issue bonds, hence no amount has been received under this account.

Pakistan had borrowed \$10.844 billion from multiple financing sources, including \$2.206 billion from foreign commercial banks, in 2022-23 against the budgeted foreign assistance of \$22.817 billion. However, the \$10.844 billion did not include the rollover of friendly countries' deposits amounting to \$6 billion (\$3 billion each from China and Saudi Arabia), and re-financing of Chinese loans of \$1.3 billion.

JI chief voices concerns over electricity policies

LAHORE (INP): Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq on Wednesday raised serious concerns about the management of line losses by the government, saying that it placed an undue burden on the general public.

The JI ameer's remarks came at a time when the issue of rising electricity prices and associated challenges were a topic of significant national discourse. Addressing the issue, Haq emphasized that while every Pakistani diligently pays their electricity bills each month, the cost of electricity consumed did not represent a government subsidy.

Instead, he argued that every Pakistani who paid their electricity bill inadvertently contributed to covering the unpaid bills of five others, likening the sit-

uation to a form of collective financial burden.

Furthermore, he cited the remarks of Miftah Ismail, who noted the increasing difficulty in sustaining basic electricity consumption, such as operating four light bulbs and one fan within households. Regardless of actual electricity consumption, every individual is subjected to a monthly penalty. The JI chief also drew attention to the alarming trend of certain individuals or entities amassing wealth and assets at an ever-increasing rate, including properties, sugar mills, and factories.

Haq also criticized the government's approach to managing electricity prices, stating that instead of providing affordable electricity to the public, the government has entered into

agreements that have resulted in a continuous escalation of prices. The JI chief also highlighted the Independent Power Producer (IPP) agreements, which were negotiated in Dollars rather than Pakistani Currency in 1994 during the tenure of the People's Party.

The JI ameer decried the lack of government action against powerful interest groups, commonly referred to as "mafias," asserting that no administration has dared to confront these entities. He underscored that, in recent times, the nation has been burdened with electricity bills that often exceed the actual cost of electricity consumption, comparing this financial strain to the historical oppression experienced during the era of the East India Company.

PPP writes letter to Chairman demanding Senate session

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has written a letter to the Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani on the matter of a requisition rejected by the Senate. This move comes in the wake of a requisition submitted by PPP calling for a session of the Senate to discuss pressing economic issues, including poverty, inflation, and unemployment, which have been plaguing the nation.

However, the Senate secretariat instead of calling the session turned down the request on the plea that five members of the requisition have withdrawn their names. In total, 28 senators had signed the requisition, and the withdrawal of signatures by five members would reduce the number to 23, falling short of the one-fourth members required to requisition the session. On

the other hand, PPP's Senator Taj Haider voiced concerns and sought clarification on the matter of the requisition.

Taj Haider wrote a letter to the Chairman asking the Senate for the names of the five members who had not been told. The letter highlighted that the Senate Secretariat had reported that five members had withdrawn their signatures from the requisition submitted by the PPP. However, the names of these individuals have not been disclosed to the PPP, despite repeated requests for this information.

Furthermore, the letter raised questions about the process by which these members purportedly withdrew their signatures. It asked whether these individuals had formally requested the Senate

Secretariat in writing to retract their support for the requisition. The PPP emphasized that the Constitution and the Rules do not empower any entity to unilaterally withdraw a signature, questioning the role of the Chairman Senate or the Senate Secretariat as decision-makers in this matter. It underlined that the Constitution does not grant the Chairman Senate's office the authority to make such determinations.

In closing, the letter conveyed hope that the decision to reject the requisition would be reevaluated, keeping the interests of the people in mind. The PPP expressed optimism that Chairman Senate Sanjrani would heed their call and promptly convene a Senate meeting, addressing the pressing concerns surrounding the requisition issue.

Fatima murder case: Hina Shah, Fayyaz Shah produced in ATC

KHAIRPUR (PPI): Key accused of Fatima murder case, Fayyaz Shah and Hina Shah, were produced in anti-terrorism court on Wednesday.. Fayyaz Shah was produced before the ATC after conclusion of his four days' physical remand. Prime accused Assad Shah and Mansoor Meerasi will be

produced in court after completion of their remand period.

The prosecution has sought physical remand of accused Hina Shah, who was produced in the court today, DSP Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Abdul Qudus Kalhwar said. Investigation officer of the

case said that Hina Shah had voluntarily surrendered in the case. "She is wife of main accused Assad Shah and daughter of Fayyaz Shah," CTD officer said.

Hina Shah, a prime accused in minor maid Fatima Phuriro murder case on Tuesday surrendered to police.