

NAB arrests Bhatti
LAHORE (NNI): NAB arrested former secretary of the Punjab Assembly Muhammad Khan Bhatti from Lahore on Sunday. Muhammad Khan Bhatti has been arrested in the Gujrat corruption case which is also related to Ex-CM Pervaiz Elahi. The sources said the NAB officials will present Muhammad Khan Bhatti in the Accountability Court to take his remand for investigation in the corruption charges on Monday.

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May 9 was an attempt to stage a coup: PM Kakar

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar has said that what happened in the country on May 9 this year was an attempt to stage a coup and civil war. In a programme of a private news channel, he said that the target of the May 9 incidents was the current Army Chief and his team. The caretaker prime minister said that he did not want to give the impression that any revenge was being taken on the May 9 accused. "But, if action is not taken according to the law against the political party willing to resort to violence and violate the laws of the country, [then] we will be seen as a party to this matter," he stated. "Electricity is not an issue on which there should be a wheel-jam strike. We have a lot of sympathy for the segment of the society that is burdened with electricity bills," he remarked. He said that the decision regarding closing the shops at night would be taken by taking the provinces into confidence. "The implementation of the decision will soon be witnessed. We do not want to take a decision in haste on the issue of electricity. We do not want to take such a decision that should be taken back," he added.

Situation in Gilgit-Baltistan completely peaceful: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi said on Sunday that the situation in Gilgit-Baltistan is completely peaceful, terming the news and speculations circulating in media regarding the deployment of the Pakistan Army as completely baseless. The minister shared a statement on platform X (formerly Twitter). Solangi tweeted: "In a statement released by the Home Department of Gilgit-Baltistan, it has been clarified that the situation in Gilgit-Baltistan is completely peaceful and the news and speculations circulating in media regarding the deployment of Pakistan Army are completely baseless. "All roads, trade centers, business activities and educational institutions in Gilgit-Baltistan are open as usual. "The services of Pakistan Army and Civil Armed Forces have been requisitioned only to maintain law and order on the eve of Chehlam of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA). Moreover, special measures have been taken for the security of the procession routes and Imambargahs as per the past practice. "It has been further stated by the Home Department that Section 144 of CrPC 1898 has been imposed across the region to maintain law and order, protect lives and property of the people and avoid any untoward incident." The developments come after unrest spread in the region following protests in Diamer's Chilas. The protesters blocked the Karakoram Highway and the Babusar Pass road for three days demanding the arrest of a religious leader from Skardu for allegedly passing controversial remarks. Protest demonstrations were also held in Astore, Gilgit, however, they were called off after the registration of a first information report against religious leader Agha Baqir Al-Hussaini. In reaction to it, a markets and transport strike was observed in Skardu with protesters also blocking main roads, including the Juglot-Skardu road. Yesterday, a meeting of the Parliamentary Peace Committee was held in Gilgit under the chair of GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan and attended by several ministers and high-ranking officials. It was decided in the meeting that legal action would be taken against those who insult the beliefs of any sects in public gatherings. Earlier, the United Kingdom joined Canada and the US in advising its citizens to avoid visiting the northern areas. The US embassy's statement said that American citizens should exercise heightened caution in GB due to recent protests in Skardu and Diamer and the potential for additional demonstrations, road closures, and associated disruptions to local mobile and internet networks in the region.

‘Russian drone attack hits Danube port infrastructure’

DANUBE (Reuters): Russian drones hit Danube River port infrastructure that is critical to Ukraine's grain exports, injuring at least two people in the attack on southern parts of the Odesa region on Sunday, Ukrainian officials said. The Danube has become Ukraine's main route for exporting grain since July, when Russia quit a U.N. and Turkey-brokered deal that had given safe passage to Kyiv's exports of grains, oilseeds and vegetables oils via the Black Sea. Sunday's attack took place the day before Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan are due to hold talks in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi. Turkey has been pressing to revive the grain deal. Ukraine's South Military Command said on social media that at least two civilians were injured in the early morning attack on what it called "civil infrastructure of the Danube". The Ukrainian Air Force said air defence systems shot down 22 of the 25 Iranian-made Shahed drones launched by Russia. Officials did not give details of which port facility was hit but some Ukrainian media reported blasts in the Reni port, which along with Izmail is one of Ukraine's two major ports on the Danube. The military said a fire that resulted from the attack at the facility was quickly extinguished. The Russian Defence Ministry was quoted by Interfax as saying that a group of Russian drones successfully struck fuel depots at the Reni port used by the Ukrainian military. Reuters could not independently verify the reports. Reni and Izmail have been repeatedly attacked by Russian drones in recent weeks. "Russian terrorists continue to attack port infrastructure in the hope of provoking a food crisis and famine in the world," the Ukrainian president's chief of staff Andriy Yermak wrote on Telegram. He posted a photo of a firefighter directing water at the burning ruins of concrete structures. The Black Sea grain deal, reached in July 2022, aimed to alleviate a global food crisis. Ukraine is a major producer of grains and oilseeds and the interruption to its exports after the outbreak of war in February last year pushed global food prices to record highs. Russia has complained that under the deal its own food and fertiliser exports faced obstacles and that not enough Ukrainian grain was going to countries in need. CIP Umar Ata Bandial will not hear cases next week

Sudan's army launches strikes to cut off paramilitary's supply routes

KHARTOUM (Reuters): The Sudanese army staged a large scale attack on its paramilitary rival's supply routes on Sunday, eyewitnesses said, as its leader appeared to reject a negotiated solution. The almost five-month war since April 15 has devastated Sudan, worsening hunger, destroying infrastructure, and killing hundreds of civilians. The army sent volleys of air strikes into the city of Omdurman on Sunday, one day after military sources said it had also deployed large numbers of ground forces and heavy weaponry in an effort to cement control of the city. That would cut off a key supply route to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which sends supplies from the Darfur region into Omdurman, and then across the Nile into Bahri and the capital Khartoum. Strikes also continued in southern Khartoum, after a local volunteer group said 20 people were killed late on Saturday in an air raid. Multiple international initiatives to negotiate a solution to the conflict, which erupted over plans to integrate the forces, have failed to quell the fighting. Speaking in the city of Kassala on Saturday, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who has been Sudan's head of state since 2019, vowed to vanquish the RSF.

PML-N hints at ‘protesting with PTI’ if elections delayed

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Ata Tarar has hinted at protesting along with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief if elections were delayed. Talking to a private television channel, former SAPM and senior PML-N leader Ata TararAta Tarar hinted at protesting with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf if the elections are postponed in Pakistan. Ata Tarar assured that the election would take place in next year's February. After being asked if the elections were delayed, Ata Tarar said, that in case of delay in general elections, the masses will see the Pakistan People's Party, and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz in the same container. Replying to a question, Tarar said PML-N can protest along with PTI if polls in Pakistan were delayed. Earlier, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) assured to hold the next general elections 'peacefully and impartially' as per the Constitution and the law. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja made this assurance while chairing two separate meetings in Islamabad today. According to a statement issued by the electoral watchdog, the meetings were aimed at reviewing the preparations regarding the upcoming general election in Pakistan. Members of the Election Commission, Secretary ECP, Chief Secretary Sindh, IG Sindh, Chief Secretary Balochistan, IG Balochistan, Provincial Election Commissioner Sindh and Balochistan, and other senior officers of ECP attended the meetings.

CTD officials arrested
KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Three officials of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in Karachi have been arrested on allegations of "corrupt practices" and wrongfully detaining a trader from Punjab, according to a senior CTD official. SSP Bashir Ahmed Brohi said that the officials were accused of detaining the trader over charges of terror financing and involvement in Hawal/Hundi business to extort money from him.



ODESA REGION: A firefighter works at a site which was hit during Russia's drone attacks in Odesa region, Ukraine.

Business leaders, COAS discuss economic initiatives

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) President Kashif Anwar alongside prominent business figures met with Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir, here on Sunday. Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi also attended the meeting in which country's economic trajectory was discussed in detail, LCCI spokesman confirmed this to the media. During the meeting, General Asim Munir highlighted the pivotal role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), emphasizing its potential to attract substantial investments of up to 100 billion dollars from countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait and others. To bolster economic decision-making, he revealed the formation of task forces focused on economic matters and different sectors. Kashif Anwar, in alignment with the broader business community, recommended active engagement with all chambers to incorporate diverse perspectives into the task force's agenda. Addressing critical issues faced by the public, Kashif Anwar proposed a reduction in income and sales tax rates on electricity bills. He noted that the populace grapples with the burden of high taxation on electricity, impacting daily lives, businesses and common people. Additionally, Kashif Anwar introduced a pragmatic approach to fuel adjustment charges, advocating for their collection during the winter months when electricity consumption is lower, alleviating financial stress on consumers. Recognizing the pivotal role of exchange rates in Pakistan's economic landscape, the LCCI President called for greater control over the rates of the US dollar in both inter-bank and open markets. The COAS General Asim Munir responded positively, assuring that money exchanges would be brought under the purview of taxation, fostering transparency in dollar exchange and interbank rates. President LCCI also pointed out that the disparity between the State Bank's rate and the Hundi rate often leads to the preference for Hundi channels when it comes to remittances. He emphasized that if these rates were aligned, remittances would naturally flow through the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). Kashif Anwar emphasized the importance of an enhanced and sustained interactive dialogue between the business community and relevant authorities. He expressed concerns over the prevailing lack of responsiveness to suggestions put forth by the business sector. Furthermore, Kashif Anwar called for a unified commitment from political parties, suggesting the signing of a charter of the economy as a precondition before any upcoming elections. Expanding on General Asim Munir's earlier remarks regarding the existence of a grey economy, accounting for 2 to 3 times of the overall documented economy, Kashif Anwar proposed an innovative approach. He recommended incentivizing the grey economy to transition into the formal, white economy, offering a strategic solution to combat this pervasive issue. President LCCI said that the expansion of the tax base would remain elusive as long as the grey economy remains unincorporated, unable to contribute to the formal, white economy. This gathering exemplified the shared dedication of both the business community and the military leadership to work collaboratively in addressing pressing economic challenges and propelling the nation toward growth. As Pakistan continues to navigate economic complexities, this constructive dialogue signifies a promising step toward finding practical solutions and fostering economic prosperity for the nation, he concluded.

JI announces protests against IMF agreements and electricity price hike

LAHORE (NNI): The chief of Jamaat-e-Islami, Siraj-ul-Haq announced filing a petition in the Supreme Court of Pakistan under the Right to Information Act to seek the details of the agreements with the Independent Power Producers (IPPs) of IMF, which he alleged have benefited the corrupt elite at the expense of the people. He held a press conference at the party's headquarters Mansoor in Lahore on Sunday, where he thanked the business community, transporters and people for participating in a peaceful strike against the government's economic policies. He also announced that Jamaat-e-Islami will hold sit-ins at the four governor houses in the country and launch a campaign against the electricity bills from today. "We will stage sit-ins in front of governor houses in all four provinces and observe wheel-jam strike along with traders and transports, if the government refused to reduce electricity bills," the JI Emir said. He warned that if the government does not withdraw the increase in petrol, diesel and electricity prices, then the business community and transporters may resort to a wheel jam strike. He said that the strike was a clear message to the government that the people of Pakistan do not accept the agreements that the previous government signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which have caused inflation and hardship for the masses. He criticized the Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) for issuing an order to cut off the meters of defaulters and said that JI will not allow any company to remove people's meters. "When government purchases expensive electricity itself, why it shifts its burden on general public. Theft committed by you and the public bear the brunt, it won't happen now. We reject these agreements with the IPPs," JI leader said. He said that electricity is cheaper in Bangladesh, India and Afghanistan than in Pakistan, and accused the caretaker Prime Minister of being a spokesperson of IMF. Siraj ul Haq claimed that the government intends to hike the electricity price to 90 rupees per unit. "The electricity bill has increased above the people's incomes and masses paying bills by selling their valuables," he lamented. He said that the government has lost control over the country as mafias are setting prices at their will. He said that Pakistan needs a long-term plan to solve its problems, not an ad hoc approach. He also urged the government to take measures to curb electricity theft in the country. He said this company will not run as the child of the poor is forced to commit suicide while India has stepped on the moon and the government has stepped on our skulls. He said the people are crying because of the electricity contracts made by PDM and PTI. He said the caretaker government should hold elections and hand over the government to the elected people. To a query about holding talks with other political parties over the issue of joint protest against electricity price hikes, he said political parties are equal participants in crimes, so why talk to them about electricity?

Maryam praises US role in providing critical supplies amid floods, corona era

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League chief organizer and vice president Maryam Nawaz Sharif met with the US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Bloom Sunday. During the meeting, both sides discussed importance of historical and bilateral relations between both countries. During the meeting, both sides stressed for promoting mutual cooperation including trade, economy, security, peace and regional stability was also emphasized. Pakistan Muslim League chief organizer and vice president Maryam Nawaz Sharif also appreciated the efforts made by the American government during the most difficult conditions of COVID-19 pandemic and floods. Earlier, Pakistan, USAID Deputy Administrator Isobel Coleman announced \$16.4 million in additional development and humanitarian assistance to support the resilience of communities in Pakistan that experienced 2022's historically severe floods, which impacted an estimated 33 million people and had a devastating impact on infrastructure, crops, livelihoods, and livestock throughout the country. This new funding will reach over 20 million flood-affected individuals to assist in their recovery, risk reduction, and resilience. The assistance will address worsening food insecurity and malnutrition and help curb the spread of disease. In addition, this funding will support humanitarian partners to provide nutritious food to mothers and their children, help families rebuild local infrastructure to protect them from future disasters, and increase protection services to prevent gender-based violence and support survivors. Following severe monsoon rains and resultant floods in Pakistan during mid-2022, USAID deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team to lead the U.S. humanitarian response and rapidly provide aid to affected communities. This included working with partners to quickly scale-up vital humanitarian assistance, including through partnering with the U.S. Department of Defense to successfully complete an air bridge that delivered nearly 630 metric tons of life-saving relief commodities to Pakistan.

After Karachi, modern bag scanning machine installed at Lahore airport

LAHORE (NNI): After Karachi, a state-of-the-art hold baggage scanning machine has been installed at Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport.

UK's High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott will inaugurate the scanning machine at the airport, said Director CAA Shahid Qadir.

Talking to a private television channel, he said that passengers traveling to the UK will now benefit from the advanced capabilities of this state-of-the-art scanning machine, which will efficiently and comprehensively scan their baggage for enhanced security.

Earlier, UK's High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott inaugurated the scanning machine at the Jinnah International Airport, Karachi.

Talking to the media, the British High Commissioner (BHC) expressed optimism about the resumption of direct flights between Pakistan and the UK, stating that technical talks between the civil aviation authorities of both countries have been completed. She said the modern security machine will expedite the baggage scanning process for passengers traveling to the UK and other Western countries.

Police arrest woman who threw toddler from 6th floor

KARACHI (NNI): A mother, who threw her newborn baby from the sixth floor of a building in Karachi, has been arrested by police. According to details, a woman threw her toddler from the sixth floor of a building in Karachi's Liaquatabad No.4.

The police have arrested the woman, who is said to be a drug addict and mentally challenged. The lady is divorced and living in her brother's house. According to police, the woman will be checked by a psychiatric doctor? In one such incident in 2021, a woman jumped off from a six-storey building along with a minor girl in Karachi after it emerged that she was locked in a room by her family over drug-addiction.

According to police, the incident occurred in Gulshan-e-Iqbal block 13-D of the city, where a woman in her early 30's jumped off from the sixth floor of a building along with a two-year-old child. Narrating the incident, the eye-witnesses said that the woman initially threw her mobile phone from the sixth floor, attracting attention from the passers-by.

560 traffic warden seats abolished

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Finance Department has abolished 560 seats of traffic wardens while creating 506 seats of senior traffic wardens, official sources told APP on Sunday. The abolished seats are in five districts - Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi. It may be mentioned that the long-standing issue of promotion of traffic wardens was addressed after Inspector General of Police Dr Usman Anwar had moved a summary to the chief minister during April this year for the creation of new posts of STWs with an objective to grant promotion to traffic wardens.

CM visits 'Shehr-e-Khamoshan', reviews facilities

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited Shehr-e-Khamoshan [graveyard], being built at Sundar Road Raiwind, here on Sunday.

He reviewed facilities being provided for burial at Shehr-e-Khamoshan and inspected various sections of the project including waiting area, ablution place, funeral place and ambulance.

Mohsin Naqvi stated that burial facilities in Shehr-e-Khamoshan had been provided in an organised manner, adding that it would be built in other cities as well on the pattern of Sundar Road Raiwind. He underscored that it was need of the time to establish the latest graveyards with increase in population, adding that all requirements with regard to the latest graveyard had been fulfilled at Shehr-e-Khamoshan.

It was informed during the briefing that a model graveyard comprising 127 kanals of land had been built at the Sundar Road Raiwind. A four wall, funeral place ablution place along with an ambulance had been provided in the model graveyard. A capacity of more than 12 thousand graves had been kept in the model graveyard. The burial fee in the model graveyards had been reduced from rupees 10 thousand to rupees 3500. The citizens could contact on(1190) to avail the service of ambulance

in the model graveyard.

Model graveyards are also being built at DG Khan,Faisalabad,Sheikhupura,Rahim Yar Khan and Sahiwal. Secretary Local government gave a briefing about Shehr-e-Khamoshan. Provincial Minister for Information & Local Government Amir Mir, Chief Secretary, Secretary Local government, Secretary C&W, Commissioner Lahore,Deputy Commissioner, DG Shehre Khamoshan Authority and officials concerned were present.

CM orders preparation of package for farmers: On the direction of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, a special package would be prepared to provide facilities to farmers of the province.

In this regard, the CM sought comprehensive recommendations for preparation of the special package. Chairman Planning & Development Board, secretaries Agriculture, Livestock, Irrigation, Finance and a team comprising officials of Punjab Bank would prepare recommendations for the package.

Mohsin Naqvi also sought a durable plan for the establishment of a Model Agricultural Market in every division. Pesticides, agricultural equipments, fertilisers and seeds would be available in the Model Agricultural Market.

36 new dengue cases reported in Lahore

LAHORE (APP): Thirty-six more cases were reported within 24 hours as dengue is on the rise in provincial metropolis, the health department official source told APP on Sunday. According to the sources, besides the dengue virus cases, 1,043 larvae spots were reported in the last 24 hours, with many patients under treatment in different hospitals of the city.

Various squads conducted surveillance at indoor and outdoor places to detect dengue larvae during the last 24 hours. The anti-dengue squad destroyed dengue larvae at 1,043 places in the province during continuing surveillance.

Moreover, 2,678 beds have been allocated for dengue patients in hospitals across Punjab, the health department said.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Lahore Rafia Haider, Additional Deputy Commissioners, and Assistant Commissioners are continuously paying surprise visits to check the performance of

dengue teams working on the ground, in the wake of increasing dengue cases after rains. The DC reviewed the performance of dengue teams in various towns of Lahore. Checking of more than 5,000 places would be ensured on daily basis, she said.

Ms. Haider recently announced that the number of dengue surveillance teams could be increased, keeping in mind the rain alerts of the Meteorological department. Issuing directions for controlling dengue, she warned all town officers to surely complete the set targets on a daily basis. She vowed to monitor various hotspots areas in the city with swift and strict surveillance, urging citizens to not let water accumulate in their homes and surroundings.

Rafia Haider sternly warned the authorities and staff concerned that no negligence would be tolerated regarding the anti-dengue campaign. The DC directed

PPP asks ECP to unfreeze development schemes' funds

KARACHI (NNI): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has asked the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to unfreeze the funds for development schemes. PPP senior leader Senator Taj Haider wrote a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and demanded to take back its decision to ban the disbursement of funds for the development schemes ahead of elections.

The political party criticised the freezing of funds for the development schemes aiming to provide relief and welfare to the masses. "Orders of the Election Commission of Pakistan to freeze Development Funds in the Province of Sindh, including those allocated in the provincial budget for providing flood resistant houses to families devastated in last year's floods and for solar panels to provide relief to the poorest of the families from hours of load-shedding and exorbitant electricity bills are shocking to say the least," the letter states.

It stated that the ECP took the surprise decision to freeze the funds for a solar panel scheme amid worst loadshedding and inflated electricity bills issues.

"Inmates of 200, 000 houses that have remained in darkness for generations have been provided solar panels so that they too can benefit from one of the so many bounties of Allah which none of us can deny. The budgeted target is to put solar panels on 2.1 million houses. This is the direction in which the whole country should be

going. Shall we reverse this direction and push our people back into centuries old darkness? Certainly not Sir. The most marginalized of our people, living in the remotest and most backward areas of our country deserve electricity as a fundamental right and this is what the Pakistan People's Party is endeavouring to ensure," it reads. Senator Taj Haider was of the view that the caretaker set-up could not seize the development schemes under the Election Act. He added that it was an unusual move to see ECP stopping the fund disbursements instead of a caretaker set-up. The PPP leader stated that the ECP took an unconstitutional step by seizing the development funds.

He added that 50,000 out of 2 million houses had been constructed by the government for the flood-affected families in the past three months but the owners were not being allowed to enter their houses.

Senator Haider complained about facing challenges in the shape of mass protests against the inflated electricity bills and the closure of business centres due to the wrong policies.

The politician detailed that under a development scheme, the Sindh government had planned to install solar panels in 2.1 million houses belonging to the flood affectees but the authorities were unable to continue the project due to freezing of the funds. Senator Haider urged the election commission to take back its decision on humanitarian grounds.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed addresses to teachers, students at Jamia Banoria Almia.

Sindhi pledges to assess ability of teachers to improve system

KARACHI (APP): Interim Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi has vowed to evaluate the ability of teachers to correct the educational system in the country. He said that the educational system would be put on the right track.

While talking to media persons during his visit to the Karachi Press Club (KPC) here Sunday, the minister said that the education and ability of the teachers would be checked in the educational institutions including the universities of the country.

He said that a grand provincial meeting had also been convened to

discuss the matters of education and vowed to improve the quality of education. Replying to a question, he said that education was the provincial subject after the 18th Amendment. He said that Sindh, Punjab and other provinces had reservations over history subjects and they wanted to put the personalities, they considered to include them in the curriculum.

Speaking on the private schools, he said that the fees of the private schools must be reasonable.

Replying to another question, he said that the Federal Urdu University was facing crisis and many employees of the University were not receiving

pensions. Earlier, speaking about the issues of the journalists, he advised his interim government to announce a permanent fund for the journalists, who give their twenty years to a media outlet, to meet their expenses as a 'Guzara Allowance.'

He said that he would ensure the provision of scholarships to the children of the journalist community. Madad Ali Sindhi said that he considered the Karachi Press Club as his home and would make all-out efforts to get the issues of journalists resolved. KPC President Saad Sarbazi and Secretary Shoaib Ahmed were also present on the occasion.

Indonesian diplomatic reception held

KARACHI (APP): The Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Karachi, under the leadership of Dr June Kuncoro Hadiningrat, hosted a Diplomatic Reception in commemoration of the 78th anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Indonesia. The event was held at a local hotel and attended by the diplomatic corps in Karachi, representatives of the Sindh Government, business, education and media communities and Pakistani colleagues.

The caretaker Minister of Home and Prison, Bring (ret'd) Haris Nawaz as chief guest joined the event along with officials from the Sindh Government and Diplomatic Community in Karachi.

The event shows a celebration of cultural diversity, strengthening diplomatic ties and fostering good-

will between Indonesia and Pakistan.

The Indonesian Consul General, Dr. June Kuncoro Hadiningrat delivered a heartfelt speech, that deliberated the cooperation between Indonesia-Pakistan through joint research, scholarships from Indonesia to Pakistanis, gastronomy, and Indonesia's commitment to allocate a bigger import quota of rice from Pakistan. Haris Nawaz also expressed his appreciation and gratitude to Indonesia for the support and camaraderie shared with Pakistan.

A joint collaboration by Indonesian and Pakistani students under the Indonesia-Pakistan Children Friendship enthralled the audience with a captivating dance performance of Tari Piring (plate dance), showcasing the vibrant cul-

tural diversity of Indonesia.

Special prestigious "Friends of Indonesian Award" was presented to Mr. Saleem Bikiya from IBM whose initiative in develop stronger economic and socio-cultural relations between Indonesia and Pakistan.

The evening concluded with a splendid dinner and another dance performance by the Consulate, highlighting the infectious energy of Indonesian music and dance.

The Diplomatic Reception organized by the Consulate General of Indonesia in Karachi was a testament to the enduring friendship and cooperation between the two nations. It brought together diplomats, dignitaries, and friends from both Indonesia and Pakistan, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures.

Droughts, flooding make women, children more vulnerable to insecure livelihoods, poverty

LAHORE (APP): Experts have highlighted a pressing concern regarding the vulnerability of women and children in Pakistan to the adverse health effects of climate change.

This heightened susceptibility primarily arises from the precarious nature of their livelihoods and their enduring struggle with income poverty. When confronted with episodes of food scarcity, drought, or flooding, women and children are disproportionately burdened by hunger and an array of vulnerabilities, as pointed out by the Climate Change Division in 2013.

The urgency of taking action in this context cannot be overstated. The experts emphasize that addressing this critical issue necessitates extensive collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, national societies, the private sector, civil societies, NGOs, and our entire community. The enormity of the challenges posed by climate change and the exacerbated risks faced by vulnerable populations make it clear that no single organization can effectively combat these threats in isolation. It is only through collective efforts that these entities can mitigate the direst consequences of the climate crisis.

Environmental advocate Khalid Mahmood Qamar underscores the alarming global temperature rise, which has been accelerating for decades. The annual mean global temperature has surged by 0.57°C in the last century, with both maximum and minimum temperatures showing an upward trend. Qamar notes that hot days have become even hotter, while cold days have become warmer. In Pakistan, regions such as the hyper-arid plains, arid coastal areas, and mountainous terrain have experienced a temperature increase ranging from 0.6–1.0°C between 1960 and 2007.

Drawing from a recent Asian Development Bank report, Qamar warns that Pakistan's current temperatures are projected to continue rising. By 2100, the mean temperature is anticipated to soar within the range of 3–6°C, with a particularly steep rise expected after 2050. This projection surpasses the global average, and certain regions within Pakistan will witness even more substantial temperature increases.

Muhammad Irfan, the dedicated manager for a resilient and greener future at WWF, emphasizes the likely impact of climate change on agricultural yields in Pakistan. Factors such as droughts, land availability, and shifting crop seasons are poised to render farmers, particularly women and children, increasingly vulnerable to the health and livelihood repercussions of climate change. Over 80 percent of farmers in the country are smallholders, with approximately one-third of the land relying on rainfed agriculture. Irregular rain patterns and unpredictable weather changes have disrupted agricultural livelihoods, making them uncertain and challenging to sustain.

Irfan further notes that the agriculture sector's low adaptive capacity stems

from the limited transferability of livelihood skills. Livestock also plays a pivotal role in the livelihoods of impoverished farmers, rendering them highly susceptible to water scarcity, heat stress, and reduced fodder availability. These challenges not only deprive them of immediate income and nutrition but also have ripple effects on the non-farming sector. As the expansion of the non-farming sector is closely tied to agricultural development, the potential loss of livelihoods among farmers could undermine purchasing power and indirectly impact this sector.

Therefore, climate change casts a profound shadow over the lives of the impoverished masses, farmers, and the broader economy, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive and collaborative action. In urban areas, the adverse effects of climate change, such as heat stress and urban flooding, are particularly impacting the lives of residents. These challenges are forcing many people into substandard living conditions with inadequate sanitation facilities.

According to a report from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) focused on Pakistan, the agriculture sector employs approximately 42 percent of the population and contributes around 21 percent to the GDP, especially in the arid and semi-arid regions of the country. It is noteworthy that Pakistan, over the years, has transformed into a food surplus nation and a significant wheat producer. This surplus is distributed to vul-

nerable populations through various mechanisms, including the World Food Programme (WFP). However, recent data from a national nutrition survey reveals that a staggering 36.9 percent of the population faces food insecurity.

This alarming food insecurity can be primarily attributed to the impact of climate change, which includes phenomena like droughts, desertification, and flooding. Additionally, economic access remains limited for the poorest and most vulnerable groups, especially women and children who struggle to maintain a diverse and adequate diet.

The same survey also indicates a troubling rise in malnutrition rates in the region. Approximately 18 percent of children, mostly under the age of 5, suffer from acute malnutrition. Furthermore, around 40 percent of children in the same age group experience stunted growth, while 29 percent are underweight. This situation is not unique to Pakistan but reflects a broader issue in developing countries across South Asia. Complementary feeding indicators in the region are far from acceptable levels. Only one in seven children aged 6–23 months receives a meal with the minimum dietary diversity, including at least four different food groups. Shockingly, around 82 percent of children do not receive the minimum recommended number of daily meals. In response to these pressing challenges, the government of Pakistan has launched an initiative aimed at enhancing food security, boosting exports, and reducing the country's dependence on agricultural imports.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi during a meeting with the Senior Journalists at Karachi Press Club (KPC).



ANP announces election campaign schedule

Ali Sheikh

PESHAWAR: Awami National Party (ANP) has announced a schedule for holding rallies and events in preparation for the upcoming elections in 37 provincial assembly constituencies across the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The party will hold public gatherings in Peshawar, Mardan, Swat, Nowshera, Swabi, Charsadda, Buner, Torghar,

Malakand, Lakki Marwat, Buner and Lower Dir. Central Senior Vice President of the party Amir Hyder Khan Hoti, and the provincial president, Amil Wali Khan, will hold meetings in 37 constituencies for the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from September 7 to December 5. During the election campaign both the leaders will participate in workers' conventions, and meetings and joining cere-

monies.

Provincial President ANP Aimal Wali Khan will visit PK 22 Dargai Malakand on September 8, on September 14 and 15, 2023, PK 9 Swat, on September 16, PK 86 Nowshera, while on September 19, PK 47 in Swabi and he will visit to PK 77 Peshawar on 21 September.

On the other hand, party's Central Senior Vice President Amir Haider Khan Hoti will visit PK 49

Swabi on September 7, PK 79 Peshawar on September 11, PK 84 Nowshera on September 14, PK 16 Dir Lower on September 16, PK 7 Swat on September 18, PK 48 Swabi on September 21, PK 81 Peshawar on September 28, PK 97 Kirk on September 30, PK 14 Dir Lower on October 2, PK 22 Malakand on October 4 and PK 26 Shangla on October 4 and 5 will address the meetings.



PESHAWAR: Provincial president PPP Women Wing Senator Robina Khalid cutting a ribbon to inaugurate office of Benazir Income Support Prgrame at Kohati Town. - F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

JI leaders booked over power protest in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (INP): The police has filed case against Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) leaders over protest against inflated electricity bills, reported on Sunday.

JI Peshawar leaders Bahrullah, Khalid, Zahir Shah, Tahir Zareen, Haji Qadeer and others have been nominated in the case.

Jamaat-e-Islami leaders have been charged of dam-

aging public property, forced closure of shops, blocking roads and intervention in official duty in the case.

The party had given call of countrywide shutter down strike on Saturday to protest against the inflation and inflated electricity bills.

After the strike a party spokesperson has said that the JI will consider over the

future line of action in a meeting in Mansoorah, Lahore on Sunday (today).

The party will step up its movement against inflated power bills and price hike, according to the spokesman.

JI Ameer will hold a press conference today to announce the future course and schedule of the protest movement, spokesman added.

Emergency imposed

PESHAWAR (APP): The emergency has been imposed in KP due to increase in chicken pox cases wherein so far 55 cases have been reported in Chitral and Khyber districts.

According to details, 34 teachers and children were affected by chicken pox in Tehsil Mastuj schools, Health Advisor Dr Riaz Anwar said. As many as 11 cases of chickenpox have been reported in the Tirah Maidan area of Khyber district, Health Advisor Dr Riaz Anwar said.

One chicken pox patient admitted in KTH, 4 patients confirmed in private clinics wherein Chitral and Khyber infected patients have been isolated, Health Advisor Dr Riaz Anwar said.

He disclosed that 5 children going home after diagnosis in a private clinic will be searched and isolated.

The health department has directed all districts to provide details of chicken-pox cases by Monday, Health Advisor Dr Riaz Anwar said.

Govt's commitment to promote tourism stressed

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa minister for Information, Tourism, and Culture, Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel on Sunday emphasized that the establishment of peace and security in the province remains the top priority of the government.

To combat the menace of terrorism effectively, the Counter-Terrorism Force (CTD) has been equipped and strengthened.

He expressed these views while addressing a five-day educational tour organized for visually impaired students at the scenic tourist spot of Nathiagali.

The minister expressed unwavering determination

to bring terrorism under control promptly. He acknowledged the unparalleled natural beauty of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and underscored the government's commitment to promoting tourism in the region.

He said that efforts are underway to curb illegal constructions and ensure the preservation of forests in the province.

Notable tourist destinations such as Nathiagali, Thandiani, Naran Kaghan, among others, are being closely monitored for the unauthorized allocation of government guest houses, hotels, plots, and lands to favoured persons, he said.

The minister assured that

tourists visiting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be welcomed with the best possible hospitality. He urged tourists to respect local culture and traditions while enjoying their stay in the region.

Talking about upcoming elections in KP Feroz Jamal Shah stated that the Election Commission of Pakistan has already set the date. The government is fully prepared for these elections.

He announced that such health-oriented events for special children would be organized annually, catering to both national and international special children. He stressed the importance of experiencing

the natural beauty of the region firsthand, especially from the students hailing from the lush mountainous areas.

Principal Government School for the Blind Peshawar Muhammad Arif, highlighted the school's unique role in providing primary education to visually impaired students since its establishment in 1962.

Following a successful grade promotion in 2018, the school now also offers technical education to ensure that its students do not become a burden on society in the future. The school provides visually impaired children with all the necessary facilities.



PESHAWAR: Provincial GS Pakistan International Human Rights Organization Saleem ur Rehman Hamdard addressing during a meeting. — F.P. photo

Noori working in Pashto film Janaan

PESHAWAR (APP): Noori Khan is one of the trusted and talented Pashto telefilms and TV dramas artist and has not been associated with this field for a long time, but in this short period of time, Noori Khan's credit shows a lot.

Talking to APP, Noori Khan said that she entered the world of showbiz five years ago. There is no dearth of new talent, we have to work hard to convince ourselves, we have started reaping the fruits of our hard work very soon.

She started her career with director AK Khan's Pashto telefilm. She said that only a good director can recognize the talent of an artist and present it on screen in a good way. One can become one who has a sensitive heart because one who can feel the pain of others is the one who is able to portray a sincere character.

Noori Khan said that she has also modeled on the

songs of famous Pashto singers, which she feels proud of. The experience of modeling for commercials is interesting in the sense that the work is done in a short period of time, the remuneration is good and nowadays, because commercials are becoming good, they also get instant fame and popularity.

Noori Khan also showed interest in playing a central role in the film, but like most actors, she also says that I will work in the film. When the quality is good, the new artists come to this field with some plans in their mind.

Noori Khan said about her choice in acting that it is not a serious acting choice but Maddy looks good to the point of watching. Regarding the environment of showbiz, she said that the number of autists are increasing day by day due to the high production.

Four alleged culprits held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Police during crack down on outlaws on Sunday arrested four criminals wanted to police in many cases in the jurisdiction of Badher police station. The operation carried out on the direction of SP Sadar Division Malik Habib Khan, led by SHO Nasir Farid Khattak under the supervision of DSP Ziaullah Khan.

The arrested criminals were identified as Falak Niazi, Sharafat, Inamullah and Wajid.

Two Kalashnikov, one rifle, one pistol and cartridges were recovered from their possession. The police registered the case and started investigation.

Security demanded

PESHAWAR (APP): The officials of the PESCO demanded security in the present circumstances and regular protests against the leveling of taxes.

Pesco had demanded security after protests against electricity bills and the Central Police Office had issued orders to provide security to Pesco in Peshawar and Khyber.

A request in this connection has already been sent to all the Divisional SPs. The concerned quarters have taken immediate security to be provided to Pesco offices besides all feeder routes should be provided with security.

Weather to remain hot

PESHAWAR (APP): Weather is likely to remain hot and humid in most districts of KP, Meteorological Department here on Sunday.

Rain likely in Chitral, Dir, Malakand, Shangla, Swat and Kohistan, the official of the Meteorological Department said. Rain is also expected in Torghar, Bitgram, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Bajaur and Buner,

Meteorological Department officials said.

Heavy winds and thunderstorms are likely to occur at some places in Mardan, Swabi, Khyber and Karam, an official of the Meteorological Department said.

Charsadda, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Kohat, Hangu and Karak expected to rain with thunder and lightning.



PESHAWAR: Chief Organizer KP of Tehreek Jawanan Pakistan Party Muhammad Jan Muhammad in a group with party members. — F.P. photo

PIDE releases report on unraveling state of industry in country

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has unveiled a groundbreaking report shedding light on the challenges faced by the engineering industry in Pakistan. The comprehensive study, conducted by a team of esteemed researchers led by Dr Nadeem ul Haque, and including Dr Usman Qadir, Dr Abid Rehman, and Mr Mohammad Armughan, delves into the realities faced by engineering firms and provides valuable insights into the state of the industry, according to a press release issued here on Sunday.

The report is based on an extensive survey of 328 engineering firms from across the Golden Triangle of Lahore, Gujrat, and Gujranwala. It reveals compelling statistics that underscore the critical concerns affecting the industry's

growth and productivity. One of the foremost issues outlined in the report is the severe impact of electricity unavailability on daily production targets.

A staggering 83% of surveyed firms expressed that the unavailability of electricity creates hurdles in achieving their production goals, resulting in a detrimental gap between demand and supply for the industry.

Moreover, 78% of these firms reported that electricity scarcity hinders their operational efficiency, a crucial factor where economies of scale need to be achieved.

Load-shedding and voltage fluctuations further exacerbate the challenges by increasing the risk of machinery malfunctions and damage, affecting 68% of the firms. The financial strain of arranging alternate supply, amounting to PKR 71,000 per unit annually, adds to the burden on

firms' operations, impacting 72% of the surveyed companies.

The report underscores the significance of addressing these challenges. It recommends that engineering firms adopt international and national quality standard certifications to maintain quality standards, a move endorsed by 89% of the surveyed firms.

Moreover, the government is urged to focus on enhancing the electricity supply in industrial areas, with smaller firms exploring backup power options to ensure uninterrupted operations, a sentiment echoed by 76% of the respondents.

An interesting finding of the report is the lack of an online presence among Pakistani engineering enterprises. With a surprising 63% of surveyed firms lacking any online presence, there is an urgent need for businesses to establish

themselves online to reach a wider customer base and enhance engagement.

The study also reveals that while a significant portion of firms (63%) show no intent to expand in the coming years, a proactive minority plans to invest in advanced technology, machinery, land, and skilled labor to boost their business prospects.

Another critical issue highlighted in the report is the lack of access to credit for the majority of firms.

The majority of firms lack adequate collateral to secure loans due to their small size. This reduces their marketability to commercial lenders and has resulted in only 5% of surveyed companies having loans or lines of credit. Limited access to finance hampers the industry's growth potential.

To address this, the report suggests that financial institutions introduce

special credit schemes for small and medium-sized enterprises to encourage business expansion and development.

The research also explores the complex landscape of international trade for Pakistani engineering firms, revealing obstacles related to tax implications, product quality, branding, and pricing.

Most notably, a substantial 84% of firms source their raw materials domestically, emphasizing a need to diversify suppliers and engage with international markets.

The report emphasizes the importance of a thriving relationship between businesses and the government for economic prosperity. However, political instability and unfavorable economic policies have led to a lack of trust and dissatisfaction among business owners, impacting productivity and profit margins.

Battagram incident accentuates mandatory inspection of all cable cars

PESHAWAR (APP): Soon after Allai received its maiden sun rays right from the top of Sukai Sir Mountain peak in Battagram district, Israr Ahmad hurried to book a place in the jam-packed cable car to reach his school well in time after crossing the wide-stretched Allai River at a height of 600 meters from the sea level.

Passionate about his studies, the eleven-year-old Israr was often seen off by his mother with a motherly kiss on his forehead before going towards the other side of the river through a cable car being the only transportation source to cross the river.

"August 22 was the dreadful day of my life when the cable car in which we were being transported to school along with my friends including Irfan, Niaz Muhammad, Rizwan and Sher Nawaz, suddenly hung in the middle of Allai River over 600 feet height due to breakage of three out of four of its cables," Israr Ahmad, a student of Government High School at Batungi Pashto told APP.

"We were foreseeing a certain death, but I held my nerves in that testing time and kept on praying for our safety. Teacher Gul Faraz kept motivating us to

remain calm and patient, saying God is the greatest protector," he said.

"Cable cars are the cheapest and time-saving source of transportation in our area to reach schools. It takes only 30 minutes to reach the other side of the river, as compared to 90 minutes on bumpy and rocky roads."

After the August 22 terrible incident, some of my classmates have stopped using cable cars and instead are traveling through bumpy roads thus often getting late for school," said Israr.

Professor Dr Muhammad Naeem, Economics Department of the University of Swabi said cable cars were the cheapest source of transportation for students to reach their schools in the mountainous areas of Shangla, Battagram, Kohistan, Swat, Chitral, Dir, Torghar and Buner districts due to poor road infrastructure and shortage of educational institutes.

He said it was among the major reasons why out-of-schools of children had swelled to a record 22.8 million in Pakistan including 4.7 million aged 5-16 years in KP.

"The number of out-of-school children and drop-out ratio in these districts

were high as compared to other districts of the province due to shortage of schools especially of girls and poor road infrastructure," he said.

Referring to the BISP survey 2021, Dr Naeem said the percentage of out-of-school children was reported at 77 percent in Palas Kolai district, 70pc in Upper Kohistan, 69 percent in Lower Kohistan and 61 percent in Torghar. Terming illiteracy as the root cause of poverty and the shabby economy, Dr Naeem said it was a matter of great concern that the number of such children had increased to 55 percent in Shangla and 51 percent in Battagram districts.

He feared an increase in students drop out ratio in the mountainous areas of these districts after the August 22 cable car incident keeping in view its psychological effects on students and parents who were using cable cars as the mode of transportation.

Syed Hammad Haider, Additional Deputy Commissioner Battagram said directives were issued to all cable cars/chairlift operators to maintain the highest standards and regularly examine their cable cars and cables before trans-

portation to avoid mishaps.

An inspection and safety audit of all cable cars installed in KP especially in the above-mentioned districts was ordered by the government after the Battagram incident. He said cable cars were in practice worldwide but their standards were examined on a monthly and yearly basis.

Syed Hammad said all the cable cars and chairlifts being used for commercial, domestic or tourism purposes would be examined in Battagram, and those not meeting standards would be banned after imposition of heavy fines.

He said Assistant Commissioners had been directed to check and review the design, capacity and safety measures of all cable cars and chairlifts at Battagram and submit reports within a week. Besides Allai cable car incident, the trapping of three persons in a cable car at Koragh Valley in Upper Chitral who were later rescued has necessitated a complete inspection and audit of all cable cars and chairlift services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa besides imposing a ban on those providing poor services.

Gulzar Khan, a cable car owner, said at least two to five million rupees were

required for the establishment of a safe and well-mechanized cable car service. He said closure of cable car service was no solution to the problem rather proper training to its executors, monitoring and repair of cables were imperative for transportation between steep hills and valleys.

Omair Khattak, General Manager Investment, Tourism Department said the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had planned to construct a state-of-the-art cable car service between Dir Upper and Lower Chitral.

"The proposed Kumrat Dir Upper and Madaklasht Lower Chitral cable car service, to be constructed with an estimated cost of USD 200 million and with the assistance of World Bank, would carry 5280 km height with facilities of a base station at Kumrat and Madaklasht.

Omair said the feasibility study of the mega project was started and work on the project would be completed in eight to 10 years.

He said the Chitral-Dir cable car upon completion would attract over one million tourists per year to Malakand division having a positive impact on KP's economy.



In brief

Teenager stabbed to death

MANSEHRA (INP): Unidentified culprits stabbed to death a 13-year-old child in Mansehra, police said on Sunday. According to details, the child Usman s/o Sultan went missing from Tangian near Hazara University the other day. The stabbed body of Usman was found in uninhabited area in neighbourhood. The body was shifted to King Abdullah Hospital for postmortem. Police said that it is seems that the child was murdered after sexual abuse, however, postmortem report was awaited.

Four burnt to death

NUSKHI, Balochistan (INP): Four including women were burnt to death when two vehicles caught fire after collision here, rescue sources said on Sunday. According to details, two over speeding collided near Nushki town of district Nushki of Balochistan and fire broke out in both vehicles. As a result of fire, four people including two women were burnt to death. The bodies were shifted to Teaching Hospital Nushki.

Two killed in road accident

JHELUM (INP): At least two people, including a woman, were killed on the spot in a truck-motorcycle collision on GT Road Dina in Jhelum District on early Sunday morning. According to rescue authorities, the deceased have not been identified yet. Rescue 1122 officials said that a couple was travelling on a motorcycle near GT Road Dina when a speeding truck overran them, killing them instantly. The truck driver fled the scene after the accident. Police and rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the bodies to a nearby hospital. A case has been registered into the accident and police are trying to trace the truck driver.

Blind murder case resolved

PAKPATTAN (INP): The police resolved blind murder case of an agriculturalist and arrested two including his sister and alleged paramour with murder weapon. DPO Tariq Walayat said that key accused Salma wanted to enter in love marriage with Ashraf, the domestic servant of her brother. However, it was not possible for Salma as agriculturist was major hurdle in implementation of her plans. DPO said that Salma along with Ashraf killed her brother and pretended that unknown culprits had shot dead the agriculturist. The Police after thorough investigation arrested both culprits and recovered murder weapons from their possession.

Woman gives birth to 5 babies

BAHAWALPUR (INP): A woman gave birth to five babies in a local hospital of Bahawalpur, hospital sources said on Sunday. According to details, a pregnant lady was shifted to Sir Sadiq Hospital of Bahawalpur. The lady gave birth to five babies in the premature delivery case. Health condition of mother and children was out of danger, hospital sources said.

Female teacher reaches Pakistan

NAROWAL (INP): Influenced by Islamic teachings, a female teacher from Vietnam reached Pakistan and converted to Islam. The Vietnamese lady identified as Low Beechman embraced at the hands of Hazrat Maulana Zakaria Mohsin in Jamia Masjid Hanafia, Narowal, a district of Punjab. After Kalma recitation she was given a new name of Amina.

Dargai political workers joins ANP

MALAKAND (APP): Awami National Party Constituency PK-22 provincial leader Muwaz Khan Shalamani has said that the leading political workers of Tehsil Dargai are announcing to join the Awami National Party, which is due to the growing public opinion on the ANP leaders.

It is a sign of trust reposing the people on ANP looking after its long struggles for the rights of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The coming

era belongs to the Awami National Party because the people have tried all the political parties. Aimal Wali Khan's visit to Tehsil Dargai will prove to be a good omen for the party and his visit to Tehsil Dargai will create new enthusiasm, passion and enthusiasm among the party workers.

Talking to the media regarding Tehsil Dargai, he said that the party will emerge as a strong force and the graph of the party will grow rapidly after the

visit of Provincial President Aimal Wali Khan to Tehsil Dargai on Friday, September 8, urged the workers to conduct a door-to-door campaign to make the provincial president's visit to Tehsil Dargai a success.

Mouz Khan Shalamani said that on the occasion of Aimal Wali Khan's visit to Tehsil Dargai, dozens of workers from various political parties, including the Pakistan People's Party, joined the Awami National Party.

Flood water reaches near Bahawalpur-Lahore highway

BAHAWALPUR (APP): The flood water has reached very close to the Bahawalpur-Lahore National Highway passing through the Goth Shah Muhammad area after covering a distance of around 10 kilometers from the river bank.

The flood water started flowing to Goth Shah Muhammad and other areas after the Sutlej river received a high flood level of around 144,000 cusec at Empress Bridge Bahawalpur and after covering around 10 kilometers distance, it reached close to Bahawalpur-Lahore National Highway passing through Goth Shah Muhammad area of Khairpur Tamewali Tehsil of Bahawalpur district.

"However, presently, there is a low flood level in Sutlej River at both Syphion Headworks Mailsi and Empress Bridge Bahawalpur," official sources in the district management said.

APP learned on Sunday that floodwater which reached Goth Shah Muhammad, Goth Noor Muhammad, and other areas of Khairpur Tamewali tehsil has spread over an area the length of 16-18 kilometers, inundating over 200 small villages, destroying standing crops on thousands of acres of land including a maze, cotton, and others.

In some places, flood water can be seen at a distance of only one acre of land from the Bahawalpur-Lahore National Highway passing through Goth Shah Muhammad and Goth Noor Muhammad areas, and in some other areas, it could be seen at a distance of three acres of land from the

highway. Thousands of people who have become homeless in Khairpur Tamewali, Israni, Lal Suhanra, Ghot Shah Muhammad, Goth Noor Muhammad, and other areas said that although, they had been provided with meals and medicines, adding they had been facing issues of theft of valuables from their houses which were surrounded by flood water.

"Leaving our valuables and domestic goods at our homes, we fled to areas lying close to Bahawalpur-Lahore National Highway but at night time, thieves using different items to cross flood water used to reach our abandoned homes and took away our domestic items," they said.

The flood water has also wreaked havoc in Saddar Tehsil and Ahmadpur East Tehsil of Bahawalpur district. After covering a distance of a few kilometers from the Sutlej river bank, it has also reached the road linking Sama Satta Railway Junction to Bahawalpur City as it has inundated thousands of acres of land in Khanowali, Fatowali and Mauza Sama Satta.

Reports reaching here suggested that after the breaking of another Zamindara embankment, flood water has entered dozens of other villages in Ahmadpur East Tehsil, inundating standing crops on thousands of acres of land and forcing thousands of people to flee homes.

The sources in the Flood Forecast Division, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and Punjab Emergency Service Department, Rescue 1122 told APP that presently,

Sutlej river had a low flood level on Sunday, September 3.

"At Islam Headworks, the inflow of water is 70,513 cusec and outflow is 68,283 cusec with low flood and steady position, at Syphion Headworks inflow is 66,635 cusecs and outflow is 66,635 cusec with low flood and steady position," they said, adding there was no more threat of high-level flood in Sutlej river so far.

Meanwhile, it is observed that the personnel of the Pakistan Army, rescuers of the Punjab Emergency Service Department, Rescue 1122 Bahawalpur, and civil society have been playing remarkable roles in rescuing people affected by the flood and providing them with meals medicines, and other necessary items.

Deputy Commissioner of Bahawalpur Zaheer Anwar Jappa himself was seen sitting with the flood-affected people at Earth and having a luncheon with them which was provided by the district management of Bahawalpur.

People affected by flood water in Hasilpur Tehsil, Khairpur Tamewali Tehsil, and Ahmadpur East Tehsil of Bahawalpur District have appealed to the Caretaker Prime Minister, Chief Minister of Punjab, national and international donors to provide them with compensation as their standing crops of maze, cotton and others spread over tens of thousands of acres of land have been washed away by flood water and their storage of wheat for cooking bread at homes was also swept away by flood water.

Tribute paid to martyrs, ghazis at ceremony

SIALKOT (APP): A ceremony in connection with Pakistan Defence Day was held at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) Auditorium.

The ceremony was organized by the Child and Social Development Organization (CSDO), a social wing of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI).

President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Abdul

Ghafoor Malik participated in the ceremony as the chief guest. It was attended by President CSDO Shahid Raza, former President SCCI Major (Retd) Mansur Ahmed, Senior Vice President Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS) Gulzaib Waqas Awan, Vice President WCCIS Madiha Faisal, Dean Faculty of Sciences, University of Sialkot (USKT) Dr. Aslam Dar, SCCI Executive Committee Members, WCCIS Executive Committee Members, students and teachers of CSDO schools.

The students of CSDO schools delivered speeches and presented national songs. They highlighted various aspects of the sacrifices rendered by hundreds of thousands of people for Pakistan and the bravery of the people and armed forces of Pakistan during the 1965 Indo-Pak war. The students also presented tableaux to mark Defence Day. The participants saluted the Shuhada and Ghazis of the 1965 war.

Addressing the participants in the ceremony, President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Abdul Ghafoor

Malik said that Defence Day reminds us of the indomitable courage and unmatched sacrifices of our gallant men who proved to the world that the defence of Pakistan is unassailable.

He said that September 6 stands as the symbol of our enduring display of unity, faith and discipline as a nation. "In the war, the nefarious designs of the enemy, bedeviled by its arrogance of numerical superiority, were thwarted. It is the day to pay homage to the Shuhada and Ghazis," he added.

He said that the day also proclaims that the proud sons of the valiant nation are well capable of defending the sacred frontiers of the motherland. Malik said that September 6, 1965, is a memorable day in our military history. "We needed complete unity among our ranks for smashing anti-state elements as well as for the all-round development of the country," he added.

He said that the Sialkot chamber was playing its role in the elimination of child labour from the industry and equipped children with education.

Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot Vice President Madiha Faisal thanked the President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) for organizing the event to mark Defence Day. "This day is a reminder of sacrifices made by our armed forces in defending our country against all odds. It is a day to pay tribute to the martyrs of our armed forces. It is also a day to renew our commitment to defend our country against all enemies. Our

armed forces are the guardians of our freedom. We owe them for their services and sacrifices. On this day, let us reaffirm our support for our armed forces. Let us pray for the safety of our soldiers and their families and let us pledge to do everything we can to defend our country. Moreover, this event will not only help educate children about the importance of defence, but it will also provide them with a platform to express their patriotism and gratitude to our soldiers. It is our hope that this event will inspire the children to become responsible citizens and contribute to the defence of our country in future," she added.

Former SCCI President Major (Retd) Mansur Ahmed said that people of Sialkot had written golden history of bravery by sacrificing their lives for defending the motherland during the September 6 war. He said the Hilal-e-Istiaql was conferred upon the people of Sialkot, who wrote golden history of bravery by sacrificing their lives for defending the motherland near Sialkot during the war.

CSDO President Shahid Raza in his closing remarks paid rich tribute to the people of Sialkot and the armed forces for rendering laudable services for defending their motherland during the war in 1965.



CHINIOT: Farmers busy in thrashing of rice in a field near Jhang Road.

Four perish in Neelum Valley road mishap

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): A car fell into the Neelum River near Pathka Chhun, a suburb of Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir on Sunday.

The officials said the car was on way from Muzaffarabad to Jheng when it slipped due to a heavy rain and fell into Neelum river in the night. Resultantly, four members of a family including a woman and three men were killed and a woman sustained injuries. The bodies were sent to their native village, Jheng.

They said local people detected the car in the river. Local people and rescue personnel launched the operation and rescued a woman.

Police said that locals were not aware of the accident due to night and they came to know about it in the morning.

Tank admin imposes section 144

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): To ensure security and prevent any untoward situation ahead of the Chehlum of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A), the district administration of Tank has imposed Section 144 across the district from September 03.

According to the district administration, the order would take effect from September 03-September 15 which imposed a ban on the display of arms, assembly of five or more than five people at one place, tinted glasses of vehicles, hatred speeches, and holding any kind of rallies without permission from the authorized institution.

The order also banned pillow riding. However, it exempted the elderly, children, women, and sick persons.

It also prohibited the playing of audio-video cassettes and printing material promoting hatred and sectarianism.

Five shops gutted due to short circuit

KHANEWAL (APP): Around five shops including four book centres gutted after a fire broke out due to a short circuit near Islamia High School Chowk.

According to details, a fire erupted in Hamza book centre near Islamia High School Chowk early morning due to a short circuit.

The fire spread to the Zubair book centre, Ghafoor Photo State and book centre, Rajput Old Book Centre and Baba Shahzad Book Centre.

The stationary, books, and photo state machines worth Rs lac of rupees burnt to ashes.

The fire brigade vehicles reached late despite calling due to which four shops were completely gutted.

The shopkeepers demanded that the district administration to compensate the loss of the shops' owners.

Minister directs to complete schemes

HYDERABAD (APP): Sindh Caretaker Minister for Irrigation Ishwar Lal has directed all chief engineers and project directors of the department to complete all ongoing development schemes for public convenience within the specified time frame.

He made this statement while presiding over a meeting held in the office of Chief Engineer Irrigation Kotri Barrage, region Hyderabad, which

was also attended by Secretary Irrigation Sindh Zarif Ahmed Khehro, all chief engineers, project directors and other relevant officers.

He directed the relevant officials to expedite the process of sending emergency schemes to deal with the possible emergency situation caused by expected floods and heavy rains.

The minister assured the officers that no transfers/postings would be made

and encouraged them to improve the image of the Irrigation department and bring the department's name to the forefront. However, he also warned them that any misconduct would not be tolerated in the department and only those officers who work honestly will remain in the department.

Eshwar Lal mentioned that he will hold such meetings every month to assess the performance of officers.

ADC directs foolproof security for Chehlum

FAISALABAD (APP): Additional Deputy Director (ADC) General Ahmad Saad Manj has directed foolproof security arrangements on Chehlum of Ashura scheduled to be observed in Faisalabad on Thursday.

Chairing a meeting on Sunday, the ADC reviewed arrangements for Chehlum observance and directed all departments to remain alert to deal with any situation.

However, he appreciated the vibrant role of Ulema for maintaining religious

harmony during Muharram-ul-Haram and said that Ulema of all sects had played their pivotal role in peace on every occasion and joint efforts would be mobilized for peace during the Chehlum.

He urged Ulema to forge unity among their ranks as it was imperative to foil nefarious designs of anti-Islam and anti-state elements. He also directed for removal of encroachment from the routes of Chehlum processions and said that Rescue 1122, Civil Defence

and police should be at high alert. He also directed the assistant commissioners to keep close liaisons with peace committees of their respective areas so that peace, tranquility and brotherhood could be promoted on the Chehlum.

He also stressed the need for activation of the DC office's control room and CCTV cameras across the city and said that all departments should submit their certificates on an urgent basis after competing necessary arrangements.

Farmers advised to start cultivation of sugarcane

FAISALABAD (APP): Experts have advised farmers to start the cultivation of sugarcane immediately and complete it on a priority basis during current month for obtaining bumper production.

According to a spokesman for the Agriculture (Extension) Department, the sugarcane crop cultivated during September was ready for harvest early and would give more yield than the crop cultivated during October and November. He said that sugar was an important commodity which played a pivotal role

in catering to food requirements of people whereas its crop could also help the growers in mitigating their financial constraints due to its attractive market value.

Therefore, the farmers should bring maximum land under sugarcane cultivation and use latest technologies for crop sowing and its harvesting as latest techniques would also play a dynamic role in increasing per acre yield.

He also advised the growers to select healthy seed for crop cultivation as health seed was the most important factor in enhancing production.

In this connection, the growers should also use hybrid and approved varieties of sugarcane which have most resistance against various diseases besides giving high quality yield.

Among approved varieties of sugarcane for September cultivation included CPF-243, CPF-246, CPF-247, SHF-240, HSF-242, CP-77-400, CP-72-2086, CP-433-33, CPF-237, SPF-245, SPF-234, SPF-213 and SPSPG-26, etc. These varieties have the potential to give 60,000 to 80,000 kg per acre yield, he added.

Constable embraced martyrdom

MULTAN (APP): A police constable embraced martyrdom during an exchange of fire with criminals on the premises of Makhdoom Rasheed police station, here Sunday.

According to a police spokesman, taking action on the directives of the court, the police team raided Basti Ghareebabad to

arrest the notorious criminal Asif Khan Khara who was wanted by police in various heinous crimes.

In the meantime, the criminal party attacked and started firing on the police party in which, constable Muhammad

Shahzad resident of 139/10-R Jahanian of District Khanewal sus-

tained bullet injuries.

The injured constable was shifted to Nishtar Hospital where he succumbed to injuries and embarrassed martyrdom.

A City Police Officer (CPO) prayed for the departed soul and lauded the services of the constable for rendering his life to serve the country.

Section 144 imposed on burning of crops remaining

DERA GHAZI KHAN, Sep 03 (APP): District administration has imposed section 144 on the burning of crops remaining under the measures to prevent smog across the district on Sunday.

In line with special directives of the provincial

government, the Commissioner DG Khan Division Dr Nasir Mahmood Bashir while presiding over a meeting regarding arrangements to prevent smog at his office, directed all deputy commissioners of the division to

launch strict action against the violators of smog standard operating procedure.

He said that brick kilns of old technology must be converted to the latest zigzag technology otherwise the kilns would be sealed.

He also urged officers to not only seal commercial units but also impose fine on the violators.

The commissioner asked for a comprehensive crackdown against encroachment, wall chalking and other illegal constructions.

Man commits suicide over his inflated electricity bill

FAISALABAD (APP): A man reportedly committed suicide over his inflated electricity bill, in the precincts of Dijkot police station. Police said on Sunday that Ghulam Muhiyuddin (60), resident of Chak No.253-RB, was a mason by profession had been facing severe financial constraints. He received an inflated electricity bill of Rs 36,000 this month, which added his miseries. After being upset, he ended his life by hanging from the ceiling of his house. The police have handed over the body to his relatives after completing necessary formalities.



Libya lights up after years of power cuts

TRIPOLI (AFP/APP): It's midnight just before the weekend. Traffic snarls the corniche in Tripoli, where improved electricity service has brought renewed energy to Libya's capital after years of conflict and power cuts.

Chronic electricity shortages had shaped the daily lives of Libyans since the fall of Moamer Kadhafi in a NATO-backed 2011 uprising.

A decade of stop-start fighting between rival armed groups followed, adding combat damage and looting to an already dilapidated grid in the North African country.

Power "outages were a disaster for my business", said Hanan al-Miladi, a 43-year-old baker who sells pastries online for weddings and other celebrations. After 42 years in power, Kadhafi left behind obsolete infrastructure, an economy largely dependent on oil, and an underskilled workforce.

To protect the network and prevent overloads, the General Electricity Company of Libya (Gecol) resorted to widespread power cuts over the past 10 years during the peak consumption periods of summer and winter.

Until last year, outages could last 10 or even 20 hours, turning the city's streets dark and leaving residents sweltering in summer temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) without air conditioning.

The most "unbearable thing was never knowing when the power would go out or for how many hours", said Miladi.

But with new management at Gecol since last year, along with a

relatively stable security situation, Libyans now receive a markedly improved electricity supply.

Prime Minister Abdelhamid Dbeibah, who heads a United Nations-backed government in Tripoli and is the Gecol chairman, in July 2022 sacked the previous manager. He also made sure the power company's new boss saw through projects, including a plan for maintenance of damaged infrastructure and tight control of funds to curb corruption. Some foreign companies have now even revived projects they had suspended in Libya.

"The situation has improved, and customers notice it," said 34-year-old butcher Moaded Zayani, who also sells frozen products.

To avoid countless sleepless nights, Libyans did adapt to the power outages.

Buying batteries costing a few hundred dinars (tens of dollars), they could power a television set and one or two lamps, as well as provide basic internet connectivity.

Those who could afford it spent thousands of dollars on buying noisy, polluting fuel-guzzling generators.

But "even with a generator, refrigerators weaken after 10 hours", said Zayani. The roar of generators hasn't completely gone away -- it returned in a July heatwave -- but not a week goes by without Gecol announcing the arrival of new equipment at the country's roughly 20 power plants.

Since a 2020 ceasefire between Libya's two rival administrations -- Dbeibah's in Tripoli, and another in the east backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar -- the country has

been slowly trying to rebuild.

The electricity supply has improved countrywide, although the boost to Tripoli's was the most dramatic and significant.

Electricity network stability is the foundation of the "Return to Life" campaign launched by the city government, and is slowly restoring Tripoli's soul.

Residents proudly nickname their city "Siren of the Mediterranean" for its attractive seafront.

"It's clear that administrative stability within Gecol has contributed to the stability of the power network," said Mohamad Rahoumi, 53, spokesman for a pastry brand.

"But consumers also have a role to play in reducing their consumption and paying their bills."

Libyan electricity rates are among the lowest in the region, at 0.050 dinars (one US cent) per kilowatt-hour for individuals and 0.20 dinars for businesses.

"The government's efforts are visible, but citizens still have a constant apprehension due to instability," said 34-year-old downtown bartender Abdelmalek Fathallah.

In August, clashes between two militias using rocket launchers and machine guns killed 55 people. It was Tripoli's worst unrest in more than a year. Although such incidents are less frequent, they "can erupt at any moment", destroying infrastructure as well as people's homes, Fathallah said. Still, the lights shining in Tripoli's medina and silhouetting the adjacent Red Castle, a 16th-century fortress built by the Spanish, symbolise hope for a brighter future.

Pope to lead interfaith dialogue in Mongolia

ULAANBAATAR (AFP/APP): Pope Francis will show support for interfaith dialogue Sunday during his final full day in the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar, a visit that has seen him seek to build bridges with China.

The morning address, which unites 10 leaders of major religions in Mongolia -- a young democracy whose Constitution provides for religious freedom -- comes as the 86-year-old pope seeks to tacitly send the message the nation's neighbours, in particular China, that spirituality is healthy for societies and not a threat.

During a gathering of Catholic missionaries Saturday at the city's Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral, Francis said governments had "nothing to fear" from the Catholic Church. "Governments and secular institutions have nothing to fear from the Church's work of evangelisation, for she has no political agenda to advance..." said the pontiff, without specifically mentioning China.

There are only about 1,400 Catholics in Mongolia out of a population of 3.3 million people. Only 25 are priests, and only two of those are Mongolian.

Most Mongolians of faith are Buddhist or practice Shamanism.

By venturing to the isolated Central Asian country, the Argentine Jesuit has hoped not only to encour-

age the tiny Catholic community of missionaries and the faithful, but use his presence at China's backdoor to try to improve the Vatican's relations with Beijing.

Beijing's Communist Party, which exercises strict control over all recognised religious institutions, is wary of the Catholic Church on its territory.

The Holy See renewed a deal last year with Beijing allowing both sides a say in appointing bishops in China.

Critics have called the move a dangerous Vatican concession in exchange for a presence in the country. Mongolia feted the pontiff Saturday with a welcome ceremony that included an honour guard and phalanx of horsemen in metal armour on parade. Calling himself a "pilgrim of friendship", Francis extolled the country's virtues, including its nomadic people "respectful of the delicate balances of the ecosystem".

He said Mongolia's Shamanist and Buddhist traditions of living in harmony with nature could help in the "urgent and no longer deferrable efforts to protect and preserve planet Earth". Religions, when not "corrupted" by sectarian deviations, help create sound societies, he said.

They "represent a safeguard against the insidious threat of corruption, which effectively represents a

serious menace to the development of any human community".

Mongolia has been marred by corruption and environmental degradation in recent years, with its capital suffering from some of the world's worst air quality and an embezzlement scandal sparking street protests last year.

Vast swathes of the country's territory are also at risk of desertification due to climate change, overgrazing and mining.

In the vast Sukhbaatar Plaza, named for a Mongol revolutionary hero, many had hoped to catch a glimpse of the leader of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics.

Among them was Mongolian Enkhturn Dagvadorj, who said Francis "seems a great person. He is indeed a global figure".

"Although Mongolians are Buddhists, it is lovely to receive a Pope from Rome in our country," he said. "His visit is very beneficial to our country in many aspects, from reputation to the economy."

Francis' trip drew pilgrims from the wider region as well, including Chinese Catholics, some of whom waved the country's red flag as they waited for a glimpse of the pontiff.

Later Sunday, Francis will preside over mass inside a newly built ice hockey arena.

Nigeria president suggests nine-month transition for Niger junta

NIAMEY (AFP/APP): Nigerian President Bola Tinubu on Thursday floated the idea of a transition back to democracy in neighbouring Niger similar to the nine-month period his country underwent in the late 1990s.

The Economic Community of West African States has imposed sanctions on Niger after troops ousted President Mohamed Bazoum in a coup on July 26 and the bloc threatened military intervention as a last resort if talks fail to restore civilian rule. In a statement on Thursday, the bloc insisted it wanted Bazoum back in power right away.

"The military authorities in Niger must restore constitutional order immediately by liberating and reinstating..." President Mohamed Bazoum," it said. Niger's new military leaders have dug in, saying they want a maximum three-year transition period to restore constitutional order and have ordered police to expel France's envoy as tensions build with a key partner in

Niger's anti-jihadist fight.

Late on Thursday, Niger's interior ministry announced it was stopping UN agencies, NGOs and international organisations from working in military "operation zones".

It did not specify which regions were affected, but said the measures were "due to the current security situation". "All activities and or movements in the zones of operations are temporarily suspended," it said. Tinubu said Nigeria returned to civilian rule in 1999 after a nine-month transition period instituted by former military head of state General Abdulsalam Abubakar, who has also headed delegations to meet the Niger junta.

"The president sees no reason why such cannot be replicated in Niger, if Niger's military authorities are sincere," the Nigerian presidency said in a statement. Algeria, Niger's influential northern neighbour, has met with West Africa leaders in a bid to avoid any military intervention in Niger and has proposed a six-month transi-

tion. But Tinubu's statement said there would be no relief from sanctions imposed by ECOWAS, of which he serves as chair, until the regime made "positive adjustments".

"The soldiers' action is unacceptable. The earlier they make positive adjustments, the quicker we will dial back the sanctions to alleviate the sufferings we are seeing in Niger," it said.

The overthrow of Niger's government has triggered concern around West Africa where Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso have all been taken over by the military since 2020.

Fears of contagion have deepened with this week's military rebellion in Gabon to overthrow President Ali Bongo, toppled moments after being declared winner of a highly disputed weekend election.

Niger's new military rulers have also been engaged in a political battle with Paris, and stripped France's ambassador of diplomatic immunity and ordered police to expel him, according to a letter seen Thursday by AFP.

France refused the demand, saying the military rulers had no legal right to make such an order. French military spokesman Colonel Pierre Gaudilliere on Thursday warned that "the French military forces are ready to respond to any upturn in tension that could harm French diplomatic and military premises in Niger".

France has around 1,500 troops in Niger, many of them stationed at an airbase near the capital, to help fight a jihadist insurgency in Niger.

Three killed in ethnic protests in Iraq's Kirkuk

KIRKUK (AFP/APP): At least three Kurds were killed and 16 people wounded Saturday during protests in the multi-ethnic Iraqi city of Kirkuk, as authorities imposed a curfew after days of tensions.

Two people were shot in the chest and a third in the head, Ziad Khalaf, director of the local health authority, told AFP.

The victims were a 21-year-old man and two people aged 37, he added.

Those wounded, including Kurds, Arabs and three members of the security forces, were hit by gunfire, stones or glass, said Khalaf.

The curfew was imposed in the evening after rival protests -- between Kurdish residents on one side and

Turkmen and Arabs on the other -- descended into violence despite a security presence.

Earlier in the day, police in the northern city had been deployed to act as a buffer and keep the rival groups apart.

Warning shots were fired to force Kurdish demonstrators to disperse. An AFP correspondent said vehicles on a main avenue were set on fire.

Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani called for a commission of inquiry into the incident, and a press release from his office pledged that those responsible would be "held accountable".

Tensions have been brewing for nearly a week

in Kirkuk, which has historically been disputed between the federal government in Baghdad and authorities in the autonomous Kurdistan region in the north.

Arab and Turkmen demonstrators staged a sit-in near the headquarters of the Iraqi security forces in Kirkuk province on Monday, after reports that Sudani had ordered the site to be handed over to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which used to occupy it.

Kurdish protesters tried to reach the headquarters on Saturday, an AFP correspondent said. After the violence, Sudani ordered a curfew in Kirkuk and "extensive

security operations in the areas affected by the riots", a statement from his office said. He called on all parties to "play their part in preventing strife and preserving security, stability, and order in Kirkuk Governorate".

Sudani, who is also commander-in-chief of the armed forces, ordered security forces in the province "to fulfil their responsibilities in maintaining security and upholding the rule of law". Late Saturday, Turkmen and Arab demonstrators continued their sit-in outside the security building. In another part of the city, local police chief General Kawa Gharib was trying to calm Kurdish protesters.

Malaysia's Forest City teeters over China property giant woes

FOREST CITY (AFP/APP): On the approach to Malaysia's \$100-billion island megaproject backed by Chinese investment, a collapsed bridge forces drivers to detour before they reach an artificial city emerging from palm oil trees where condos, roads and shops lay empty.

Aimed at middle-class Chinese buyers, Forest City has weathered scant sales, Chinese currency controls, a pandemic shutdown and public anger at China's growing influence in Malaysia. But its future is in doubt again because of the financial woes of Chinese property giant Country Garden. The project developer rose from a farmer's idea to Beijing's largest private real estate firm, but is now saddled with \$196 billion of debt.

It posted a record loss for the first half of 2023 this week but won creditor approval to extend a key

bond repayment deadline, narrowly avoiding a potential default that imperilled thousands of developments in and outside the world's second-largest economy.

Another deadline looms next week over an unpaid multi-million dollar interest payment that again leaves it at risk of default.

"I hope Country Garden can overcome their financial difficulties," said 29-year-old Zhao Bojian from Chinese province Henan, who bought one of 26,000 Forest City apartments for around \$430,000 five years ago. "If nobody comes to Forest City, we cannot do business here."

Sitting across from gleaming city-state Singapore, the sprawling private town in Johor state was one Country Garden's many ambitious gambles that took the company to great heights but now risk crashing it back down to reality. Launched under

China's Belt and Road Initiative with a company partly owned by a powerful Malaysian sultan, Forest City houses around 9,000 people, way below its 700,000 target.

Construction workers chip away at the island city by day while an eerie silence falls over its deserted four-lane highway at night.

Only a small number of lights shine from windows by evening across the project's more than two dozen high-rise towers.

Below those sit rows of shuttered shopfronts, some with court documents stuck to doors demanding outstanding payments. Inside, rubbish is strewn across the floors. Many buyers do not live in the artificial city, a security officer told AFP, and instead stash their money as absent owners.

Model sculptures of the completed city's four artificial islands -- far from its current state -- sit in the lobby of a sales showroom to attract potential buyers guided by Mandarin, Malay and English road signs.

Previous governments have opposed residency for expat investors, criticising the project as built only for foreigners.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has stepped in to try to save Forest City as it threatens to become a white elephant. Last week, he announced the creation of a "special financial zone" and perks including a special income tax rate and multiple entry visas.

Observers say Forest City faces an uphill battle regardless. "The liquidity pressure could have an impact on their capability to complete overseas housing projects," said Bernard Aw, chief Asia-Pacific economist at credit insurance firm Coface.

The last major storm to hit Taiwan was Typhoon Haitu in 2019, which left one person dead.

Haikui is expected to be less severe than Saola, which bypassed Taiwan but triggered the highest threat level in nearby Hong Kong and southern China before it weakened into a tropical storm by Saturday.

AIRES (AFP/APP): In inflation-hit Argentina, where rentals, cars, and appliances are increasingly priced in dollars to sidestep the volatile peso, a leading presidential candidate has sparked debate over whether to officially adopt the currency as a remedy to a battered economy.

The US dollar has long been a refuge for Argentines from pesos which lose value faster than

they can spend them. Citizens bypass strict currency controls to buy dollars from a flourishing parallel market and squirrel them away at home in what is often their only viable means of savings.

So why not just dump the peso entirely?

This is the tempting message being spread by Javier Milei, a political outsider with radical ideas who has surged to the front of the presidential race ahead

this month, experts say the lure of Milei's ideas is that many Argentines feel they have nothing to lose.

"It would be good to dollarize. With the instability of the exchange rate I sell half as much as I usually do," said Ivan Abl, who has sold fabric in the Once district of the capital for 30 years. After thinking for a few moments, he adds, "But, that will mean the Yanks will control everything right?"

From art squat to Berlin gentrification lightning rod

BERLIN (AFP/APP): Berlin's Tacheles art squat, a symbol of the anything-goes vibe of the city after the fall of the Wall, is completing a disputed transformation into offices, shops and luxury flats.

An outlet of the Fotografiska museum chain is set to open inside the hulking, battle-scarred edifice on September 14 and the first residents of newly built homes will move in this autumn.

When it is completed, planned for the end of 2024, the complex will boast 265 apartments sized from 25 to 360 square metres (269 to 3875 square feet) as well as new digs in the German capital for the likes of Netflix and Pfizer.

Of the 176 apartments available for purchase -- with prices per square metre ranging from 9,500 to 30,000 euros (\$10,300 to \$32,600) -- around 45 are still for sale, according to developer PWR.

The remaining 89 apartments are reserved for

rental. Investment fund Perella Weinberg Real Estate bought the property encompassing 25,300 square metres in 2014 for 150 million euros -- a steal in the current market.

In addition to the historic building that will house Fotografiska Berlin, the site will include an ultramodern open-air shopping plaza and glass-and-steel office compounds. Tacheles, which means "straight talk" in Yiddish, was a popular department store in the early part of the 20th century but suffered damage during World War II and was partially demolished by the East German communists.

Young artists flocked to east Berlin after the fall of the Wall in 1989, drawn by the low cost of living, and squatted disused buildings including the dilapidated five-storey complex on Oranienburger Street.

At its peak as a subculture mecca, the graffiti-covered Tacheles housed a cinema, restaurant and bar as well as art studios and gal-

leries, drawing about 400,000 visitors a year.

However in 2012, bailiffs and police evicted the artists to make way for construction work, signalling the end of an era.

"Between 2010 and 2012, we were threatened, offered money to leave and had our electricity cut off," Bruno di Martino, a 56-year-old Frenchman who had his studio at the Tacheles since 2006, told AFP. "After the downfall of the communist regime in the former GDR in 1990, it was no longer clear who owned the buildings," said Hanno Hochmuth, historian at the Leibniz research centre in Potsdam.

The chaotic conditions allowed for creative ferment, making the "new" Berlin a unique attraction with countless blank slates for development.

"In East Berlin, many properties were returned to their former owners or their descendants, and this almost always resulted in resale to real estate speculators," Matthias Bernt, an urban planner at the Leibniz centre, told AFP.

Property prices soared, touching off waves of displacement from the heart of the city that have gathered pace in recent years.

Bruno di Martino was among those impacted. When forced to leave Tacheles, he set up his studio in the Friedrichshain district on another disused site, RAW, previously owned by the German railways.

For him, the new Tacheles complex is "a pure profit project aimed at the privileged few".

"Berlin used to attract tourists for its artists, its underground, its alternative side, but all that is in danger of disappearing," he said.

There is a certain irony that the Fotografiska photography museum is moving into the building where art was once made. A top-to-bottom renovation has nevertheless retained some of their graffiti and artwork.

Thousands evacuated as Typhoon Haikui heads for Taiwan

YILAN (AFP/APP): Thousands of people were evacuated in Taiwan ahead of Typhoon Haikui, with hundreds of flights cancelled and businesses closed as authorities prepared Sunday for the first tropical storm to directly hit the island in four years.

Haikui -- which had already brought heavy rains by Sunday morning -- is expected to make landfall by 5:00 pm (0900 GMT) in Taitung, a mountainous county in lesser-populated eastern Taiwan.

The storm was around 180 kilometres (110 miles) east of Taiwan just before 9:00 am, Taiwan's Central

Weather Bureau said in a press conference.

"It is expected to pose a considerable threat to most areas in Taiwan with winds, rains and waves," said deputy director Fong Chintzu, urging to public to be "on guard".

"It has gathered some strength since yesterday," he said, adding that the storm would move west to the Taiwan Strait by Monday.

The typhoon was packing a sustained wind speed of about 140 kilometres (39 miles) per hour, as schools and businesses in the southern and eastern parts of the island were closed Sunday.

More than 200 domestic flights were cancelled.

"I remind the people to make preparations for the typhoon and watch out for your safety, avoid going out or any dangerous activities," Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen said.

Authorities said they had evacuated more than 2,800 people across seven cities -- the majority of them from the mountainous county of Hualien, which neighbours Taitung.

The streets of Hualien were deserted Sunday morning, battered by unrelenting torrential rain, while a fishing harbour in northeastern coastal Yilan

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Will Pakistani elite rescind its affluence?

The countrywide public outcry continues to display peoples' dissatisfaction demanding remedial of the pressing concerns of the community, particularly the skyrocketing electricity bills and the relentless inflation gripping the nation. All segments of society, including businessmen, traders, Academia, trade unions, and civil society joined the masses in their ongoing demonstrations against price hikes, cruel tariff rates and massive taxation on unjustifiable accounts that had been slapped by the government on the public through recent electricity bills.

The prevailing situation presents a grim picture of the country's political and economic future because the brawl created by the rulers over the past decades has now reached an irreversible stage. No ready-made solution to the problem is currently available to the leaders to silence people and move the country for this time. The purblind leadership which mostly consists of blue-eyed and puppet personalities failed to conceive any applicable solution to the current fiasco and still awaits the response of the global lender regarding approval of their begging request, which is apparently the sole recipe to prevailing quandary.

No alternative plan of the caretaker rulers for providing relief to the public in the face of backbreaking energy bills has surfaced so far, despite the initial claim of planning to scrape extraordinary incentives of the elite class that constitutes almost \$17.4 billion or 6% of the country economy and unfairly offered by the past rulers to the corporate sector, feudals, military as well as to military-run businesses and parliamentarians. Those privileged sections of society managed the exemption of taxes, unlimited access to national resources and capital together with reserved quota laxity in rules for job opportunities, in civil superior service, the commission in the military as well and the civil service for their wards and hereafter. Such biased governance not only created economic havoc in the country but formed a pool of talentless judges, generals and bureaucrats from privileged factions at the top administrative positions causing serious political, governance and legal issues in the country.

Currently, the government of Aristocrats have levied thirteen different types of taxes on the public through electricity bills, which amounts to financial terrorism, and has no example in any other country in the world. The powerful elite has an exemption from taxes or uses free-of-cost electricity while an extensive tax burden and unjust tariff have been slapped on impoverished individuals making their financial struggles even more burdensome.

Realistically, the upheaval is the self-creation of Pakistani rulers and lingering on because of deliberate negligence and discrimination of the past and present administrators who upheld communal, sectoral or institutional interests over wellbeing and comfort of the common public that squeezed the land for the poor without affecting the upper classes in the country. In the current situations, taking further loans from internal sources or abroad is not a long term solution to persistent economic challenges, because those crutches do not offer a logical solution to the chronic ailment which needs stringent reforms and a complete overhauling of the system so this nation starts moving on its own feet on a permanent basis. The prevailing economic crisis, social inequality, political polarization coupled with unprecedented price hike and inflated utility bills gave birth to utmost public outrage and serious grievances against the system. The situation is rapidly heading toward lawlessness and anarchy that could be exploited by the anti-State elements and the country's enemies to their advantage. It is high time that incumbent rulers must correct their course by addressing the mistakes made by their predecessors until it gets too late and this country experiences violent public revolution like several other nations in the world.

Africa, new coliseum for global tussle

French President Emmanuel Macron and his aides in Elysee Palace are seriously concerned about the waning influence of Paris in its former colonies in the African continent. After four coups and ouster of pro-French rulers in former French colonies, Macron's aides are currently mulling over multiple strategies to reinforce France political and economic dominance in African capitals. Several buzzwords and fascinating terminology such as democratisation of societies, youth empowerment, preservation of human rights, revival of economic co-operation, revitalization of public diplomacy and community engagement are being coined to engage African leaders, who were previously subverted/ brainwashed by the Russian diplomats and wagner military trainers regarding presence of French Special forces in Afghan states.

Interestingly, west was caught surprised by the recent Chinese economic outreach and political invasion in economically impoverished Africa, while Moscow's diplomatic and military advances in Sahel and Western Africa further astonished western nations because the moves of their Asian adversaries were greatly coinciding with each other. As of today, various pro-west governments in Africa had been toppled by military Generals that are more inclined to Russo-China alliance instead of pro-democracy Europe and America. The recent development in global politics including expansion of BRICS in Africa and the Middle East and Putin hosted the Russia-Africa summit that was purely a response to the US-Africa Summit had multiplied the anxiety of western leaders who were earlier not on talking terms with backward African nations. After France, other western nations including Canada, the UK, Germany and Italy are also mulling to rebuild their contacts with the backward world to garner crucial political backing at the multilateral forum, yet this campaign has sensitized the third world nations about political motives of the west.

Historically, there is neither a hard and fast rule in global politics nor any fixed friendship or alliance and those bonds make and break with the changing realities of the contemporary world.

Similarly, no nation is ever completely self sufficient or can live in isolation because of its wealth and abundance of resources. However, European leaders largely ignored this reality while dealing with their counterparts from less developed Asian and African nations. Although, western leaders have realized their guilt and are trying to correct course, it is not necessary that the newest tactic might serve their purpose.

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Navigating the Nile — a win-win for Egypt and Ethiopia

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Amid the tumultuous landscape of African geopolitics, Egypt and Ethiopia find themselves submerged in a high-stakes struggle as the enduring consternation over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, the largest hydropower project on the continent, continues.

The ripples from the dispute extend beyond only water rights; they threaten regional stability and raise questions not only about the Nile's waters but even the future prospects for the integration of both countries within the BRICS — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — grouping of emerging economies. Egypt and Ethiopia were last month invited to join as the organization announced its expansion plans.

Understanding the complexities of this dispute might seem challenging in the face of lopsided trans-boundary water politics. Given what is at stake, however, and the shifting tenor of recent developments, are Egypt and Ethiopia potentially close to a win-win situation after all?

Despite seemingly endless negotiations between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over the contentious dam in various forums and formats at multiple levels, a breakthrough has so far remained as elusive as ever. Even during the most recent talks, hosted by Cairo last week, the Egyptian Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation reported no notable change in the Ethiopian position. It was the first formal negotiations in more than a year, following stalled efforts led by the African Union.

Both Egypt and Sudan continue to express concern about the potential adverse effects of the dam, given their dependence on water from the Nile, while Ethiopia highlights its development goals and downplays their concerns.

For Ethiopia, a country with plentiful water resources but deficiencies in electricity supplies, the dam offers a historic opportunity to bolster its energy capabilities, reducing poverty and fostering developmental achievements. The dam is emblematic of its national pride and socioeconomic progress — but that is not all.

Ethiopia's stance in the myriad negotiations suggests that its ultimate objective is not the efficient, sustainable generation of hydropower to advance its development goals. It also appears to be leveraging the dam as a tool for a pseudo “hydro-hegemony,” or domination of the waters of the Blue Nile.

This strategy presents Egypt and Sudan with a challenging predicament: Either they acquiesce as Ethiopia angles for greater control over the Blue Nile, or consent to an agreement that not only acknowledges but institutionalizes Ethiopia's unrestricted rights to this precious riparian resource.

Both of these alternatives are simply not feasible, however, especially for Egypt, given its dependence on the Nile for water security. Therefore, Cairo naturally perceives the dam and Ethiopia's unilateral

decision to begin filling it as an existential threat.

Nile waters remain the desert country's main water resource. It quenches the thirst of its population of more than 100 million people, and is the lifeblood of its agriculture industry. Therefore, the continuing tensions surrounding the operation of the dam and the lack of a binding resolution — or even a tenable compromise — only serve to heighten the perceived threat should the filling and operation of the dam not be judiciously managed.

There is also the wider threat to Arab water security, which is a ticking time bomb made all the more volatile by Ethiopia's unilateral decisions about the

in an already unstable part of the world.

The problems are well known, the risks are clear and all three countries involved in this particular dispute have demonstrated willingness to negotiate a solution. So, what stands in the way?

The main issue lies in the difficulty in reaching a comprehensive agreement on the operation of the dam that secures Ethiopia's energy objectives while allaying Egypt's water security fears. To impatient observers, the dam is effectively a fait accompli. The discourse therefore needs to shift from arguments about its existence and the timeline of its construction to discussions of its operation.

In the absence of a mutually beneficial deal, the prospect of one state being allowed to control water flows to others would leave millions at risk. Moreover, power asymmetries among nations and the vulnerability of Arab countries to climate change, for example as a result of anticipated reductions in precipitation levels in coming decades, will turn inevitable disputes among riparian states into yet another threat multiplier in an already unstable part of the world. The problems are well known, the risks are clear and all three countries involved in this particular dispute have demonstrated willingness to negotiate a solution. So, what stands in the way? The main issue lies in the difficulty in reaching a comprehensive agreement on the operation of the dam that secures Ethiopia's energy objectives while allaying Egypt's water security fears. To impatient observers, the dam is effectively a fait accompli. The discourse therefore needs to shift from arguments about its existence and the timeline of its construction to discussions of its operation.

dam. It sits on the Blue Nile, a tributary that provides about 86 percent of the Nile's water, and any disruption it causes could reduce the flow of water to Egypt by a staggering 25 percent at a time when the country is already grappling with critical water deficits as a result of climate change, wasteful consumption, and exponential population growth.

Furthermore, Ethiopia's unilateral actions could be seen by other nations as providing a green light to engage in similar maneuvering to seize control of precious shared water resources.

In the absence of a mutually beneficial deal, the prospect of one state being allowed to control water flows to others would leave millions at risk. Moreover, power asymmetries among nations and the vulnerability of Arab countries to climate change, for example as a result of anticipated reductions in precipitation levels in coming decades, will turn inevitable disputes among riparian states into yet another threat multiplier

sell the surplus electricity it generates to Egypt. This would partially offset the water flow impact of the dam and establish an integrated energy market. This is an appealing, win-win situation that resonates with the ethos of regional integration and mutual dependency, which are ideals endorsed by both Egypt and Ethiopia as BRICS invitees.

Another feasible compromise could entail Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan agreeing a data sharing arrangement to help manage water flows from the dam. Such a mechanism could incorporate stipulations about the guaranteed release of water during times of drought, thereby indirectly addressing Egypt's desire for assurances about its water security.

The path forward seems straightforward enough. Curtail the unilateralism, foster a culture of shared responsibility, underpin the approach through science and mutual benefits, and what seemed like failures might swiftly begin to resemble stepping stones toward a lasting solution.

Moreover, the discussions must transcend simply the dam itself. There is an urgent need to talk about cooperative and sustainable management of the Nile Basin, incorporating issues such as climate change, population growth and water-intensive developments.

A comprehensive Nile Basin agreement should be seen as an invaluable opportunity rather than a challenge. The resolution of this dispute will undoubtedly set a significant precedent for similar conflicts related to trans-boundary water resources.

Experts posit that the best way to minimize the dam's potential negative effects on Egypt and Sudan is through negotiation and agreement, which might be moving closer to happening given the agreement in July by Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to work toward finding a resolution within four months. During talks due to take place in Addis Ababa in September, both nations could strive for a win-win situation that addresses the thorny water-security implications and the regional complexities that surround the dam.

Therefore, there is yet hope that the leaders of both countries might pioneer a transformative water-cooperation model within the agreed four-month target, if they can turn the tide of negotiations in this direction.

Ultimately, there are plentiful opportunities for Egypt and Ethiopia to reach a cooperative understanding over the operation of the dam that safeguards their respective national interests.

Once upon a time, Egypt was considered the “Gift of the Nile.” In the 21st century, we must amend this idea to reflect the fact that the Nile might be the gift that offers the resurgence of cooperation and integration, not only to Egypt and Ethiopia but potentially to all of the countries that share its precious, irreplaceable waters.

Ben-Gvir's comments are a public embrace of apartheid in Israel

Yossi Mekelberg

It has been reported that Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir's car recently ran a red light and collided with another vehicle, injuring two of its occupants. This could not be more symbolic of Ben-Gvir's political career and the harm he causes, even when he is in the back seat, let alone when he is given the chance to get behind the wheel of one of the country's most sensitive ministries.

It is even more fitting that this traffic accident happened while he was on his way to yet another TV interview. As much as this Jewish supremacist politician is, to a large extent, the product of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and its oppression of the Palestinian people, he is also a product of the media, which gave this man and his deplorable views disproportionately excessive airtime long before he entered front-line politics.

For chat show producers and presenters he was viewed as no more than an oddity, a cuddly ultranationalist who would add some spice to the discussion, but there was no danger that his views would come to be reflected in official government policies.

They could not have got it more wrong. These appearances made him a household name. He is now no longer simply the settler thug overturning Palestinian stalls in the Hebron market and telling one of the traders, “Go to Syria. We are the lords of the land here.” Or participating in what has become known as the “Hate Wedding,” an event during which men and children danced and sang, “O Lord God, please strengthen me that I may take revenge on the Palestinians.”

He is in the government now, his policies are simply apartheid policies, and he presents them with no qualms and no shame.

In recent weeks the anti-Palestinian language of far-right representatives in the Knesset and Cabinet has become even more malicious. There is a strong correlation between the levels of incompetence demonstrated by most members of the current government in performing their duties, and the vitriolic language they hurl at political rivals, at the Palestinian minority in Israel and, even more frequently, at those in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

It is a classic, deplorable tactic among those with strong fascist inclinations of deflection from the very simple fact that the populism that brought them to power is hardly useful or applicable when they are actually in government.

One would be hard pressed to find less-qualified individuals for the roles of national security minister and finance minister than Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich respectively; and in the case of the latter, also for his role as a defense minister, with sweeping powers over civilian issues in the West Bank that enable him to entrench Israel's expansionist policies there while thwarting Palestinian development projects.

In his latest outburst from his favorite environment, a TV studio, Ben-Gvir bluntly and unashamedly claimed during an interview that “my right, the right of my wife and my children to move around Judea and Samaria is more important than freedom of movement for the Arabs.”

Given the very simple fact that there has not been a single word of condemnation from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or any other Cabinet or coalition member, their silence can only be interpreted as acquiescence to Ben-Gvir.

Most Israelis offended and react badly whenever their treatment of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza is characterized as that of an

apartheid state. But there is no more accurate descriptor, if one only bothers to pay attention to the nature of relationship between Israel's instruments of occupation and the Palestinian people, which was so perfectly epitomized by what this senior minister declared so publicly.

To add insult to injury he patronized a Palestinian-Israeli journalist, Mohammed Magadli, who was also in the studio, saying “Sorry, Mohammed but that's the reality.” In other words, he was saying that as an Arab, the only option left for you is to accept this sickening state of affairs.

Ben-Gvir was correct. This is indeed the reality. But it is one that no decent human being should be happy with and it clearly falls under the legal definition of apartheid.

Both the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court define apartheid as “inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them,” and the institutionalization of this regime of oppression. Is not this the very description of the daily life and the daily hardships of the Palestinians who are controlled and dominated by Israel?

It is not that those who represent the settlers in government ever bother to hide their supremacist ideas, but in this case Ben-Gvir, while serving in government, has told it exactly like it is: The occupiers' aims are to normalize discrimination along racial, ethnic and religious lines, in which the Jewish population's interests by definition — and I mean by the racists' definition — take precedence over those of Palestinians. The Palestinians must either accept this, or else.

Ben-Gvir's model for Jewish-Palestinian relations is based on his experience of living in the Kiryat Arba settlement, but in this case Ben-Gvir, while serving in government, has told it exactly like it is: The occupiers' aims are to normalize discrimination along racial, ethnic and religious lines, in which the Jewish population's interests by definition — and I mean by the racists' definition — take precedence over those of Palestinians. The Palestinians must either accept this, or else.

However, we need to thank Ben-Gvir and his like-minded, bigoted political allies for their openness and honesty in presenting their twisted ideology in public. The path to the current situation — in which Palestinians use separate roads, queue at checkpoints for hours, face settler terrorism, are deprived of equal access to water and other resources, and live under a completely different and discriminatory legal system — was not a new one. It was being constructed and imposed long before the Religious Zionist Party came anywhere close to serving in government. However, now that its proponents are in positions of power they will not hesitate to inflict a second Nakba on the Palestinians.

What should worry anyone who believes in the fundamental humanity of all peoples, and in equal rights for everyone, is the lack of any robust response to all of this from the international community, and the stubborn refusal of the pro-democracy movement in Israel to take up the anti-occupation cause and call for equal rights for all people living on both sides of the Green Line.

This is the only way to stop this terrible miscarriage of justice and prevent the even worse cataclysm that is lurking just around the corner.

Europe feels a sense of ‘deja-coup’ as its Africa policy unravels

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen previously declared Africa to be a “super priority” for Brussels. However, the EU’s policy on the region potentially lies in tatters after the coup this week in Gabon, which was the eighth in West and Central Africa since 2020.

Much of Africa is rich in natural resources and so the continent has been widely viewed by many European nations as key to their goal of decoupling from Russia, and derisking from China, in the wake of the war in Ukraine. And in the past decade, prior to the pandemic, the region had made a number of democratic gains as it tried to shed a reputation for political putsches.

But now the EU’s vision for Africa is threatened by the recent wave of coups, which Gerard Araud, a French former ambassador, blamed in large part on “European failure,” including by France but also others including Germany and Italy. In particular, he cites the lack of any clear European unity over a shared strategy on Africa.

Even the EU’s chief diplomat, Josep Borrell, has acknowledged that the recent coups are a “big issue for Europe that is opening up a new era of instability in a region which is already very fragile ... It’s clear that things haven’t gone well given the proliferation of coups and the presence of (Russian) Wagner gangs.”

Borrell is referring to the fact that persistent insecurity and corruption is increasingly giving rise to what Nigerian President Bola Tinubu has described as a “contagion of autocracy.” Against this backdrop,

coups have gained legitimacy while the credibility of democracy has been eroded, with military leaders sometimes proclaiming their rule as a second era of independence.

The scale of the challenge for Europe is so great in part because of changing demographics. In the 1960s, the EU’s collective population was about twice that of Africa. Now Africa’s population is almost double that of the EU, and by 2050 it could quadruple.

The EU launched what it styled as a bold new Africa plan in 2021 but it has been undercut for the reasons Araud highlighted and more besides. Certainly, some in the West foresaw the political risks arising in the desertifying Sahel region and West Africa, and launched multiple interventions.

But this has not been enough and the problems have been exacerbated by wider developmental failures. To meet the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, markets and governments need to generate

Andrew Hammond

more than \$270 billion a year in loans or aid for Africa as a whole and this is not happening.

These European and wider Western policy failures have been intensified by competitive rivalries as a range of world powers challenge Europe’s former political power in Africa. From Middle Eastern and Indian initiatives in the region to the great power game between the US and China, geopolitical interest

competing attention other nations are paying to the continent. This includes not only great powers such as the US and China but other states such as India, Russia, Turkiye, the UK and some Gulf states.

Africa has assumed new importance to the British in the aftermath of Brexit as London seeks to consolidate ties with key non-EU nations. Given the long-standing historical ties the UK has on the continent, especially with Commonwealth countries,

China is showing the greatest interest of all. Beijing aims to better connect its Belt and Road Initiative with Africa’s development, and about 40 African countries have signed up to the huge infrastructure project.

Under President Joe Biden, the US has also stepped up its interest in the continent by turbocharging its “Prosper Africa” initiative to help boost trade and investment. For much of the Trump presidency, American policy on Africa lacked coherence, clarity and urgency, despite key administration figures, including former National Security Adviser John Bolton, acknowledging that China and Russia were “interfering with US military operations and posed a significant threat to US national security interests” on the continent.

Take Kenya, for example. It is a key partner of the US in the region amid the insecurity and displacement in neighboring countries. Yet, about 70 percent of Kenya’s external debt is now owed to Beijing, and many large infrastructure projects are being carried out by Chinese firms.

This exemplifies the fact that while the upsurge of attention being paid to Africa by Western powers and China is in part a reflection of geopolitical considerations, broader economic calculations are also in play.

From European initiatives to the great power game between the US and China, interest in the continent is only likely to grow during the rest of this decade, especially if its emerging markets come close to fulfilling their significant economic potential in the years to come.

Myanmar’s shadow civilian govt apologizes to Rohingya on 6th anniversary of genocide

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

This week marks the sixth anniversary of the onslaught of ruthless violence, rape and genocide by the military in Myanmar against the Rohingya of all ages. The genocidal conduct of the regime forces compelled a staggering three-quarters of a million Rohingya, men, women and children, to flee to Bangladesh, clutching their meager possessions.

Six years later, the situation of the Rohingya has shown minimal improvement. Their future remains grim, with little optimism about the prospect of being able to return to their homeland. Nevertheless, a thin silver lining exists, as a significant number of them have found safety in Bangladesh after escaping the clutches of a genocidal campaign.

For observers of Myanmar, including myself, none of these developments were a surprise as they unfolded. It was evident to many of us that the military, with the complicity of the civilian government, was orchestrating a comprehensive campaign of genocide.

What was not anticipated, however, was that following the genocide the military would overthrow the elected civilian administration and employ the same brutal tactics against the very citizens who had previously supported them. The underlying lesson was unmistakable: If you turn a blind eye to genocide, it simply means you will be next.

Civilians in Myanmar believed that the military would be satisfied with the expulsion of the Rohingya and never anticipated that the same military forces they supported would soon turn on them as well. After all, the Rohingya were different, ethnically, religiously and culturally, and had long been targeted for persecution by the Buddhist authorities in Myanmar.

Nonetheless, the widely publicized tragedy that befell them conceals a bleaker reality about Myanmar, which is that the nation is mired in one of the planet’s longest and most intricate civil conflicts. Each facet of this strife is marked by ethnic or religious divisions. Often both.

The assault on the Rohingya constitutes merely one example of Myanmar’s ongoing military campaigns against minority factions. Once the Rohingya issue was ostensibly “resolved,” from the military’s point of view, it was at liberty to shift its resources to other fronts. At that point, Myanmar’s remaining minority groups were likely to face similar treatment. Some of these communities had been the targets of military oppression for more than half a century.

Nevertheless, the persecutions are poised to surpass all previous hardships. The campaign against the Rohingya dramatically expanded the military’s capability for ethnic cleansing and, possibly of greater significance, emboldened it, given that a substantial section of the population appeared to endorse the aggression.

To comprehend the enduring nature of these conflicts and their recent escalation, one must examine Myanmar’s demograph-

ic and political dynamics. About 68 percent of the nation’s population is Bamar (ethnic Burmese), primarily concentrated in the area around the Irrawaddy Valley, the nation’s core. The country is predominantly Buddhist, with 88 percent adhering to the conservative Theravada doctrine.

Bordering the Irrawaddy Valley there lie a number of regions inhabited by a diverse assortment of ethnic and religious minorities, nearly all of which have sought independence from the central government since Myanmar, then known as Burma, achieved independence from British colonial rule in 1948.

These secessionist movements emerged because, soon after independence, Bamar Theravada Buddhists gained a significant level of control over the government and the military,

The assault on the Rohingya constitutes merely one example of Myanmar’s ongoing military campaigns against minority factions. Once the Rohingya issue was ostensibly “resolved,” from the military’s point of view, it was at liberty to shift its resources to other fronts. At that point, Myanmar’s remaining minority groups were likely to face similar treatment. Some of these communities had been the targets of military oppression for more than half a century.

imposing their identity as the official state identity. In the years that followed, a series of military regimes systematically marginalized and suppressed religious and ethnic minorities through a range of oppressive tactics.

Various groups were denied citizenship, their villages were razed, and their marriage rights were curtailed. In Rakhine state, authorities imposed restrictions on the number of children Rohingya Muslims could have, generally limiting them to two, which was just below the population replacement rate.

Clashes between the army and secessionist movements have reignited in recent years as the federal army has reinvigorated its resolve. Battles between the Myanmar military and the separatist Kachin Independence Army displaced nearly 100,000 Kachin people in the north of the country in 2011. Many years later, these displaced persons continue to live in internal refugee camps, with scant prospect of rebuilding their lives.

In the past two years, the military has escalated its shelling of targets in or near civilian camps and villages. In the northern Shan state, hostilities have resumed between the military and the Taang National Liberation Army, an extension of a conflict that dates back to 1963. In the past nine years, battles with the ethnic Kokang Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army have driven tens of thousands of refugees across the border

into China. To the south, the army has targeted Christians among the Karen people, forcing over 100,000 refugees into Thailand in recent decades.

It is not solely the displacements of these peoples that mirror the predicament of the Rohingya. Kachin and Karen women have reported instances of rape by the military as a means of oppression, echoing the mass rapes recounted by Rohingya refugees.

Perhaps the most lamentable aspect of the recent turmoil in Myanmar is that it occurred during the nation’s journey toward democracy. When a civilian government, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, was elected in 2015, Western diplomats had aspirations that she would temper the excesses of the military. The opposite transpired, however. The violence escalated.

The crux of the matter lies in decades of government propaganda that instilled in the electorate

deep biases against non-Buddhist and non-Bamar individuals.

Radical Buddhist monks and advocates of a supposedly pure Buddhist state wield considerable influence over social media in the country. Civil society groups advocating for the rights of the Rohingya or Christian minorities are virtually nonexistent in the Buddhist landscape.

This realization seems to have prompted the opposition’s humanitarian minister, Win Myat Aye, to now finally express remorse for the inability of authorities “to ensure justice for the Rohingya in the northern Rakhine State,” the region in which the military began to execute its brutal crackdown in August 2017.

Win’s apology represents a departure from his prior stance, which was evident in a 2017 BBC interview, during which he defended the military action as an essential response to counter terrorism. He responded with a “yes” when asked whether it was the Rohingya themselves who set fire to their own villages. Six years later, his views have changed. “We, as the civilian government, were incapable of delivering justice during that period,” Win said, alluding to the 2017 operation to eliminate insurgents among the Rohingya minority in Rakhine. “Reflecting on all of this brings me a deep sense of regret. We extend our apologies for this shortcoming. It is now clear why we were unable to dispense justice at that time.”

Investor trust will pay dividends in stronger Turkish-Saudi relations

It is not surprising that economic considerations are among the major factors in shaping a new era in the Turkish-Saudi relationship, which is, by its very nature, multifaceted. From high-level reciprocal meetings to signed agreements, it has become evident that Ankara and Riyadh are engaging in solid efforts to bolster their economic ties, while placing their recent rapprochement on a more sustainable track.

However, in order to understand the importance of these deals and commitments from the two sides, it is crucial to look at the challenges and opportunities for Turkiye and the Kingdom in their path to enhanced economic relations.

When states aim to rebuild relations after years of tension, heads of state pay reciprocal visits to each other, with large business delegations accompanying them. Although much of the focus is on what the leaders say during those visits, the most important task falls to the business people behind the scenes who drive the newly restored relations.

A few days after a meeting between Turkish and Saudi trade ministers on the sidelines of the G20 ministerial summit, Ankara and Riyadh agreed

to implement a “robust plan” to increase bilateral trade, especially mutual investments in diverse sectors. A memorandum of understanding is expected to be signed in this regard in coming days to advance cooperation in export strategies and sectoral partnerships.

If mutual trust is built and these MoUs turn into concrete project-based agreements and partnership deals, we are likely to see a flourishing economic relationship between Turkiye and Saudi Arabia. The two countries also signed a deal on advancing cooperation in mining of critical minerals, a follow-up to a series of deals reached on energy and oil cooperation during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s visit to the Kingdom.

One task, and perhaps the most important, for the two sides is to restore and maintain trust among investors who enjoyed stable economic cooperation during the 2000s. Both Saudi and Turkish investors, business people and companies faced tough times when the countries’ relations were strained in recent years. From the Turkish side, the unofficial embargo implemented by the Kingdom on Turkish exports and companies from 2018 until the normalization of rela-

Sinem Cengiz

tions adversely affected trade volume. This not only prevented Turkish companies from bidding for significant Saudi state tenders, but also caused concerns over the uncertainty of investing in the country in the long term.

From the Saudi side, the Kingdom’s business people and companies lost trust in their Turkish counterparts, who failed to go ahead with planned projects due to pressure the government faced from the opposition, which was highly critical of Gulf investments in Turkiye, ahead of the elections. The government has secured another five years in power.

However, this is a short period for major projects that aim to stay in Turkiye for the long term. Predictability, both political and economic, is the most important concern for investors on both sides because negative past experience has an imprint in relations. So, long-term confidence building is the most important task for now.

Now that the elections are over in favor of the Turkish government, and the Saudi side has lifted its unofficial embargo, both sides can focus on strategies that will build and maintain investor trust. In

today’s uncertain economic environment, reestablishing trust among both Turkish and Saudi investors is crucial for long-term success. Investor trust requires consistency, credibility and transparency. But, most importantly, it also requires economic and political stability. Trust is strengthened when two countries fully embrace each other’s policies, both political and economic. In this regard, it is important to understand the expectations and requirements from both sides for mutual benefit and a clear path to growth. Here, the most important point is that the confidence-building process between investors of both sides should be supported by the leaderships in Turkiye and Saudi Arabia.

There are definitely advantages to a strong Turkish-Saudi economic relationship. As part of its Vision 2030, Riyadh is seeking socioeconomic cooperation, and Turkiye appears to be a significant market. Turkiye and Saudi Arabia are two emerging powers with great competitive advantages, as well as complementary economic systems that provide a solid foundation for expanding investment and commercial ties.

While Ankara is concerned with finding new

export markets and increasing foreign investment into the Turkish economy, the Kingdom wants to reduce its dependence on hydrocarbons, and diversify its economy through investments at home and abroad.

In this regard, Saudi Arabia’s reserves offer solid ground for a synergistic investment partnership across multiple sectors to establish and transfer industrial knowledge and expertise. Industrial development is essential for the Kingdom’s economic diversification, as it has launched multiple projects in an effort to meet current and the future demands.

This offers numerous investment opportunities for Turks.

Ankara and Riyadh are now preparing for a GCC-Turkiye Economic Forum to be held in November in Istanbul, which will be the first of its kind focusing on investment opportunities in trade, energy, food security and infrastructure. Improved economic cooperation is crucial to strengthening bilateral ties.

But for that to happen, focus must be paid more on confidence-building strategies and expectations among investors, the key drivers for strengthening economic relations as part of long-term goals.

Dr. Diana Galeeva

ductured in that currency. Another hint of the cautious nature of developments is that the UAE canceled the branch license for Russia’s MTS Bank, the target of British and US sanctions in February.

Meanwhile, recent normalizations of relationships in the region, especially Saudi-Iran rapprochements, can also be linked with the impact of the Ukraine war. One of the key themes at the 2023 Kazan Forum was the development of an international North-South transport corridor (Mumbai, Moscow, Tehran, Baku, Bandar Abbas, Astrakhan, Bandar Nazli). On the sidelines of the summit, a meeting was held between Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Marat Khusnullin and UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade Thani Ahmed Al-Zeyoudi. The prospects for the develop-

ment of this vast North-South project were also discussed at the meeting, indicating how the GCC countries are alert to and important for alternative routes for trade.

Similar dynamics are occurring in the military and security fields. Russia and the UAE have discussed the delivery of existing contracts on military-technical collaboration and promising areas of collaboration, according to a representative of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation at IDIEF 2023. There is increased activity by the joint Russia-Saudi intergovernmental commission on military-technical collaboration.

Again, there are positive dynamics between regional players, as normalizations between Saudi Arabia and Iran have seen Moscow emerge as a neutral platform for bilateral talks

between Saudi and Iranian defense officials in August.

However, GCC countries’ defense infrastructure is still heavily reliant on Western equipment. For example, despite presenting itself as carefully balancing between Ukraine and Russia over the war, Qatar recently agreed to extend joint Typhoon operations with the UK for another two years, which illustrates the importance of the Western allies in defense and security, especially considering the long-term historical relations that have formed the Western-security umbrella.

The worldwide consequences of the Ukraine war presents some challenges to the Gulf countries. Food security, which was already a concern due to the global epidemic and climate change, has become more pressing since Russia suspended its participation in the grain deal that allowed Ukraine to export its grain

by sea. This highlighted the fragility of global supply chains, and the food security of the GCC, causing problems such as food price inflation, especially in Kuwait.

As might be expected, however, strategic thinking can turn these same circumstances into an opening. The UAE offered a five-year, \$500 million financing deal to Egypt to fund its wheat imports. Food security may also be a platform for further enhancing the global profile of Gulf states since they are credible mediators in the disagreement, emphasizing their neutrality and persuasiveness.

The Ukraine war has already created new niches within worldwide diplomacy, such as Saudi Arabia hosting peace talks in August, described as “flexing its diplomatic muscle,” while Riyadh reportedly mediated a prisoner swap between Ukraine and Russia in September 2022.

Meanwhile, other actors also play essential roles in humanitarian aid. The UAE sent a ship carrying 250 tons of relief aid to Ukraine in August, in addition to 30 tons of emergency medical and relief aid in March 2022. In October 2022, the UAE also promised to send \$100 million in humanitarian aid.

In other words, the conflict has offered multiple opportunities for GCC countries to showcase soft power and branding initiatives. One positive perspective on these geopolitical transformations is that Gulf countries feel able to become key diplomatic actors who maintain good working relations with all sides to position themselves as potential mediators. As the result, arguably, the Ukraine war marks a different kind of turning point for the global balance of power and for a wider recognition of Gulf players’ global significance.

Ukraine war shows soft power of the Gulf states

The Ukraine war has significantly affected the political, economic and geopolitical status of GCC regional players worldwide. What are the main dynamics in play in the wider context after more than 18 months of fighting, and how are these assessed from the perspective of the Gulf region?

Shortly after G7 sanctions were introduced in May 2023, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addressed the Arab League. This firstly recognized the economic power of the Arab states, especially GCC countries, and their consequent importance to both parties of the conflict through their crucial regional role and growing international voice.

Second, the centrality of energy supply and policy to the conflict was acknowledged. Closer ties with the GCC might help Ukraine tilt the balance in its favor by weakening Russia’s

voice at the table. Tentative moves are being made. In late February this year, Prince Faisal bin Farhan visited Ukraine, the first visit by a Saudi foreign minister since diplomatic relations were opened 30 years ago.

Conversely, Russia understands the importance of GCC and other OPEC+ countries to its own economy and the sway they have with Western powers as energy suppliers. There are several candidates to rival or replace Russian gas to Europe.

In such ways, various regional actors have begun to adapt and diversify their economies and politics, strategically responding to new geopolitical realities caused by the war. In March, Riyadh joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Chinese-led Asian security and economic bloc, with the status of dialogue partner. Qatar and Egypt were also grant-

ed dialogue partner status of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization at the Dushanbe Summit in 2022, paving the way for similar status to be granted to Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE. It is plausible that these states will follow a similar route to that taken by the Kingdom.

Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE were invited to become members of the BRICS group in August 2023, again an economic forum not centered on Western powers. These are examples of the importance of the Gulf actors within worldwide transformations, further strengthening their positions as economic and political forces. However, any such policies will be very delicately balanced, as the GCC states will follow their own national interests. The GCC’s economies remain strongly tied to the US, as their currencies are pegged to the dollar and the global sale of oil is con-



Protest to be continued till power tariff hike withdrawal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has pledged to carry on protests until government withdraws unprecedented hike in power bills and rising fuel cost.

The FPCCI's Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar stated that the inflated power bills triggered country-wide protests, demanding that the government to abolish imposed taxes on electricity, saying that increase in electricity bills is unbearable and demanded relief from the government. In July, the then federal cabinet gave its go-ahead to a massive increase in the base tariff of electricity by up to Rs7.50 per unit against the national average tariff determination of Rs4.96 by the power regulator National Electric Power Regulatory Authority.

The regulator had hiked the tariff to increase revenue collection for the loss-making power distribution companies during the current fiscal year. According to a Nepra statement, the revised national average tariff for the 2023-24 fiscal year has been determined at Rs29.78 per unit kWh, which is Rs4.96 per unit higher than the previously determined national average tariff of Rs24.82.

While the regulator cited the rupee's devaluation, high inflation and interest rates, the addition of new

capacities and overall low sales growth as reasons behind the increase, it was actually hiked to meet one of the conditions set by the International Monetary Fund of introducing structural reforms in the energy sector. He said that the applicable tariff would be much higher after including surcharges, taxes, duties and levies, besides monthly and quarterly adjustments.

He said that IPPs were earning huge profits in dollars, but the businesses were badly suffering due to exorbitant power tariffs and the rising cost of doing business. He said that PPAs in Pakistan had made energy cost highest in the region and stressed that to save the industry, the government should renegotiate PPAs with IPPs in the best national interest.

He said that due to the significant depreciation of rupee, the import of industrial raw materials had become very expensive which was pushing up the production cost.

He stressed that the government should take urgent measures to stabilize the value of rupee in order to save the industry from further troubles.

He said that instead of hiking the power tariffs, the government should focus on controlling the transmission and distribution losses and power theft besides improving the performance of power companies to save the consumers from further burden.

The business community

was of the view that the government could mobilize the required resources through increasing the number of taxpayers, reducing line losses and power theft, and ending exemptions to narrow the fiscal deficit instead of increasing the power tariff.

He said the last increase in power tariff left the industrial sector, particularly the export industry like textile, uncompetitive in comparison to regional competitors. This may lead to the loss of more export orders and render many more people jobless.

Despite the tariff surge, he said, power companies would not be able to recover the targeted revenue loss of around 28-30%. At the same time, it will force many consumers to stop paying their bills, which have become unbearable.

He asked the government to undertake fundamental reforms in the power sector to make electricity affordable. Besides, the government should launch a crackdown on the habitual power bill defaulters like putting them behind bars. He the latest increase in power tariff would prove counterproductive as it has taken the cost of industrial production up by at least 30% or more in one month.

He pointed out that a large number of industrial units had closed down in the past one year due to the government's strategy to cool the overheated economy. Not a single company is operating at 100% produc-

tion capacity these days.

BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that the rising interest rates, the uncertain rupee value, soaring fuel prices, higher gas and power tariffs, and unabated food inflation were extremely serious issues that needed to be addressed by the government on a priority basis. He said that since the arrival of the caretaker government dollar has gone out of control. The new finance minister should call of the real stakeholders to finalize policies, suggesting the institutions which are getting free electricity and petrol should be ended.

FPCCI former president stressed that the government should change the basic tariff of IPPs in rupee instead of US dollars as this change would save billions of rupees of the national exchequer and provide electricity at affordable cost to the trade and industry, making our export competitive in the international market. Similarly, the profits of the IPPs should also be paid in local currency instead of US dollars, he said.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that they cannot compete with the international market in the current price of electricity, it is impossible to do business in the current conditions and businesses are closing down, the government should focus on alternative sources of energy to provide cheap electricity, create a conducive investment environment for tax collection.



RAWALPINDI: Egyptian Ambassador to Tarek Dahrouh meeting with President RCCI Saqib Rafiq.

Sugar price shoots to Rs220 per kg

QUETTA (INP): Sugar price spiked to a record high of Rs220 per kg in retail markets of Balochistan.

The sugar that was earlier being sold at Rs200 suddenly recorded a Rs20 per kg rise in Balochistan to reach an all-time record high of Rs220.

The commodity's wholesale price is Rs210 per kg in the province, while a 50-kg sack has reached Rs10,500, the market sources said.

According to dealers, the price of the commodity increased after the supply of sugar got suspended as vehicles got stuck on the national highways after the suspension of permits.

The sudden rise in sugar prices has added to the misery of the people who are already bearing the brunt of inflation.

Earlier sources claimed that the Ministry of Commerce and Industries ruled out the shortage of sugar in Pakistan.

The clarification came after sources claimed that Pakistan is seeking to import sugar from Brazil.

The sources within the ministry said Pakistan has sufficient stock of sugar more than 2 million metric tons, which is sufficient for the country's use until December.

Gold prices see upward trajectory

LAHORE (APP): Amid the upward trend in the international market, gold prices in Pakistan witnessed a big single-day hike on Sunday, while the local currency is sliding to an all-time low.

According to Local Gold and Sarafa Market sources, gold prices saw an upward trajectory in Pakistan on Sunday, as the yellow metal increased more than Rs10,000/tola in a couple of days.

The gold rate in the country for a single tola of 24-karat is Rs242,600, sources said. Similarly, the gold price for 24-karat was recorded at Rs 207,990 per 10g as per bullion market sources.

It is worth mentioning here that the gold price in Pakistan fluctuates several times as per the international market, so the price is never fixed.

Govt urged to withdraw inflated electricity bills

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has urged the government to withdraw the inflated electricity bills, abolishing all kinds of surcharges, taxes, duties, levies, and monthly & quarterly adjustments, as the rising cost has led to widespread discontent among the business community.

APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood said that due to the significant depreciation of rupee, the import of industrial raw materials had become very expensive which was pushing up the production cost.

He said that the government has made energy cost highest in the region and stressed that to save the industry, the government should renegotiate PPAs with IPPs in the best national interest.

He stressed that the government should take urgent measures to stabilize the value of rupee in order to save the industry from further troubles.

He said that instead of hiking the power tariffs, the government should focus on controlling the transmission and distribution losses and power theft besides improving the performance of power companies to save the consumers from further burden.

APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi was of the view that the government could

mobilize the required resources through increasing the number of taxpayers, reducing line losses and power theft, and ending exemptions to narrow the fiscal deficit instead of increasing the power tariff.

Ibrahim Qureshi said the last increase in power tariff left the industrial sector, particularly the export industry like textile, uncompetitive in comparison to regional competitors. This may lead to the loss of more export orders and render many more people jobless.

Despite the tariff surge, he said, power companies would not be able to recover the targeted revenue loss of around 28-30%. At the same time, it will force many consumers to stop paying their bills, which have become unbearable.

He asked the government to undertake fundamental reforms in the power sector to make electricity affordable. Besides, the government should launch a crackdown on the habitual power bill defaulters like putting them behind bars.

The APBF president said the latest increase in power tariff would prove counterproductive as it has taken the cost of industrial production up by at least 30% or more in one month.

He pointed out that a large number of industrial units had closed down in the past one year due to the government's strategy to cool the overheated econo-

my. Not a single company is operating at 100% production capacity these days.

Syed Maaz said that the business community held peaceful protest rallies against the soaring cost of living, including higher fuel and utility bills and record depreciation of the rupee against the dollar, which has led to widespread discontent among the trade and industry.

He said that the traders shuttered their shops, striking over soaring energy and fuel bills stirring widespread discontent. There were widespread market closures on Saturday in Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar, where abandoned bazaars were posted with placards decrying the unreasonable increase in electricity bills and taxes. Everyone is participating because the situation has become unbearable now. Some relief must be given so people can put food on the table.

Maaz Mahmood observed that the rising interest rates, uncertain rupee value, soaring fuel prices, higher gas and power tariffs, and unabated food inflation were extremely serious issues that needed to be addressed by the government on a priority basis.

He said that since the arrival of the caretaker government, dollar has gone out of control now.

RCCI to hold business opportunities conference

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) is spearheading a delegation of the Pakistani business community to Cairo, Egypt, for an unparalleled Pakistan-Egypt Business Opportunities Conference on September 7.

RCCI president Saqib Rafiq in a statement informed that with participation from esteemed Egyptian businessmen, the event was primed to set a new precedent in fostering bilateral economic growth and partnerships.

"The conference, organized by RCCI, will witness the convergence of visionary entrepreneurs from both

Pakistan and Egypt," he added.

He further added, "On the sidelines of the Business Opportunity Conference, Business-to-business (B2B) meetings will also be held."

"This will provide an exclusive platform for delegates to establish meaningful connections and nurture potential partnerships," he remarked.

Prior to the conference, the RCCI leadership had a pivotal meeting with Tariq Muhammad Dehroug, the Egyptian Ambassador to Pakistan, Sameh Ahmed El Ghamrawi, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Mohamed Saad, Egyptian Defense

Attaché.

"These meetings serve as an opportunity to discuss the substantial strides made in preparation for the event and highlight the monumental business prospects that await both nations," he added.

With a delegation numbering in the hundreds, RCCI's efforts stand as a testament to its commitment to fostering economic growth and international collaborations.

The Business Opportunities Conference in Cairo signifies a significant milestone in creating lasting partnerships that transcend geographical boundaries.

Durable peace must for development of SAARC countries

ISLAMABAD (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) former President Iftikhar Ali Malik Sunday strongly advocated the cause of achieving durable peace in the region, an essential prerequisite for economic growth, prosperity, and development for all

countries of South Asia.

Chairing a virtual conference on 'The role of Afghanistan for durable peace in the region' he said, "South Asia has long been plagued by instability and conflicts that have hindered the region's progress and potential," said a press release.

"One of the major concerns contributing to this instability has been the presence of terrorist sanctuaries on Afghan soil, which have posed a severe threat not only to Afghanistan but to neighboring countries, including Pakistan," he added.

He said, "Counter-terrorism cooperation and col-

laboration closely with regional and international stakeholders, especially Pakistan, to eliminate terrorist sanctuaries on Afghan soil, can help eradicate the breeding grounds for extremist elements and bring about much-needed stability."

About economic integration, he said, "We must embrace economic integration initiatives within the South Asian region and enhanced economic cooperation can create an environment conducive to peace, prosperity, and development for all."

He said being trade leader of South Asia he firmly believed that by tak-

ing these steps, the Afghan Taliban government could play a pivotal role in shaping a more secure and prosperous South Asia, as this, in turn, would foster economic growth, improve living standards, and create a brighter future for all nations in the region.

Ifitikhar Ali Malik said, "We remain committed to supporting any positive efforts towards peace and development in South Asia and are hopeful that, Afghanistan can become a beacon of hope and stability for the entire region."

He hoped that Afghanistan would flush out all armed militants' sanctuaries on their soil.

EDF urged to upgrade training institutes

LAHORE (APP): Carpet Training Institute (CTI) Chairperson Ejazur Rehman has stressed the need for restructuring and upgrading training institutes supported by Export Development Fund (EDF) as per international standards that would help improve competitiveness in the international markets.

After having a meeting with a delegation of the CTI stakeholders here Sunday, he told media that though training institutes under the EDF were being provided high-quality support in various fields to develop better

skilled workers especially for export-oriented industries, there was a dire need to bring these institutions at a par with international standards by introducing new and modern trends and techniques thus enabling Pakistan to compete in global markets more effectively.

"We have to develop our export sectors according to the new trends of global markets," he added.

Ejazur Rehman said that according to an assessment, there was a change in the trends regarding exports in the world so it has become

necessary to bring innovation in other training institutions including the Carpet Training Institute, to reorganize the structure according to international standards and especially to increase all kinds of capacity.

"Access to latest technologies and various training programmes have to be designed according to global trends so that we can match the trends of global markets in exports," he said and hoped that Export Development Fund would give a new dimension to the ongoing cooperation with training institutes.

Khawaja Wajih-u-Din

As a matter of routine I ask the small children, I teach, that what they intend to become in life. Not even point one percent wants to be a judge or a lawyer or have to do anything with law enforcement. The kids furthering a simple explanation often tell me that whatever the ruler(s) says is the law in consonance with a local saying "cha Sara chay Kar we agha sarkar we". (If you have an errand with anyone he is the government) this is very disappointing indeed.

As a young kid I was always fascinated by the term called "rule of law". I was very curious to know what it entails. I came to know that it inter Alia means that the rule of law is a political ideal that all citizens and institutions within a country, state, or community are accountable to the same laws, including lawmakers and leaders. In simple words it means that everybody is equal before law.

As student of law I was excited to read that rule of law is a durable system of laws, institutions, norms, and community commitment that delivers four universal principles: accountability, just law, open government, and accessible and impartial justice. Public perception plays an important part in the impression about any system. There is a general misconception that lawyers and judges to be the only ones associated with or responsible for maintaining the rule of law. It in fact is an entire process which involves legislators, investigation or the law enforcement agencies, administration, prosecution, executors of law and implementers of law. Public at-large is also a very important member.

Hence I've always believed that each one of us in our small capacities is an adjudicator of right and wrong about his or her actions in life. The question that we need to ask ourselves is that whether we believe in fairness, impartiality and whether we prac-

tice moral codes and ethical values.

There was a time when anybody reaching the court premises, law enforcement institution or his lawyer's office would feel that he has come within the domain of justice. Very few people would think that way now.

I remember while buying a few items of daily use from a small store in the vicinity of my house, a person walked in and wanted one KG of sugar. He was quoted a price which was more than the price fixed by the highest court of law in Pakistan. Heated argument took place between the parties and the person was told to buy it from the said court and was asked to leave. On my interference I was politely given the same reply. It was very embarrassing to say the least. More importantly it reflects at the public perception of the rule of law.

There are about 2 mil-

lion cases pending in different courts in Pakistan. The question is why such huge load of pendency despite very low expectations. Some reason can be attributed to dearth of effective governance. Deficient or inefficient system resulting in delays, lack of proper legal advice to the potential litigants, ineffective way of handling the workload since inception to culmination, not involving technology in the process. Lack of merit puts the final nail in the coffin.

Very few people are associated with the field of law out of choice. Most of the players in the system are there for personal gain or fiscal benefits or for an advantage on the political front or because they have exhausted all other options. They are very few who actually believe in the rule of law. It is not surprising that we hardly find anyone who seems to be interested in building of the institu-

tions. This is not limited to the people associated in the field of law but also applicable to every Tom, Dick and Harry on the street.

There was a time when the executive, lawyers, judges and people associated in the field of law enjoyed the highest esteem in the society. The biggest asset the state institutions had was its integrity. It was so because they were excellent in their field they had very high moral and ethical values. They believed in the rule of law and justice. The father of the nation is the biggest example. As the time progressed we saw a great decline in every sphere of life including the rule of law.

The people on the streets feel that only poor and helpless persons have to face the rigors and agony of protracted litigation. It is not only very expensive, humiliating sometimes and delayed most of the times. Pakistan since its cre-

ation follows the British legal system. Arguments through the years and has been on whether the laws of the land are in accordance with Islamic injunctions and whether our system caters for the need of the time. Further whether to laws have to be in our national and regional languages.

It is noted with concern that whenever any law is declared to be against the injunctions of Islam the Law still remains in the Field along with the recommendation of the council.

Federal Shariat Court has been established. Whose decisions are very rarely implemented. On the legislations side the best we have done is to change the Evidence Act into Qanoon-e-Shahadat in 1984. Any law knowing person would tell you that in fact no material change was brought about except adding few sections. Even the illustrations are the

same. Few other laws have been enacted. As a student of law, I was told by one of the Honorable judges of the High Court at that time, that after the amendment in the Pakistan penal code through Qisas and Diyat ordinance, the powerful would further exploit the downtrodden and then forcibly matters will be compromised, if appropriate measures are not taken by the state. This is exactly what is happening today in Pakistan. There have been other legislations in this regard which have raised many eyebrows at the national and international level. Through these steps only people have been hoodwinked.

It can be stated without any fear of contradiction that a hedgepodge of different systems is in place which is not helping anyone. On the other hand the British system wherever followed has by leaps and bounds made progress to cater for the need of the time. The case management rule is one example.

Through proper system

they have made sure that one does not to look for a friendship or other illicit means for relief in a legal system. They have automated the system and have ensured that you get your rights whenever they are infringed even against the opponent who is high and mighty. It is due to the fact that the people know that no one can infringe upon their rights, if it is done the courts are always there to protect them. This is the actual essence of the rule of law. No wonder they enjoy integrity in the eyes of the public. So much so that even a Pakistani former legislator when acquitted by a British court stated proudly that he has not been acquitted by a Pakistani court.

Provision of justice is a duty and not a favor to anyone. The Commandments of Allah the Almighty and sayings of his Prophet (MPBUH) are very clear regarding the rule of law and justice.

(The writer is ex-Registrar of PHC) — To be continued



In brief

Indian delegation to arrive in Lahore

LAHORE (NNI): After a 15-year gap, A three-member delegation of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to watch the Asia Cup match will arrive in Pakistan tomorrow (Monday, September 04). BCCI President Roger Bani will lead the Indian delegation while BCCI Vice President Rajeev Shukla will also be included in the delegation. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials will welcome the guest delegation at the Wagah border. The channel report said that the Indian delegation will discuss issues of mutual interest with PCB officials. The Indian Cricket Board delegation is coming to Pakistan for the first time since 2008. The Indian delegation will also watch the Asia Cup match at Gaddafi Stadium and later will attend the official dinner at the Punjab Governor's House in Lahore.

US suffer first loss at Basketball WC

NEW YORK (Agencies): The United States suffered their first defeat of the Basketball World Cup on Sunday, going down 110-104 to Lithuania but still advancing to the quarter-finals. The US found themselves trailing by 17 points at half-time but came back into the game after a strong third quarter in Manila. Lithuania kept their noses in front to see out the win and preserve their unbeaten record at the tournament. Both teams had already qualified for the quarter-finals going into the game. The US, who finished seventh at the last World Cup in China in 2019, will now play Italy in the last eight on Tuesday. Lithuania take on Serbia in the quarter-finals on the same day. Lithuania made a barnstorming start to the game and nailed their first nine three-point attempts. Anthony Edwards of the US was the game's top scorer with 35 points, while Vaidas Kariniauskas led Lithuania with 15 points.

Gambhir unhappy

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Gautam Gambhir expressed his disapproval when he witnessed Indian and Pakistani players engaging in a friendly conversation during the Asia Cup clash on Saturday. During the rain-induced interruption, players from both teams were seen sharing light moments with each other. However, Gambhir found himself perplexed by the camaraderie among the players. "When you play on the field for your national team, you must leave the friendship outside the boundary roads. Game face hona zaroori hai. Dosti bahaar rehni chahiye. (It is important to have a game face. The friendship can remain outside during the match). There has to be an aggression in the eyes of both sets of players. You can be as friendly as you want after those six or seven hours of cricket," Gambhir said on Star Sports. "Those hours are very important, because you're not just representing yourself, you're representing a nation of over a billion. These days you see players of rival teams patting each other on the back and exchanging fist bumps during a match. You would never see that a few years ago. Aap friendly match hi khel rahe ho," he added. Gambhir said that it's acceptable to engage in some banter on the field but cautioned against going too far.



LAHORE: Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mehidy Hasan Miraz put up a big stand for Bangladesh, Afghanistan vs Bangladesh, Group B Asia Cup.

Bangladesh thump Afghanistan to keep Asia Cup hopes alive

LAHORE (Agencies): Allrounder Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Najmul Hossain Shanto smashed centuries before Bangladesh's pace bowlers shared eight wickets to beat Afghanistan by 89 runs in the Asia Cup in Lahore on Sunday.

Miraz hit a 119-ball 112 for his highest ODI score while Shanto scored a 105-ball 104 to help Bangladesh to 334-5 before they bowled out Afghanistan for 245 in 44.3 overs.

Taskin Ahmed (4-44), Shoriful Islam (3-36) and Hasan Mahmud (1-61) took wickets at regular intervals to keep Bangladesh's hopes of reaching the Super Four stage alive. Afghanistan will now play title holders Sri Lanka -- who defeated Bangladesh in their first game -- on Tuesday in Lahore to decide who qualifies for the next round.

Set to chase their highest target in ODIs, Afghanistan got off to a disastrous start with Islam trapping the dangerous Rahmanullah Gurbaz leg-before in the second over for one.

Ibrahim Zadran, who top-scored with 75, added 78 for the second wicket with Rahmat Shah (33) and another 52 for the third

with Hashmatullah Shahidi (51) but failed to keep up the momentum.

Mahmud ended Zadran's 74-ball knock with a brilliant diving catch by wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim to hit Afghanistan hard. He hit ten boundaries and a six.

Shahidi and Najibullah Zadran (17) added 62 for the fourth wicket to keep Afghanistan in the hunt but they fell in quick succession. With 123 needed off the last ten overs, Rashid Khan hit a 15-ball 24 but that was too little, too late.

- 'Proved himself' -

Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan praised Miraz. "We played very well all-round," said Shakib. "Mehidy got his chance up the order and proved himself, we always knew he had the ability. We executed our plans really well." Afghanistan skipper Shahidi was disappointed with his team's bowling.

"We conceded too many runs," said Shahidi. "It was still chaseable but we fell short and now our last game is do-or-die."

Earlier, Miraz and Shanto helped Bangladesh put up their highest ODI total outside their own country. The pair lifted

their team from the loss of Mohammad Naim (28) and Towhid Hridoy (0) through a third-wicket stand of 194 off 190 balls, punishing Afghanistan's spinners on a flat Gaddafi stadium pitch.

Bangladesh changed up their tactics after losing their first game, promoting right-hander Miraz up the order to open the innings.

Miraz justified the decision by striking seven boundaries before he hurt his left hand while hitting a third six and walked off the field. Shanto hit nine boundaries and two sixes before he was run out in the 45th over as Bangladesh piled up 103 runs in the last ten overs. Shakib carried on the good work with an 18-ball 32 not out that was laced with four boundaries and a six.

Afghanistan's much-vaunted spin trio failed to stop the flow of runs with only Mujeeb Ur Rahman getting one wicket while Rashid went wicketless in his 10 overs which cost 66 runs. Pakistan have already qualified for the Super Fours from Group A by beating Nepal in their first match and then seeing their clash against India end in a no result due to rain in Pallekele on Saturday.

Verstappen wins Italian GP for record 10th straight F1 victory



MONZA (AP): Runaway Formula One leader Max Verstappen secured a record 10th straight win with victory at the Italian Grand Prix on Sunday, with a Red Bull one-two on Ferrari's home track.

Another flawless performance from the two-time defending champion saw Verstappen beat teammate Sergio Pérez by 6.802 seconds. Carlos Sainz Jr. was third, 11.082 behind Verstappen and just ahead of Charles Leclerc as the two Ferrari drivers battled for the final spot on Monza's iconic podium.

Verstappen had started second, behind Sainz, but eventually got past him at the start of lap 15 and from then on — just like the rest of the season — no one could match the Red Bull pace. The record became all but a foregone conclusion as Verstappen began to pull away, swiftly building an advantage of more than five seconds five laps later.

The victory also saw Verstappen increase his huge championship lead to 145 points in a crushingly dominant season for the 25-year-old Dutchman.

Verstappen has won 12 of the 14 races for unbeaten Red Bull and matched Sebastian Vettel's F1 record of nine straight victories last weekend at the Dutch GP. Pérez has the other two victories. It was a second straight victory for Verstappen at Monza. Before last year he had never finished the Italian GP higher than fifth.

PFF name squad for AFC U23 Asian Cup Qualifiers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) has announced the men's squad which will travel to Bahrain on Monday for AFC U23 Asian Cup 2024 Qualifiers, starting from September 6.

The 23 players include Goalkeepers: Salman ul Haq, Hassan Ali and Usman Ali; Defenders: Mohammad Sohail, Mohib Ullah, Haseeb Ahmed Khan, Mohammad Sufyan, Syed Abdullah Shah, Mamoon Moosa Khan, Saeed Khan and Abdullah Iqbal; Midfielders: Mohammad Hayan Khattak, Mohammad Taha, Zaid Umar, Nizam Uddin, Alamgir Ghazi and Harun Hamid; Forwards: Shayak Dost, Moin Ahmed, Mohammad Waheed, Mohammad Waleed, Hamza Ahmed and Fareed Ullah.

Pakistan was placed in Group D of the AFC U23 Asian Cup Qatar 2024 Qualifiers alongside Bahrain, hosts, Japan, 2016 winners, and Palestine.

Pakistan will kick off its campaign against Japan on September 6, while they will take on Bahrain and Palestine on September 9 and 12, respectively.

Shaheen says partnerships key after Pakistan pacers rattle India

COLOMBO (AFP): Pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi said bowling in partnerships was the key to rattling India's batting in the blockbuster Asia Cup clash abandoned because of rain.

The left-arm fast bowler took four wickets, including the prize top-order dismissals of India captain Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, as Pakistan gained a psychological edge over their great rivals, who had elected to bat first in Kandy on Saturday.

The two teams could potentially clash twice more in the Asia Cup if

both reach the final, ahead of a highly anticipated 50-over World Cup clash in Ahmedabad next month.

Shaheen, who finished with 4-35, and fellow quick Haris Rauf reduced India to 66-4 before a fightback by Ishan Kishan, who made 82, and Hardik Pandya (87) lifted India to 266 all out.

New-ball-partner Naseem Shah did not get his first wicket until the 45th over but then struck twice more to wrap up the India innings in 48.5 overs.

Rain meant Pakistan were unable to bat and the points shared. It was

enough to put Pakistan into the Super Four stage of the Asia Cup and India will join them if they avoid defeat to Nepal at the same ground on Monday.

"Mickey (Arthur) always says 'fast bowlers win you tournaments' and we always try to bowl in partnerships," said Shaheen of the national team director in a video chat on the Pakistan Cricket Board's social media. He said the role of Haris Rauf, the third member of a daunting pace attack, was "to instil fear in the opposition batsmen with pace and bouncers, while Naseem and I rely on swing".

Shaheen set up Rohit, on 11, with two outswingers and brought the next back in to smash the off stump of the Indian captain. Kohli was the next to go on four as he chopped on a length delivery outside the off stump from Shaheen.

"Virat is the backbone of the Indian team and getting his wicket was crucial," said Shaheen, who was confident Pakistan could have won had the weather not intervened. "We had the result in our hands. But overall the team performance in one innings was very good." Former Pakistan speedster Shoib Akhtar praised Shaheen on his opening spell.

"I don't think Rohit is able to read or understand Shaheen at all," Akhtar said on his official YouTube channel. "The visual of Rohit Sharma being beaten like this was not good, he is a far better player than this."

Dinesh Karthik laud Pak pacers



ISLAMABAD (APP): Indian cricketer-turned-commentator Dinesh Karthik has praised formidable Pakistan pacers, Shaheen Afridi, Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah for the top notch display in the Pakistan-India match which was called-off without any result due to rain.

Karthik lauded the trio for their ability to consistently bowl at speeds exceeding 90 miles per hour, a feat that sets them apart from others. When asked to pick between Pakistan and Indian pace trio (Mohammad Shami, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Siraj), Karthik chose the Men in Green.

"Shaheen, Haris Rauf and Naseem can bowl 90+ consistently and all three are very different in nature. Shaheen Shah obviously the left-armer, has an angle to it and brings the ball back in, Naseem Shah swings the ball both ways, Haris is arguably one of the best bowlers right now at the back end of an inning because of his skid and the nasty bouncer that he's got," Karthik said talking on Cricbuzz as quoted by cricbuzzpakistan.com.pk.

Karthik said he would feel more comfortable facing the Indian bowling attack comprising Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, and Mohammad Shami on flat wickets, rather than the Pakistan trio. He reasoned that the bounce generated by the Pakistan bowlers, would pose a greater challenge.

"For me they are a far more potent attack on flat wickets. If there is something in the pitch then both attacks at all times become very equal but if I had to play an attack I have a feeling, I have a better chance of probably playing Jasprit, Bumrah, Siraj and Shami only because the bounce they'll get will be slightly lesser than what these three other bowlers can do from Pakistan," he further said.

On Saturday, the Pakistan trio scripted history by becoming the first set of pacers to claim all 10 wickets in an Asia Cup (ODI). However, the match was called-off without any result due to heavy showers but Pakistan qualified for super four stage.

Heath Streak: Former Zimbabwe captain & coach dies aged 49

HARARE (Agencies): Former Zimbabwe captain and coach Heath Streak, who had been suffering from colon cancer, has died at the age of 49.

Streak is Zimbabwe's all-time leading wicket-taker and once took 6-87 in a Test against England to earn a place on the Lord's honours board.

He was serving an eight-year ban from cricket, issued in 2021, for corruption offences. "He was carried to be with the angels," his wife Nadine wrote on social media.

"In the early hours of this morning, Sunday 3 September, the greatest love of my life and the father of my beautiful children, was carried to be with the angels from his home where he wished to spend his last days surrounded by his family and closest loved ones.

"He was covered in love and peace and did not walk off the park alone." Streak, born in Bulawayo, had three children.

He played in 65 Tests for Zimbabwe, taking 216 wickets, and 189 one-day internationals, in which he took 239 wickets. As a

county cricketer, he had spells with Warwickshire and Hampshire.

He was named Zimbabwe's head coach in 2016 but left when the side failed to qualify for the 2019 World Cup.

His ban came after he admitted five breaches of the ICC's anti-corruption code. He said he did not attempt to fix any matches, but disclosed information likely to be used for betting on matches in the 2018 tri-series involving Zimbabwe, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the 2018 Indian Premier League and 2018 Afghanistan Premier League.

He had engaged with an Indian man known as 'Mr X' and facilitated introductions to four players, failed to disclose the gifts and payments he received, and the approaches.

In a statement, Zimbabwe Cricket said: "Our heartfelt condolences go out to the family, friends, and fans of former captain Heath Streak. His contributions to cricket will always be remembered, and he will be dearly missed. Rest in peace."

Balochistan produces int'l level players, talented youngsters

QUETTA (APP): Deputy Director (DD) of Sports Balochistan Amanullah on Sunday said that the province had equal potential and talented youngsters as other provinces.

He called for the provision of more extended facilities to make the younger generation healthy and provide an opportunity to exhibit their abilities.

He said the province had the honour to produce international players who brought laurels to the country and the government would create more opportunities and provide facilities to the sportsmen for representing the country.

He hailed the Islamic Relief Pakistan for organizing a three-day cricket tournament at Hanna Urak to provide healthy activities to the youth of the flood-affected area.

Amanullah said while addressing the players and sports lovers on the occasion of the final match of the cricket tournament at Sahar Awan Cricket Ground at Hanna Urak on Sunday.

The final match of the tournament was played between the teams of Spartan Hanna and Green Hanna, which was won by Spartan Hanna after an interesting competition.

DD sports said that organizing of cricket tournament was aimed that to provide a healthy environment to the youth by promoting sports in the province to save them from social evils.

Amanullah added that they were providing full support to the youth of Balochistan to exhibit their

abilities to the world and bring forward local talent.

He said that both the teams that reached the finals played well, but losing and winning are part of the game. The players of the losing team should not lose confidence but should work hard in the future.

He thanked the Islamic Relief for organizing the successful tournament and assured them that the Sports Department of Balochistan would be always standing by their side to provide sports opportunities to the youth.

Isa Tahir Sanjrani, Area Manager of Islamic Relief Program Pakistan, said, "Under its Wasila program, Islamic Relief Pakistan is empowering the youth and women of Balochistan."

"The Islamic Relief Pakistan is providing training to the youth in various fields to empower them."

He said, "The purpose of organizing cricket tournaments under the Wasila program is to attract the youth towards healthy activities so that they can avoid drugs and other social evils."

He said, "Islamic Relief Pakistan has planned to organize national and international level sports competitions in Quetta for its players to boost sports activities in the province."

Later, Deputy DD Sports Balochistan Amanullah, Area Manager of Islamic Relief Program Pakistan Isa Tahir Sanjrani distributed trophies and prizes among the players of the winner and runner-up teams of the final.

Liverpool hint at Premier League title challenge in Villa cruise

LIVERPOOL (Agencies): Liverpool looked like the dominant Jurgen Klopp side of old as a 3-0 win over Aston Villa at Anfield on Sunday maintained the Reds' unbeaten start to the new season.

Dominik Szoboszlai, with his first goal for the club, and Mohamed Salah were on target either side of Matty Cash's own goal.

Victory takes the Reds to within two points of Manchester City at the top of the Premier League.

But it was the manner of victory and a return of 10 points from a tricky opening four games of the new season that will have Liverpool fans dreaming of a title challenge once more.

Either side of Liverpool's first title in 30 years in 2020, Klopp's men missed out on the title to City twice by a solitary point in 2019 and 2022.

However, last season they slumped to fifth in the Premier League to miss out on Champions League football for the first time in seven years. A return to the top four looked like it could be the limit of Liverpool's ambitions for the new campaign after a difficult summer in the transfer market led them to miss out on a number of targets.

Klopp has had to completely rebuild his midfield, but new signings Szoboszlai and Alexis Mac Allister have slotted in with ease. Arguably the Reds' most important business of the window was turning down a huge offer from Saudi side Al-Ittihad for Mohamed Salah this week.

Salah was a constant threat and there is little doubting Liverpool's fire-



power up front with Darwin Nunez now finding his feet after a difficult first season. Nunez was rewarded for his match-winning contribution off the bench with two goals away to Newcastle last weekend with his first start of the season.

- Alexander-Arnold sets the tone -

The Uruguayan's pace and power consistently exposed the Villa defence but it was from a set-piece that the home side broke the deadlock after just three minutes. Trent Alexander-Arnold's corner came out to the edge of the box where Szoboszlai arrowed a powerful shot into the far corner on his weaker left foot.

Alexander-Arnold controlled the game from his new role at the base of the Liverpool midfield when in possession. Captain for the day in the absence of the suspended Virgil van Dijk, it was his pass that started the move for the second goal. Salah squared for Nunez, who should have scored himself, but when his shot came back off the post, the ball ricocheted in off the unfortunate Cash.

Villa had lost just seven Premier League games in 28 under Unai Emery.

But just as in the 5-1 thrashing they suffered at Newcastle on the opening weekend of the season, their high defensive line was easily picked off. Joel Matip headed a huge chance wide and Nunez hit the crossbar as Liverpool should have added to their lead before half-time.

But Villa will also feel they did not make the most of their chances to bring the game to life.

John McGinn blazed over with just Alisson Becker to beat before the Brazilian goalkeeper produced a miraculous stop to keep out Cash's header at the start of the second period. At the other end, Nunez somehow headed wide with the goal gaping after a wonderful cross by Salah picked out his strike partner.

The Egyptian remains indispensable if Liverpool are to hold any hope of reeling in City for a 20th English top-flight title and got the goal his performance deserved on 55 minutes. Villa failed to deal with another corner and Salah converted Nunez's flick-on at the back post.



In brief

CDA plans to develop several new parks

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is planning to develop several new modern parks in the federal capital to provide better recreational facilities to the residents of the city. "The civic authority has already developed around 37 public parks in the federal capital during the last ten years and is working on a policy to increase their number in the coming years," official sources in the CDA told APP. "We need three to four months to develop a new park after completion of the codal formalities." At present, they said the federal capital had six amusement parks, which were considered sufficient to cater to the recreational needs of Islamabad residents. "But the policy has been made that whenever a new sector will be developed, an amusement park will be constructed along," they added. The sources said that the CDA was developing several new sectors, including I-11, I-12, I-14, I-15, I-16, D-12, and Park Enclave, adding that Model Villages and parks were also being developed in the said areas. "As and when these areas are developed and completed, the new parks will be there to meet the demand and requirement of the general public as per CDA approved layout plan," they added.

16 liquor suppliers held

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 16 liquor suppliers and recovered 105 liter liquor from their possession during crackdown here on Sunday. According to police spokesman, Ganjmandi police conducted raid and held 06 liquor suppliers Musa Ahmed, Hamsur Rehman, Shiraz Gul, Talib, Usman and Matiullah and recovered 41 liter liquor from their custody. Similarly, Civil Line Police nabbed Naveed and recovered 10 liters of liquor from his possession. Kalar Syedan police seized 10 liters of liquor from Shahruxh while, Bani police arrested Qasim and recovered 10 liters of liquor from his custody. New Town police recovered 07 liters of liquor from Joel Saleem. In another operation, Naseerabad police arrested Riaz and recovered 07 liters of liquor from his possession and 06 liters of liquor was recovered from Naveed. Rata Amaral police recovered 05 liters of liquor from Stephen. R.A Bazar police recovered 05 liters of liquor from Patras and 05 liters of liquor was recovered from Salman while 05 liters of liquor was also recovered from Parvez. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. SSP Operations appreciated the performance of police teams said the crackdown on liquor suppliers is being intensified, liquor suppliers cannot escape the grip of the law, he added.

Wild bear appears in Rwp

RAWALPINDI (APP): A wild bear has been spotted near Bhatta Chowk in Rawalpindi which caused panic in the area. Rescue 1122 teams rushed to the site to deal with the horrifying situation and make sure everyone stayed safe. The teams also informed the wildlife department about the wild bear. According to a Rescue 1122 spokesman, a security guard shared a video with the rescue officials in which a wild bear could be seen. However, the rescue teams tried their best but the bear managed to escape from the scene. The teams have continued the search for the missing bear by combing the area.



ISLAMABAD: Youngsters jumping and bathing in water channel of Rawal Dam to get some relief from hot weather in the Federal Capital.

Swiss Government announces Excellence Scholarship for Pakistani Students

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Swiss Government has announced the "Excellence Scholarship for Pakistani students" for the academic year 2024-25, according to the Higher Education Commission. Each year, the Swiss Confederation awards Excellence Scholarships to promote international exchange and research cooperation between Switzerland and over 180 other countries.

The research scholarship (research fellowship, PhD, Postdoc) is available to post-graduate researchers in any discipline (who hold a master's degree is the minimum qualification required) who are planning to come to Switzerland to pursue research or further studies at doctoral or post-doctoral level.

The Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are aimed at providing education opportunities to the young researchers from

abroad who have completed a master's degree or PhD and foreign artists holding a bachelor's degree. The recipients are selected by the awarding body, the Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS).

The prospective applicants can study in the categories including one-year Research after Masters, 03-year PhD after Masters, one-year Post Doctorate.

The interested candidates may also request for all necessary information and requirement regarding the scholarship by sending an email to Islamabad.scholarship@ed.admin.ch. The deadline for submitting the application to the embassy is September 30 while more information is available through the web link: <https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/education/scholarships-and-grants/swiss-government-excellence-scholarships.html>.

The applications are subject to preliminary selection by the relevant national authorities and/or the Swiss diplomatic representation.

The short-listed applications are then assessed by the Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS), which makes the final decision.

The FCS assesses scholarship applications according to three criteria including candidate profile, quality of the research project or artistic work and synergies and potential for future research cooperation.

The FCS is composed of professors from Swiss public universities. Scholarship awards are decided on the basis of academic and scientific excellence. The FCS will announce its decisions regarding the new scholarship awards by the end of May at the latest.

Special cell established

ISLAMABAD (APP): A special investigative cell in the Anti-Terrorism Department of Islamabad Capital Police has been set up which will investigate cases related to financing terrorism and extremism.

On the special directions of Federal Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti, Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr Akbar Naseer Khan has taken the initiative to set up this special cell. A police spokesperson said, "The in-charge of this cell will be an officer in Grade 17 and it will operate under the supervision of SSPCTD." The ICCPO has stated, "This cell will function in accordance with international standards and will also seek cooperation from other law enforcement agencies in matters of special investigations."

He further said, "Robust legal actions will be taken against the individuals involved in the financing of terrorism and extremism." Previously, ICCPO Dr Akbar Nasir Khan had established an anti-terrorism and extremism unit in CTD which was the first one of its kind in Pakistan.

Iranian ambassador condemns disrespect of Holy Quran in Europe

ISLAMABAD (APP): Iranian Ambassador Reza Amiri-Moghaddam, in a recent gathering of religious scholars and leaders from various faiths and sects, raised concerns about the increasing incidents of disrespect towards religious symbols, particularly the Holy Quran, in European nations. The event, titled 'Honoring the Holy Quran from the Perspective of Religions and Sects,' witnessed a unified call for safeguarding religious sanctity and promoting mutual coexistence.

Ambassador Amiri-Moghaddam, speaking at the event organized by the Iranian Cultural Consulate in collaboration with Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen, underscored the distressing trend of disregarding the sanctity of religious symbols. He pointed out that over the past six months, the Holy Quran had been desecrated on more than six occasions in Europe.

Expressing his pleasure in joining the assembly of learned individuals, the Ambassador extended his appreciation to those involved in organizing the event, which brought together scholars and devotees from diverse religious backgrounds, including Shia, Sunni, Christian, Sikh, and Hindu. The event focused on the importance of honoring and revering the Holy Quran from a multi-religious perspective.

Ambassador Amiri-Moghaddam emphasized its timeliness given recent incidents in European countries that showed disrespect

for the Holy Quran. He specifically highlighted the permission granted by the Swedish government for such disrespect under the banner of freedom of expression, labeling it a dangerous precedent. He expressed disappointment over the lack of preventive actions and raised concerns about similar incidents in the future.

Ambassador Amiri-Moghaddam stressed that the desecration of the Holy Quran transcended religious boundaries, representing an affront to all divine scriptures. He noted that condemnation for such acts came from religious leaders globally, uniting against such unacceptable behavior. Moreover, the Ambassador pointed to the violation of international law that prohibits the propagation of religious hatred, highlighting the contradiction between these actions and international agreements and human rights principles. He characterized the act of disrespecting the Holy Quran as emblematic of an agenda seeking to create discord among Islamic nations and expressed concerns about the silence of European nations on these matters within their borders. In the age of technological advancements that amplify ethical and spiritual capacities, Ambassador Amiri-Moghaddam urged scholars to promote positive discourse and create an environment where all religions can effectively counteract the trend of disrespect.

Govt taking steps to boost foreign investment in tourism industry: minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Tourism Wasi Shah Sunday said that his government was taking significant steps to enhance foreign investment for the tourism industry and boost investors' confidence to explore the tourism potential of Pakistan which will promote the soft image of the country at the international level.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that efforts are being made to

promote and showcase Pakistan's rich tourism heritage at all international forums with the active participation of public-private stakeholders.

He said that the foundation stone of the first theme park in Skardu will be laid soon.

The Minister Tourism said that all possible measures will be taken to provide the best ever facilities to tourists, adding that the tourism sector will actively promote to strengthen the

national economy and lead the country to progress and prosperity.

Minister said the growth of the travel industry must also benefit local communities and create an environment while enhancing the tourist ecosystem. Replying to a question, he said Pakistan has great potential to attract a huge number of foreign tourists and expatriate Pakistanis to explore and witness the country's culture, ecotourism and religious tourism.

Political instability, economic policies led to lack of trust, dissatisfaction among businessmen

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has unveiled a groundbreaking report shedding light on the challenges faced by the engineering industry in Pakistan.

The comprehensive study, conducted by a team of esteemed researchers led by Dr Nadeem ul Haque, and including Dr Usman Qadir, Dr Abid Rehman, and Mr Mohammad Armughan, delves into the realities faced by engineering firms and provides valuable insights into the state of the industry.

The report is based on an extensive survey of 328 engineering firms from across the Golden Triangle of Lahore, Gujrat, and Gujranwala. It reveals compelling statistics that underscore the critical concerns affecting the industry's growth and productivity.

According to the press release issued from the PIDE, one of the foremost issues outlined in the report is the severe impact of electricity unavailability on daily production targets. A staggering 83% of surveyed firms expressed that the unavailability of electricity creates hurdles in achieving their production goals, resulting in a detrimental gap between demand and supply for the industry.

Moreover, 78% of these firms reported that electricity scarcity hinders their operational efficiency, a crucial factor where economies of scale need to be achieved. Load-shedding and voltage fluctuations further exacerbate the challenges by increasing the risk of machinery malfunction

and damage, affecting 68% of the firms. The financial strain of arranging alternate supply, amounting to PKR 71,000 per unit annually, adds to the burden on firms' operations, impacting 72% of the surveyed companies. The report underscores the significance of addressing these challenges. It recommends that engineering firms adopt international and national quality standard certifications to maintain quality standards, a move endorsed by 89% of the surveyed firms. Moreover, the government is urged to focus on enhancing the electricity supply in industrial areas, with smaller firms exploring backup power options to ensure uninterrupted operations, a sentiment echoed by 76% of the respondents.

An interesting finding of the report is the lack of an online presence among Pakistani engineering enterprises. With a surprising 63% of surveyed firms lacking any online presence, there is an urgent need for businesses to establish themselves online to reach a wider customer base and enhance engagement. The study also reveals that while a significant portion of firms (63%) show no intent to expand in the coming years, a proactive minority plans to invest in advanced technology, machinery, land, and skilled labor to boost their business prospects.

Another critical issue highlighted in the report is the lack of access to credit for the majority of firms. The majority of firms lack adequate collateral to secure loans due to their small size. This reduces their mar-

ketability to commercial lenders and has resulted in only 5% of surveyed companies having loans or lines of credit. Limited access to finance this hampers the industry's growth potential. To address this, the report suggests that financial institutions introduce special credit schemes for small and medium-sized enterprises to encourage business expansion and development.

The research also explores the complex landscape of international trade for Pakistani engineering firms, revealing obstacles related to tax implications, product quality, branding, and pricing. Most notably, a substantial 84% of firms source their raw materials domestically, emphasizing a need to diversify suppliers and engage with international markets.

The report emphasizes the importance of a thriving relationship between businesses and the government for economic prosperity. However, political instability and unfavorable economic policies have led to a lack of trust and dissatisfaction among business owners, impacting productivity and profit margins.

The release of this comprehensive report marks a significant contribution to the understanding of Pakistan's engineering industry. The recommendations provided serve as a roadmap for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and businesses to collaborate and drive positive change in the sector. By addressing the identified challenges, Pakistan can position itself for a brighter industrial future.

HEC announces Scholarship Program for students

ISLAMABAD (APP): Higher Education Commission (HEC) has announced a Scholarship Program for students of Gilgit-Baltistan to study in top Pakistani universities or institutions.

According to an official of HEC, the applications have been invited from outstanding students of Gilgit-Baltistan who intend to pursue undergraduate studies (four/five years BS programs) from HEC-recognized public sector universities/degree awarding institutions (DAIs). The scholarships are being offered for the academic year 2023-24 in all areas of study or disciplines under the project titled, "Undergraduate Scholarship Program for the Students of Gilgit-Baltistan in Top Pakistani Universities/Institutions (Batch-III)".

About the eligibility criteria, the official informed that the applicants must domicile

or local certificate of Gilgit-Baltistan and have completed a Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC)/ Equivalent.

The applicants who are already availing any other scholarship are not eligible to apply while the maximum age limit is 22 years as of closing date of application submission. The candidates will have to meet HEC and university criteria for admission to BS programs. About the scholarship program, the official revealed that the scholarship will cover tuition fees, hostel fees and other charges-maximum Rs. 240,000 per year, a stipend of Rs. 15,000 per month and books and traveling allowances of Rs. 30,000 per annum. The candidates will be shortlisted based on their scores in Aptitude Test (to be conducted by the Education Testing Council, HEC) and academic credentials in which the candidates must secure at least 50 percent marks.

Railways earn over 5mln from salons in last 3 years

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has generated revenue worth Rs 5,269,315 through utilizing its 23 salons and inspection coaches for commercial purposes, during the last three years.

"At present, Pakistan Railways has only 23 salons and inspection coaches with different dignitaries of the country who are entitled to use these salons when needed," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. Giving the details, he said, "Two highly luxurious coaches have been allocated for the Prime Minister's Secretariat while four coaches have been allocated for the Minister for Railways, Secretary/Chairman of Railways, and another senior official in the ministry."

The official said, "Only one salon has been allocated to the federal government while one each has been allocated to the Governors of Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, and the provincial governments." In addition, eight salons had been allocated for the Railway Headquarters

Lahore, in which one each would be marked to Chief Executive Officer/General Manager (BS-22), Additional General Manager BS-21, Inspector General Railway Police, Federal Government Inspector, and four salons were allocated for Principal Officers, he added. The official said six salons had been allocated for Divisional Superintendents of Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Quetta, Sukkur, Lahore, and Karachi.

He said that the Principal Officers of Pakistan Railways were entitled to travel at these salons or inspection coaches only when they were travelling on duty. Above all, they said luxury salons were also available for private travel on a rental basis.

The official said the salons were very luxurious and had two rooms, a bath, a dining area, and a kitchen like a tiny house on wheels with the availability of every facility. He said some of these salons were inspection coaches and their back wall was made of glass from where officers could view the track and surrounding area.

AC conducts crackdown

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to curb the spread of dengue, the Assistant Commissioner Secretariat conducted a surprise inspection of various locations in the Secretariat Sub-Division here Sunday.

The inspection team sealed four factories, stores, and dustbins for violating dengue SOPs, while the managers were taken into custody, while other infringers were fined and warned, ICT Spokesman said. The AC Secretariat, Syed Faizan Ali, led the inspection team, which comprised of officials from the health department, the municipal corporation, and the police. The team inspected workshops, tyre stores, nurseries, dustbins, and other facilities. The inspection team found that four factories were not following the dengue SOPs. The factories were storing water in open containers, which is a breeding ground for mosquitoes. The team also found that the tyre stores were not disposing of used tyres properly.

The used tyres can also collect water and become breeding grounds for mosquitoes. AC also ordered the factories and tyre stores to be sealed immediately. The managers of the factories and stores were also taken into custody.



ISLAMABAD: Surveyor busy in survey of road during expansion work of Club Road in the Federal Capital.

Speedy work urged

KABUL (Agencies): The Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar held a meeting with the representatives of the companies that have won mining contracts. During the meeting which was held in his office, Acting Mines and Petroleum Minister listened to the work plans of the companies' representatives, ideas and suggestions, and promised to cooperate with them according to the mining laws and regulations.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Saffar 17, 1445 — Monday, September 04, 2023

Chief visits Iranian official

KABUL (Agencies): The head of Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA), Mulla Bakht Al-Ramman Sharafi in a meeting with Dr. Sardar Nazari, Governor of Iran's Khorasan province, emphasized on further railway cooperation. The two sides expressed their satisfaction on the occasion of the beginning of cargo transportation through the third section of the Khawaf-Herat railway line and emphasized that rail cooperation should be strengthened further.

‘Dozens of children returned from Iran’

NIMROZ (TOLONews): Mohammad Omar Zubair, head of the work and social affairs department in Nimroz, said that dozens of Afghan children are returned from Iran to Nimroz province every day.

According to Zubair, most of these children do not have the money to rejoin their families and relatives in their provinces.

“The movement of children at the border has increased. Now the institutions are not working, and we are trying to send these children to their provinces,” said Mohammad Omar Zubair. Shabir Ahmed, 14, was

arrested by the security forces of Iran and returned to Nimroz when he was planning to go to Iran illegally with his family.

“There were countless people in the camp. There were all kinds of people, underage, old people, hungry, with children, with families, and they didn't even have bread to eat.”

Meanwhile, some of these children, whose families live in Iran, want the current government to solve their challenges.

“They arrested us, sent us to the camp, and we had no money. We have been thirsty and hungry for a

week,” said Mohubullah, a Ghor resident.

“They took us from Bandar Abbas and took us to the camp, now we don't have the fare for a car, and we don't know how to go home,” said Mer Ahmad, a Badghis resident.

According to experts, the increasing poverty and unemployment in the country have caused people under the legal age to immigrate illegally.

“There is no single mechanism for all-around support that can safely hand over these children to their families,” said Mohammad Mahmmodi, a lecturer.

Medical students’ exit exam held

KABUL (TOLONews): The National Examination Authority (NEXA) announced the holding of the final medical exam of the Medical Council (Exit Exam) and the Public Health master's program of Kabul Medical University.

According to figures, nearly 4,000 candidates participated in the exam, and there were no women among the participants.

The chairman of NEXA, Abdul Baqi Haqqani, pledged transparency in the process and emphasized that Afghanistan is falling behind in the medical sector compared to other countries in the region.

“We are weak in the health sector, and it requires a lot of attention. In the health sector, we are falling behind. We fall significantly behind compared to other nations,” Haqqani said.

According to Gul Mohammad Osman, director of the Afghanistan Medical Council, the exam for women has been postponed since there isn't a particular procedure for them, and the new procedure has been sent to the leader of the Islamic Emirate for approval.

“Sadly, neither we nor other organizations, such as the Ministry of Higher Education, the Public Health Department, or the NEXA, had any particular procedures for taking the test so that we could give the exam to girls,” Osman said.

According to Ziaullah Hashemi, a NEXA spokesman, there are 3,300 candidates for the Medical Council exam and in order to pass, they must receive 216 marks.

Of the almost 600 applicants for the master's program, 30 will move on to the next round.

“The exam of 3,300 candidates in the Exit Exam of the Afghanistan Medical Council was taken, and those who have answered 60% of the questions correctly will succeed, that is, the one who receives 60% of the score,” Hashemi said.

No women participated in nearly ten exams conducted by the National Examination Authority (NEXA).

66,000 mt of goods transported

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA) announced that more than 66,000 metric tons of goods were transported by rail in Afghanistan from August 25 to August 31.

The goods were shipped through the ports of Hairatan, Turgandi and Agina, which connect Afghanistan with its neighboring countries.

Minister meets Turkish ambassador to Kabul



KABUL (Agencies): Acting Minister of National Defense, Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqub Mujahid met with the outgoing Turkish Ambassador, Cihad Erginay in Kabul.

According to a statement released by Defense Ministry, the meeting took place in the office of Yaqub Mujahid, where they discussed about Turkey's humanitari-

an cooperation to Afghanistan, the strengthening of bilateral relations, acceleration of further economic cooperation in the future, and other important issues.

Mujahid has appreciated Turkey's humanitarian cooperation to the country thus far and called for the strengthening of bilateral relations, the statement added.

Ministry of Agriculture says fresh fruit yield increased to 30 per cent

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock said that in the fresh fruits and vegetables sector, there has been an increase from seven to 30 per cent in some provinces of the country.

Musbahuddin Mustaeen, a spokesman for the ministry, said that except for the northern provinces that witnessed drought, farmers in other provinces have made remarkable gains in the field of fresh fruits.

“In the current year, there has been an increase from 7 to 30 per cent in the

fruit products sector in the different provinces of the country. And this is a good achievement for the Ministry of Agriculture,” said Musbahuddin Mustaeen.

Some farmers in the northern provinces of the country said that due to successive droughts, they did not get good results and some of their trees have dried up.

“This year there was a drought, and our apple, fig, and grape trees dried up.

On the other hand, there is a water shortage, we ask the government to help us,”

said Rohullah, a gardener.

“We have achieved good results this year compared to last year. These trees (apricots and black plums) are harvested in three years and these trees are three years old,” said Mohammad Wali, a gardener.

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Agriculture asked the current government to interact with various countries in the export sector to increase fruit exports.

“Today, seven kilos' grapefruit is 70 afghani. While the farmer buys fertilizer at a high price. If the

trader exports to Pakistan, the Pakistani currency rate will decrease. The merchant suffered and the farmer also suffered on his side,” said Merwis Hajizad, deputy of the Chamber of Agriculture.

Despite the droughts in the country and the concern expressed by international aid organizations in this regard, the country's agriculture is irrigated in a traditional way, agriculture has not been mechanized and farmers still carry out their work with basic agricultural equipment.

OIC delegation visits Kabul to share members’ concerns

KABUL (TOLONews): A delegation of scholars and thinkers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has come to Kabul, with the aim of sharing the concerns of the member countries of the OIC with officials of the Islamic Emirate and religious scholars.

The OIC said on X social media platform that these scholars will meet and discuss various issues including women's education and work from the perspective of Islam with the officials of the current Afghan government and

religious scholars in Kabul.

“The delegation's visit comes within the framework of the follow-up of the OIC General Secretariat to the resolutions of the Executive Committee and the Council of Foreign Ministers, which called on the Secretary-General of the OIC to dispatch a delegation of ulemas and religious scholars led by the International Islamic Fiqh Academy and other relevant religious institutions in the Muslim world to engage with Afghanistan on issues of utmost importance, such as tolerance and

moderation in Islam, girls' education and women's work,” the OIC said on X.

“The Islamic world has some concerns regarding the education of girls and some other issues, such as the concerns of neighboring countries about the use of Afghan soil against them, which should be shared with the high-ranking officials of the Islamic Emirate,” said Zia Ulhaq Madani, a political analyst.

Meanwhile, these scholars emphasized that the Islamic world wants stability in Afghanistan, at a meeting with Political

Deputy Prime Minister Mawlawi Abdul Kabir.

During the meeting Political Deputy Prime Minister once again emphasized the positive interaction of the Islamic Emirate with the world.

“The delegation advised the Islamic Emirate to use the experience of the Islamic world regarding girls attending school and women working in government offices and generally in all fields,” said Mohammad Hassan Haqyar, head of the media directorate of the political deputy of the PM.

Medicines manufacturing company established



JALALABAD (Agencies): A new medicines manufacturing company has been established in Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province.

The factory was established at the cost of seven million afghanis by a local investor, providing job opportunities for dozens of people.

The company's officials say that currently they produce 20 types of medicines.

A number of young people who work in the company are satisfied with their work and ask other investors to invest in the country to provide more job opportunities for young generation.

Officials in the company say that they produce quality medicines and want more investment in the medicine manufacturing sector so that Afghanistan will become self-sufficient in the medicines production sector and entry of low-quality medicines into the country will be prevented.

10 killed, 3 wounded in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Qatar Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani last week said disengagement with the Afghan caretaker government could lead to a ‘bigger chaos.’

Religious scholars and tribal leaders held a gathering in Kabul on Wednesday and asked the caretaker government to interact with the world keeping in view Sharia, independence and contemporary demands.

Casualties

Last week, 10 people were killed and three others were injured in various incidents of violence across the country.

A minor girl was killed and two others were injured when a hand grenade was lobbed into a house in Nangarhar. One child was killed in a blast caused by an unexploded shell in Sari-Pul province.

According to reports, unidentified gunmen killed one person in Faryab, one each in Bamyan and Baghlan. A body was found in Logar and a husband stabbed his wife to death in Baghlan.

Local officials say a 16-year-old girl was killed with a shot gun mistakenly,

one individual was killed as a result of a clash over cattle grazing, one person was killed and his wife wounded as a result of a clash with shepherds in Faryab.

In the previous week, 15 people had been killed and 16 others injured in different incidents across the country.

Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of civilians, security forces and insurgents would get killed and wounded in violent incidents every week.

Interaction between Kabul, world stressed

Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said that disengagement with the “Taliban” will create a “bigger chaos.”

Speaking at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Al Thani said that after the foreign forces' withdrawal and the Taliban's return to power, there was an “absence of a clear roadmap for the way forward for Afghanistan.”

Scott Smith, UNAMA deputy head for political affairs, said to create trust between the caretaker government and the world,

including US, dialogue should be continued in order to provide a foundation for healthy and positive relations.

He added: “Our effort is to lead to permanent dialogue and understanding and to find a basic solution to the debatable issues between Afghanistan and the international community.”

Maulvi Abdul Kabir believed in interaction and dialogue to resolve issues and will not allow anyone to use Afghanistan's soil against any country or interfere in its internal affairs.

Religious scholars and tribal leaders held a gathering in Kabul on Wednesday and asked the caretaker government to interact with the world keeping in view Sharia, independence and contemporary demands.

Anas Haqqani, a prominent member of the Islamic Emirate, said that the Islamic Emirate was open for interaction with the world.

A delegation of scholars of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation said in a meeting with Maulvi Abdul Kabir that the Islamic world wanted permanent stability in

Afghanistan and was not in favor of war.

Allegations about Daesh, reactions

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has said the Islamic State's existence has developed into a threat in Afghanistan and some other countries, but the Islamic Emirate spokesman said the group's operational capabilities have been neutralized.

Zabihullah Mujahid said claims about the existence of 20 militant groups in Afghanistan, spread of arms and increasing capabilities of Daesh are baseless and in fact boosting Daesh morale and fueling instability in the region.

He added: “Anyone who makes such baseless claims, they either lack enough information or want to give Daesh morale through such propaganda and fuel instability in the region.”

He said IS activities had been reduced to zero in Afghanistan during the past one year and despite that such an international organization was spreading a baseless and negative propaganda without evidence. “This brings into question the credibility of this global organization”, Mujahid

Human rights, girls’ education

An Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) delegation held talks with top Islamic Emirate officials on a wide range of topics.

The delegates met a number of Afghan scholars, caretaker ministers and officials, including Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi.

The largest Islamic bloc said the delegation also met ambassadors and representatives of OIC member states in Afghanistan.

OIC said meetings would continue between ulema, Afghan scholars and IEA officials on various topics and concerns cited in resolutions of the Council of Foreign Ministers.

In addition, former ambassador of the Islamic Emirate in Islamabad, Mulla Abdul Salam Zaeef, said that 95 per cent of Islamic Emirate leaders did not agree with the decrees of their leadership regarding restrictions on education and work of women.

Reactions to instillation of security cameras

The Ministry of Interior said over 62,000 cameras had been put in place in the

capital and other important locations to ensure security.

Amnesty International (AI) has reacted to the installation of more than 62,000 cameras by the caretaker government in Kabul and some other areas.

In its reaction, AI slammed the installation of the cameras as a violation of fundamental rights of the Afghan people.

But MoI spokesperson Abdul Matin Qani rejected the AI statement on his X account.

Qani wrote: “When US and NATO forces were carrying out surveillance operations with cameras in all zones of the country for intelligence gathering, why no one voiced concerns about those violations?”

He argued everyone knew the installation of security cameras was a requirement that was common in Afghanistan and other parts of the world.

Qani reaffirmed the Islamic Emirate's commitment to enforcing security, protecting people's rights and taking into account all Shariah principles.

According to him, the cameras in Kabul were installed by MoI with the help and advice of the public.

Humanitarian aid, signing contracts worth 6.55 million dollars

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) says that Japan is helping Afghanistan with 9.5 million dollars in agriculture. America says it continues to support Afghans.

However, World Food Program (WFP) in Afghanistan has warned that if they do not receive necessary funds to deliver aid, the number of people in Afghanistan who need humanitarian aid may increase.

The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MoMP) on Thursday inked contracts for seven large-scale mines worth \$6.557 billion with winning bidders.

The contract for Mes Ainak copper mine in Logar province with an investment of 411 million dollars was signed with a private company Toyar, the contract for Ghoryan iron mine in Herat province was signed with Watan Dera-khshan company, which would invest \$2.8 billion.

The second block of Ghoriyan mine with an investment of \$874 million was signed with Sahil Sharq Maneh company and

a Turkish company.

The contracts include four blocks of the iron ore mine in Ghorian district of Herat province. Watan Dorokhshan Company, which includes Azaran Industrial Structures Company as a shareholder, was awarded the first block. Sahil Middle East Mining & Logistics Company, whose partners are Dara-e-Noor, an Afghan company, and Epcol, a Turkish company, was awarded the second block. Shams, an Afghan company, with GBM and AD Resources, British companies, was awarded the third block. Bakhtar Steel Company, with Ahya Sepahan and Parsian Iranian companies, was awarded the fourth block.

In addition, one block of the lead and zinc mine in Tulak district of Ghor province was awarded to Afghan Invest Company. The Samti gold mine in Chah Ab district of Takhar province was awarded to the China-Afghanistan Company with Zarawar Afghanistan Private Company being shareholder. The second Mes Ainak mine in Logar province was awarded to Turia Private Company.

Uncertainty around elections must end immediately: HRCP

LAHORE (NNI): The governing Council of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), on concluding a meeting earlier today, has expressed immense concern over the uncertainty surrounding the general elections.

HRCP insists that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announce an election schedule promptly such that polls are held as close as possible to the stipulated 90-day period. The delimitation of constituencies must also be completed quickly and efficiently and under no circumstances used as an excuse to delay the elections any further. Moreover, HRCP is concerned by the scope for manipulating the electoral process by institutions such as NADRA and urges the ECP to guard against this possibility.

HRCP is greatly alarmed by the increasingly polarised environment, in

which religious and sectarian divisions are being exacerbated reportedly to carve out artificial political space for far right parties such as the TLP. The divisive and violent tactics used by such parties to build their political identities—particularly at the expense of religious minorities and sects—is eating into organic political and civic spaces.

The continuing terrorist violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also made political parties more apprehensive about campaigning in the province—a pattern we have witnessed before and must not go through again.

Apart from ensuring that free, fair and credible elections take place, the test of the current caretaker government is to see not only whether it will protect and respect people's right to protest peacefully, but also whether it will respond to the issues that ordinary citizens are mobilising around.

Raimondo warns China patience of US business is ‘wearing thin’

WASHINGTON (Reuters): U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo warned China in interviews broadcast on Sunday that the patience of U.S. business was “wearing thin,” saying American companies deserved a “predictable environment and a level playing field.”

The two biggest economies in the world used to be each other's largest trade partners, but Washington now trades more with neighboring Canada and Mexico, while Beijing trades more with Southeast Asia.

While in China recently, Raimondo had said there was strong appetite among U.S. businesses to make the relationship work and that, while some actions of the Chinese government were positive, the situation on the ground needed to match the rhetoric.

“China is making it more difficult,” Raimondo told CBS's Face the Nation.

“I was very clear with

China that we need to - patience is wearing thin among American business. They need and deserve a predictable environment and a level playing field.

And hopefully China will heed that message so we can have a stable growing commercial relationship.”

Raimondo has said U.S. firms faced new challenges, among them unexplained large fines, raids on businesses and changes to a counterespionage law.

“I was very clear, direct and firm in all of my conversations with my Chinese counterparts,” she told CNN.

“I didn't pull any punches. I didn't sugar-coat anything.” Raimondo also said that she had brought up to Chinese officials that her email was hacked in advance of her late August trip to China.

“They suggested that they didn't know about it and they suggested that it wasn't intentional,” she

Court hands over Ali Wazir to police on one-day physical remand

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The court of Islamabad handed over former member of the National Assembly Ali Wazir to the police on one-day physical remand in an alleged fraud case.

Police produced Ali Wazir before duty magistrate, Shahzad Khan and investigation officer (IO) Muhammad Ali requested eight days physical remand of Wazir. The IO told the court that police wanted to investigate Wazir regarding the money he received and used to build a property.

The duty magistrate said the case against Wazir has a section of Ani Terrorism Act so produce him before the concerned court tomorrow. The magistrate granted only one-day physical remand of Wazir.

Wazir has been booked in a case registered with the Bhara Kahu police station.

Former MNA and co-founder of Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) Ali Wazir was produced in the court of civil judge Shahzad Khan Ali Wazir in Islamabad on Sunday.

A case had been registered against Wazir at Bhara Kahu police station of the federal capital for collecting donations.

The police will now produce him in the anti-terrorism court (ATC) tomorrow.

His lawyer Ataullah Kundi told the court that his client had already been granted bails in two cases registered at Tamol police station, and that the police had taken him into custody from Adiala Jail yesterday.

On the request made by Kundi, the court allowed former MNA to see his son and other people.

Sanaullah blasts Imran for bringing ‘disgrace’ to country

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) Punjab President and former interior minister Rana Sanaullah has criticized former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan for taking his case to the international court, terming it an anti-Pakistan act.

In his statement released on Sunday, the former interior minister wondered why the “ladla” (blue-eyed) wants to take his case to the International Court of Justice. “Going to the International Court of Justice means making Pakistan a criminal in the international court. This despicable act is done only by the enemies of the country and their operatives. The one who brought terrorists back to the country, freed them, and resettled them, is now showing them a new path,” Sanaullah lashed out at Imran Khan.

He said that those who launched Imran were now trying to save him. They first made him a hero, then supported him through foreign funding and brought him to power. After he (Imran) came to power, he destroyed the country's economy, and foreign relations. He paved the way for social unrest after unleashing inflation and infused dirty ideas into the minds of Pakistani youth so that they would attack state institutions in the form of groups. Sanaullah deplored that by taking Pakistan into the International Court of Justice, the usurpers of the rights of Palestine and Occupied Jammu and Kashmir would be extremely happy.



PYONGYANG: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspects the Pukjung Machine Complex and a major munitions factory in an undisclosed location in North Korea in this picture released by North Korea's KCNA.

Interfaith Harmony Conference Promotes unity, tolerance among religions, calls for accountability in Jaranwala incident

ISLAMABAD (APP): Religious leaders and scholars from diverse religious backgrounds converged at the Interfaith Harmony Conference recently held at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in the federal capital. The conference, organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, served as a platform for prominent figures to advocate for unity, peace, and tolerance among different religious communities.

Minister of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed, opened the conference with a powerful message of unity. He strongly condemned any distortion of faith and emphasized the need for all religions to come together. He shed light on the recent tragic incident in Jaranwala, expressing his belief that such incidents should never have occurred. Minister Aneeq also pointed out that neighbouring India had witnessed even worse atrocities against various communities, highlighting that the lives lost among Christian brethren in India were not just Christians but “our brothers.”

He extended his message of inclusivity by highlighting the divine nature of all scriptures, including the Torah, Psalms, Bible, and the Holy Quran, affirming that these are all divine revelations, with the Quran being the final one.

Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, who also serves as the President of the International Interfaith Harmony Council, shared valuable insights on the importance of religious cohesion. He emphasized that the teachings of Islam inherently advocate for peaceful coexistence among all communities.

Ashrafi made it clear that the individuals allegedly involved in the Jaranwala incident were not representatives of any religion but rather of extremism and terrorism.

Expressing deep regret over the Jaranwala incident, Ashrafi extended heartfelt apologies to the Christian community. He personally met with Christian leaders to seek forgiveness, reaffirming the commitment to mutual respect and understanding.

However, he also voiced concerns about Pakistan's judicial system acknowledging that if the perpetrators of the Joseph Colony incident had been properly prosecuted, a shameful recurrence in Jaranwala could have been averted. He pointed out several instances of blasphemy and desecration cases awaiting resolution in trial courts, which had remained undecided for years.

Ashrafi mentioned that numerous individuals had been apprehended in connection with the Jaranwala incident and expressed optimism that they would expeditiously receive fair legal treatment in accordance with the country's laws.

Mufti Muneeb ur Rehman emphasized the need to discard the term 'minorities' and asserted that “regardless of our religious affiliations, we all share a common identity as Pakistanis.” He raised concerns about the nomenclature of religious groups in Pakistan, urging the government to consider more inclusive terms.

He reminded everyone that the rights granted to Muslims by the Constitution were equally applicable to all Pakistanis, irrespective of their beliefs. Mufti Muneeb also stressed the importance of using appropriate terms, such as Christian

for followers of Jesus Christ and specific terms like Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, and Buddhist for followers of those respective faiths.

In line with the spirit of inclusivity, Mufti Muneeb suggested refraining from using the term ‘infidel’ if it carries negative connotations about certain groups.

He challenged the notion that terrorism is tied to religion and emphasized that it stems from individual actions. He called for the nation to prioritize combating terrorism and corruption above linguistic debates. Mufti Muneeb acknowledged the importance of unity in safeguarding the respect of religions and holy books.

He called upon adherents of different faiths to stand united against any disrespect towards sacred figures or scriptures. He also cautioned against providing refuge to individuals who commit blasphemy against revered personalities or holy texts, emphasizing that such acts should not be tolerated. Several other faith leaders and scholars, including Bishop Sarfraz Peter, Pastor Emmanuel Khokhar, Sardar Santok Singh, and Archbishop Dr. Joseph Arshad, made significant contributions to the conference. They emphasized legislative measures to control religious violence, the elimination of hate materials from national curricula, and the need to shun discriminatory attitudes towards minority communities.

Proposing an enabling environment across the nation, Pastor Emmanuel Khokhar stressed the importance of immediately stopping the teaching of hate material in educational institutions.

North Korea stages tactical nuclear attack drill

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korea conducted a simulated tactical nuclear attack drill that included two long-range cruise missiles in an exercise to “warn enemies” the country would be prepared in case of nuclear war, the KCNA state news agency said on Sunday. KCNA said the drill was successfully carried out on Saturday and two cruise missiles carrying mock nuclear warheads were fired towards the West Sea of the Korean peninsula and flew 1,500 km (930 miles) at a preset altitude of 150 meters.

Pyongyang also said it would bolster its military deterrence against the United States and South Korea.

South Korea's military said the claim of success could be an exagger-

ation as “not all of them succeeded,” Seoul's Yonhap News reported, citing a senior official at the Joint Chiefs of Staff. KCNA also reported that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visited Pukjung Machine Complex, which produces marine engines, and a munitions factory to stress the importance of strengthening Pyongyang's naval forces. “He affirmed that a future plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the WPK (Worker's Party of Korea) would set forth an important modernization of the complex and the development direction of the shipbuilding industry,” a KCNA statement said.

It did not specify the date of his visit. The latest missile test came just

after the joint annual exercises between South Korea and the United States, known as Ulchi Freedom Shield, came to a close on Thursday. It featured air drills with B-1B bombers.

North Korea has been stepping up its military deterrence against Washington and Seoul and has criticized last month's summit agreement between the two on improving military cooperations.

KCNA said on Aug. 21 that Kim recently visited a navy fleet stationed on the east coast to oversee a test of strategic cruise missiles aboard a warship and he stressed the ship would maintain striking power for combat situations.

Thousands rally in Niger seeking withdrawal of French troops

NIAMEY (AFP/APP): Thousands rallied Saturday in Niger's capital Niamey to demand that former colonial ruler France withdraw its troops as sought by a junta which seized power in July.

The protesters gathered near a base housing French soldiers following a call by several civic organisations hostile to the French military presence in the West African country.

They held up banners proclaiming “French army leave our country”.

The demonstration was boosted by fresh arrivals in the afternoon and a dense crowd formed at a roundabout near the French military base on Niamey's outskirts.

Niger's military regime had fired a new verbal broadside at France on Friday, accusing Paris of “blatant interference” by

backing the country's ousted president, as protesters held a similar rally.

President Mohamed Bazoum, a French ally whose election in 2021 had stoked hopes of stability in the troubled country, was detained on July 26 by members of his guard.

Relations with France, the country's former colonial power and ally in its fight against jihadism, went swiftly downhill after Paris stood by Bazoum.

On August 3, the regime announced the scrapping of military agreements with France, which has about 1,500 soldiers stationed in the country, a move that Paris has ignored on the grounds of legitimacy.

The agreements cover various timeframes, although one of them dat-

ing from 2012 is set to expire within a month, according to military leaders.

The military rulers have also announced the immediate “expulsion” of the French ambassador Sylvain Itte and said they are withdrawing his diplomatic immunity.

They said his presence constituted a threat to public order.

But French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday hailed Itte's work in Niger and said he remained in the country despite being given a 48-hour deadline to leave Niger last Friday.

Article 22 of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations states that embassy premises are “inviolable” and that agents of the host state “may not enter them, except with the consent of the head of the mission”.

Flood water reaches near Bahawalpur-Lahore highway

BAHAWALPUR (APP): The flood water has reached very close to the Bahawalpur-Lahore National Highway passing through the Goth Shah Muhammad area after covering a distance of around 10 kilometers from the river bank.

The flood water started flowing to Goth Shah Muhammad and other areas after the Sutlej river received a high flood level of around 144,000 cusec at Empress Bridge Bahawalpur and after covering around 10 kilometers distance, it reached close to Bahawalpur-Lahore National Highway passing through Goth Shah Muhammad area of Khairpur Tamewali Tehsil of Bahawalpur district.

“However, presently, there is a low flood level in Sutlej River at both Syphon Headworks Mailsi and Empress Bridge Bahawalpur,” official sources in the district management said.

APP learned on Sunday that flood-water which reached Goth Shah Muhammad, Goth Noor Muhammad, and other areas of Khairpur Tamewali tehsil has spread over an area the length of 16-18 kilometers, inundating over 200 small villages, destroying standing crops on thousands of

acres of land including a maze, cotton, and others.

In some places, flood water can be seen at a distance of only one acre of land from the Bahawalpur-Lahore National Highway passing through Goth Shah Muhammad and Goth Noor Muhammad areas, and in some other areas, it could be seen at a distance of three acres of land from the highway. Thousands of people who have become homeless in Khairpur Tamewali, Israni, Lal Suhanra, Ghot Shah Muhammad, Goth Noor Muhammad, and other areas said that although, they had been provided with meals and medicines, adding they had been facing issues of theft of valuables from their houses which were surrounded by flood water.

“Leaving our valuables and domestic goods at our homes, we fled to areas lying close to Bahawalpur-Lahore National Highway but at night time, thieves using different items to cross flood water used to reach our abandoned homes and took away our domestic items,” they said.

The flood water has also wreaked havoc in Saddar Tehsil and Ahmadpur East Tehsil of Bahawalpur district.

After covering a distance of a few kilometers from the Sutlej river bank, it has also reached the road linking Sama Satta Railway Junction to Bahawalpur City as it has inundated thousands of acres of land in Khanowali, Fatowali and Mauza Sama Satta. Reports reaching here suggested that after the breaking of another Zamindara embankment, flood water has entered dozens of other villages in Ahmadpur East Tehsil, inundating standing crops on thousands of acres of land and forcing thousands of people to flee homes.

The sources in the Flood Forecast Division, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and Punjab Emergency Service Department, Rescue 1122 told APP that presently, Sutlej river had a low flood level on Sunday, September 3. “At Islam Headworks, the inflow of water is 70,513 cusec and outflow is 68,283 cusec with low flood and steady position, at Syphon Headworks inflow is 66,635 cusecs and outflow is 66,635 cusec with low flood and steady position,” they said, adding there was no more threat of high-level flood in Sutlej river so far.

Swedish police arrest two as riot breaks out at protest involving Holy Quran’s desecration

STOCKHOLM (Agencies): Swedish police on Sunday arrested two people and detained around 10 people after a violent riot broke out at a protest involving the burning of Holy Quran, police said.

The protest was organised by Iraqi refugee Salwan Momika, whose protests — which have included public desecrations of the holy book — have sparked outrage across the Middle East.

Sunday's protest was held in a square in the southern city of Malmo, which has a large immigrant population, and according to public broadcaster SVT around 200 people had showed up to watch.

“Some onlookers have shown upset feelings after the organiser burned writings,” police said in a statement. “The mood was at times heated,” the statement said, adding that a “violent riot” occurred at 1:45 pm (1145 GMT).

According to police, the event

had ended after the organiser left but a group of people remained at the scene.

About 10 people were detained for disturbing the public order and another two were arrested, suspected of violent rioting.

Local media reported that some onlookers threw rocks at Momika, and video from the scene showed some trying to break through the cordon before being stopped by police.

In another video, a man could be seen trying to stop the police car that transported Momika from the location by getting in front of it.

Through a series of demonstrations, Momika has sparked anger directed at Sweden and diplomatic tensions between Sweden and several Middle Eastern countries.

The Swedish government has condemned the desecrations of the Holy Quran while noting the country's constitutionally protected free-

dom of speech and assembly laws.

Iraqi protesters stormed the Swedish embassy in Baghdad twice in July, starting fires within the compound on the second occasion.

Swedish envoys have also been summoned in a slew of Middle Eastern nations.

In mid-August, Sweden's intelligence agency heightened its terror alert level to four on a scale of five, noting that Sweden had “gone from being considered a legitimate target for terrorist attacks to being considered a prioritised target.” Sweden also decided to beef up border controls in early August.

In late August, neighbouring Denmark — which has also seen a string of public desecrations of the Holy Quran — said it plans to ban the burnings.

Sweden has, meanwhile, vowed to explore legal means of stopping protests involving the burning of texts in certain circumstances.