

UAE FM calls Jilani
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani and Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed on Saturday discussed the escalating situation in Gaza, Palestine and the urgent need for cessation of hostilities and protection of civilians. During a telephonic conversation, they also stressed upon the coordinated response.

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Israel prepares for ground offensive

Gaza mosques broadcast the message: ‘Hold on to your homes. Hold on to your land’

Monitoring Desk

GAZA: While over one million Palestinians in northern Gaza faced an Israeli deadline on Saturday to evacuate south, the IDF announced a time period during which it will allow safe movement for Gazans, Reuters reported. As the IDF prepares to move ahead with its plans to retaliate for last week's Hamas rampage through southern Israel, the Israeli army's Arabic language spokesperson Saturday announced on X, formerly Twitter, that it will allow safe movement for Gazans.

The spokesperson said that Gazans fleeing to the south upon Israel's orders would be provided with a safe passage on two main roads south in the territory between 10:00-16:00 but did not specify which main roads would be open. Israel has pledged to eliminate Hamas following a recent attack that killed 1,300 Israelis and seized hostages.

Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip since Hamas's attack on southern

Israel one week ago have martyred at least 2,215 people, including 724 children, the Palestinian territory's Hamas-controlled health ministry said Saturday. Some 458 women were among those martyred, the ministry said. It added that 8,714 people have also been wounded, after an earlier statement said at least 324 people were martyred in the past 24 hours alone.

The Hamas-run Gaza Strip, home to 2.3 million Palestinians, has been under a total siege and bombarded with unprecedented air strikes. More than one million residents of northern Gaza on Friday received 24 hours' notice from Israel to flee south before an expected ground offensive. However, Hamas, which has vowed to fight to the last drop of blood, urged residents to stay.

As tens of thousands of Palestinians were estimated to have headed south from northern Gaza following the Israeli order, the United Nations (UN) and other organisations warned of a disaster if so many peo-

ple were forced to flee, and said the siege should be lifted to let in aid. According to BBC, as the deadline of the ultimatum approached, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said they conducted raids in Gaza territory "to eliminate the threat of terrorist cells and infrastructure", and soldiers collected evidence that will aid in locating hostages.

They posted a video on X, formerly known as Twitter, saying the Israeli Air Force continued striking Hamas targets and anti-tank missile launchers in Gaza immediately after they were used to attack Israel. In the West Bank, demonstrators supporting Gaza fought gun battles with Israeli security forces. Palestinian officials said 16 people were shot dead.

There have also been fears of hostilities spreading, including to Israel's northern border with Lebanon, where clashes this week have already been the deadliest since 2006. Additionally, a Reuters video journalist Issam Abdallah was killed on

Friday while working in southern Lebanon by missiles fired from the direction of Israel, according to another Reuters videographer on the scene. Six other journalists were injured.

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati and a Hezbollah lawmaker blamed the incident on Israel. Israel's UN envoy said it would investigate what had happened in the area following the journalist's death. "We always try to mitigate and avoid civilian casualties. Obviously, we would never want to hit or kill or shoot any journalist that is doing its job," Gilad Erdan said. US President Joe Biden announced that talks with the governments of the region were taking place over the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Israeli military spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said tank-backed troops had mounted raids to hit Palestinian rocket crews and gather information on the location of hostages, the first official account of ground troops in Gaza since the crisis

began. "We are striking our enemies with unprecedented might," Netanyahu said in a rare statement televised on Friday after the Jewish Sabbath began. "I emphasise that this is only the beginning."

Tens of thousands of Palestinians were estimated to have headed south from northern Gaza following the Israeli order, according to the United Nations (UN), which said more than 400,000 Palestinians had been internally displaced due to hostilities prior to the directive. Many others, however, said they would stay. "Death is better than leaving," said Mohammad, 20, outside a building smashed by an Israeli air strike near the centre of Gaza.

Mosques broadcast the message: "Hold on to your homes. Hold on to your land." The UN and other organisations warned of a disaster if so many people were forced to flee, and said the siege should be lifted to let in aid. "We need immediate humanitarian access throughout Gaza, so that we can get fuel, food and water to every-

one in need. Even wars have rules," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Friday.

Biden emphasised the humanitarian crisis as a top priority, stating that US teams are working with Israel, Egypt, Jordan, other Arab governments, and the UN in the region. "The overwhelming majority of Palestinians had nothing to do with Hamas and Hamas' appalling attacks," he said. "And they're suffering as a result as well." UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said it was impossible for Gazans to heed Israel's order to move south without "devastating humanitarian consequences", prompting a rebuke from Israel that the UN should condemn Hamas and support Israel's right to self-defence, Reuters reported. "The noose around the civilian population in Gaza is tightening. How are 1.1 million people supposed to move across a densely populated war zone in less than 24 hours?" UN aid chief Martin Griffiths wrote on social media.



LONDON: People holding placards during a protest demonstration in Edinburgh against the Israeli attacks on Gaza.

Pro-Palestinians hold protest in London

LONDON (BBC): In London more than 1,000 police officers were deployed as crowds marched from the BBC's New Broadcasting House to Downing Street. The Met Police said seven people had been arrested, including one for criminal damage and two for public order offences.

In London at the Palestine Solidarity Campaign demonstration, Palestine flags and supportive placards were waved as people chanted during the march to Downing Street. The Met Police said as of 17:30 BST on Saturday its "significant policing operation" was "still active". It said the march had ended and the "majority of the crowd have dispersed". Police had earlier warned that anyone showing support for Hamas, a proscribed terrorist organisation, or deviating from the route, would face arrest.

Police appeared to detain several men in Trafalgar Square. One person allegedly threw an object at a police van at the pro-Palestinian demonstrations, near to Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square. He was chased by officers and caught whilst jumping into a fountain in the square, which sparked a confrontation between protesters and Met officers - with a semi-circle formed around the man.

The Metropolitan Police earlier said certain areas of central London were covered by a Section 60AA power, which requires a person to remove items such as masks that might be used to conceal their identity, until 22:00 BST. Four arrests were made under these powers. Earlier conditions put in place under the Public Order Act to deal with the march were lifted on Saturday evening, while special conditions banning people gathering in an area of Kensington High Street - near to the Israeli embassy - remain in place.

The force said it was aware of people lighting flares or fireworks and said: "Action will be taken when we identify those in possession of/throwing them." Protesters on the route to Westminster could also be heard chanting "Rishi Sunak,

shame on you" and the slogan "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free".

Rallies took place in a number of UK cities including Liverpool, Bristol, Cambridge, Norwich, Coventry, Edinburgh and Swansea. In Glasgow, thousands of people marched at an event organised by the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Among those addressing the London gathering was former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. He said British politicians should not condone Israel's bombing campaign.

The London protest began at the BBC's headquarters in Portland Place, which was vandalised overnight with red paint splattered over the building's entrance. In a social media post later on Saturday, activist group Palestine Action claimed responsibility for daubing the building in "blood red paint, symbolising their complicity in Israel's genocide of the Palestinian people through biased reporting". The Metropolitan Police said it was "investigating an incident of criminal damage to a building in Portland Place, W1A". "We are aware of a video posted online claiming responsibility and this will form part of our investigation," the force said, adding that no arrests had been made and its enquiries are ongoing.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called the rise "disgusting" and said that intimidating or threatening behaviour would be "met with the full force of the law". He said Israel had "every right to defend itself" from Hamas attacks, but stressed that civilian safety must be "paramount in our minds". Only Goldschmidt, spokeswoman for the Israeli Embassy to the UK, said Israel was not targeting civilians but told Times Radio: "There will be innocent people who will pay tragically with their life, but this is a state of war and we have to prevent anyone from harming us again." "We have no quarrel with the Palestinian people. We are trying to protect ourselves from the Hamas barbaric organisation, which is exactly if not worse than Isis."

Russia calls for peace, truce in Gaza

Monitoring Desk

MOSCOW: Russia has taken a stand by urging for an immediate "humanitarian cease-fire" in the Gaza Strip and Israel. The call comes amidst escalating tensions and violence between the two parties.

The draft resolution, put forth by Russia and shared with the Security Council, strongly condemns all acts of terrorism and violence aimed at civilians. While not explicitly naming Hamas, the militant group in control of Gaza, the resolution calls for the secure release of hostages.

The initial conflict erupted when Hamas, deemed a terrorist organization by the European Union and the United States, breached Israel's heavily fortified border. The attack resulted in the deaths of approximately 1,300 people, predominantly civilians. Israel reported that Hamas had taken about 150 hostages during this assault. Israel, responding to the incursion, launched missile strikes on Gaza, a densely populated area, causing significant casualties, including over 600 children.

The United States has urged the Security Council to condemn the Palestinian for their actions, marking it as the deadliest attack in Israel's history. Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia underscored the need for urgent Security Council action to halt the ongoing bloodshed and restart peace negotiations, emphasizing the establishment of a Palestinian state. Nebenzia also held the United States accountable for the escalating tensions in the Middle East, criticizing their role and urging for international attention to Israeli air force attacks on civilian infrastructure in Gaza.

While the Security Council members reacted with caution to the resolution, some expressed openness to the humanitarian concerns it highlighted. British Ambassador Barbara Woodward stressed the need for thorough consultations, considering the gravity of the situation. Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jun emphasized the emerging consensus on humanitarian concerns, advocating for efforts to cease the fire and de-escalate the tension.



GAZA: A Palestinian child wounded in Israeli air raids is brought to a hospital in Khan Younis.

Six labourers shot dead in Turbat

F.P. Report

TURBAT: Six laborers were killed and two injured in a firing incident at a house in a satellite area in Turbat area of Kech district on Saturday.

According to media reports, the deceased laborers were identified as Muhammad Shafiq, Muhammad Aslam, Muhammad Siddiq, Muhammad Naeem, Muhammad Shahzad and Muhammad Iqbal. They all belonged to Shujaabad Tehsil of Multan district in Punjab.

The injured laborers were identified as Muhammad Riaz and Muhammad Shabbir. They were shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment. According to police, the firing incident took place late at night. The unknown shooters managed to escape. Police have registered a case and started investigation into the incident.

The motive behind the firing is not yet known. However, police are investigating various angles, including the possibility of a targeted attack on the laborers. The incident has sent shockwaves through the local community. The residents of the area have demanded that the authorities apprehend the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

Meanwhile, the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and Interior Minister Safriz Ahmed Bugti on Saturday while condemning the heinous terrorist attack on labourers in Turbat, expressed his deep grief over the loss of lives.

They also conveyed their heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. The prime minister posted on X, "Deeply sad-

dened to hear about the terrorist attack on innocent labourers in Turbat. My heartfelt condolences to the victims' families. We condemn this heinous act and stand united against terrorism." In a separate message of condolence, Interior Minister Safriz Ahmed Bugti has strongly condemned the tragic killing of six laborers in Turbat, Balochistan.

He, expressed condolence and sympathy to the bereaved families and said neither Baloch, nor Punjabi, but terrorists had martyred Pakistanis. Praying for martyrs, the minister said the state stood with the oppressed and those who shed unjust blood would never be forgiven. He further said the state would take action against the terrorists with full force. The minister made it clear that the sad incident was against the Baloch tradition, as they always respected and valued their guests.

Balochistan Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki on Saturday has taken notice of the Turbat incident and suspended the Superintendent of Police (SP) of the concerned area. The dead bodies of the laborers who were martyred in the incident would be transferred to Quetta by a special helicopter of the Chief Minister of Balochistan.

In an official statement issued here, it has stated that Ali Mardan Domki has taken strict notice of the incident and contacted the divisional and district administration. On the instructions of the chief minister, the helicopter of the Balochistan government has reached Turbat to transfer the dead, their families and the injured to Quetta and will be sent to Multan by tomorrow morning.

Mily officers appointed to NAB to step up accountability process

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to step up the accountability process following the Supreme Court's verdict resurrecting graft cases, the Establishment Division notified the posting of four military officers in different departments of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

According to the notification, Brigadier Muhammad Khalid of infantry has been appointed Director National Accountability Bureau in (BS-20), Lt Col Nadeem Muzaffar as Additional Director in (BS-19), Major Waleed Khalid of Military Intelligence as Deputy Director (BS-18), and Major Qais Kamran Syed of Military Intelligence as Deputy Director (BS-18). These military officers have been appointed on secondment

basis on standard terms and conditions as contained in JSI-4/85 with immediate effect. The notification was issued after approval by Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar. It is worth mentioning that after approval by the NAB Chairman Lt Gen (ret'd) Nazir Ahmed, a letter was written to the Establishment Division for the deputation of officers from the military departments. Sources said besides the services of intelligence agencies, the NAB had also sought the services of officials from the State Bank of Pakistan, FBR, FIA and other departments for technical support to investigate white-collar corruption.

The sources added that the intelligence officers and officials appointed on deputation will perform their duties on their own scale and salary. They said a strong

and effective intelligence system will be established in the NAB to speed up the accountability process. On September 15, a three-member bench of the apex in a majority 2-1 verdict approved Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's petition challenging amendments made to the country's accountability laws during the tenure of the previous PDM-led government.

Then-chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial-led bench ordered restoring all graft cases that were closed against the political leaders and public office holders and declared the amendments void. As a result of the verdict, graft cases against various political bigwigs, including former prime ministers and a former president have been restored.

PM to attend BRF in China on 17th

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar will visit China to participate in the 'Third Belt and Road Forum (BRF) for International Cooperation', being held in Beijing from October 17-18.

"The prime minister will attend the opening ceremony of the BRF and address the high-level forum entitled 'Connectivity in an Open Global Economy,'" the Prime Minister's office said in a post on X Saturday.

PM Kakar will hold a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the occasion. Senior Chinese officials, business leaders and investors as well as a number of leaders will also attend the Forum.

Soldier martyred, six terrorists killed

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Mir Ali, North Waziristan District on reported presence of terrorists. During the conduct of operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists as a result of which six terrorists were sent to hell, while eight terrorists got injured.

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from killed terrorists who remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and target killing of innocent civilians. However, during intense exchange of fire, Sepoy Abdul Hakeem (age 33 years, resident of District Naseerabad) having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat.

Sanitization of the area is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism.

Solangi calls on Naqvi

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi met Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi here on Saturday.

Matters pertaining to mutual interest, resolution of media industry problems and steps being taken for the well-being of journalists were discussed during the meeting, said a handout issued here on Saturday. CM Naqvi said that an endowment fund to the tune of Rs 1 billion had been established for welfare of journalists community for the first time. "We are also endeavouring to solve other problems being faced by the journalists community," he added.



PESHAWAR: Activists of Tehreek-e-Labail holding a rally to show solidarity with Palestinians. — F.P. photo

Beginning of a new phase of Zionist crimes against Palestinians

Ali Banafsheh Khah

SEVENTY-FIVE years ago, the fake apartheid regime of Israel established by encroaching upon the land and resources of the Palestinian people and by relying on the full support of the so-called Western human rights claimants. Since the beginning of its illegitimate existence, the identity of Israel's fictitious regime has been associated with genocide, racism, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possessing weapons of mass destruction and nuclear arsenals.

By committing war crimes and genocide, this regime has always ignored and violated the very fundamental rights of the Palestinians by torturing and massacring defenseless women and children. It has been the perfect mirror of state terrorism in the Middle East region and has continued its disgraceful existence. The intensification of the all-round siege of Gaza and the cutting off of water, electricity, fuel and other vital necessities

have turned this part of the Islamic world into the world's largest prison.

So far, dozens of resolutions issued by the United Nations have condemned the organized violation of human rights and international law by the Israeli regime, while some Western states keep supporting Israel's brutality and racist approaches against the oppressed Palestinians. This support has made the Zionist regime even more arrogant and brutal and has helped their crimes continue especially in Gaza strip.

Al-Aqsa Storm operation broke out as an independent and spontaneous measures by the resistance groups and the Palestinian people in defense of their inherent rights. The action of the Palestinians is a legitimate defense in response to seven decades of oppressive occupation and brutal crimes of the illegitimate Zionist regime. The comprehensive support of the West and the silence and passivity of the international community in respect of such scenario, forced the Palestinians to resist, by relying on their own inher-

ent strength to make endeavors to end the more than seventy years of occupation of the fake Israeli regime.

Continued desecration of Islamic holy places and the first Qibla of Muslims in the world by extremist and racist settlers in recent months, as well as the continuation of the Zionist regime's policy of committing crime and aggression against the people of Palestinian, especially women, children, the sick, the elderly, and prisoners, are among the main factors. In the current situation.

Hence, emphasizing on the inherent and legal right of the Palestinian people to defend themselves against the brutal acts and heinous crimes of the child-killing Israeli regime, the Islamic Republic of Iran, holds the Zionist regime and its supporters responsible for the continuation and escalation of violence and committing crimes against the oppressed, helpless and defenseless people of Palestine.

The writer is Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Peshawar.

Mercy Pak Educational Complex distribute prizes among orphans

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The annual prize distribution ceremony was organized at the Mercy Pak Educational Complex for orphans and destitute children here on Saturday.

Professor Dr. Hafeez ur Rahman, the Dean of Peshawar Medical College, graced the occasion as the chief guest. Prof. Dr. Najibul Haq, Advisor to the Prime Foundation on Education and Health, Director of MEC, Dr. Faqir Muhammad Anwar, philanthropists, academicians, staff, and students were also in attendance.

During the ceremony, students demonstrated their talents through tableaux, speeches, the recitation of Iqbal's poetry, and Nasheed performances, earning praise and applause from the audience. Chief guest, Prof. Dr. Hafeez ur Rehman, commended the institution's services and its commitment to providing education and training.

He also paid tribute to the selfless individuals who contributed to the institution's management and maintenance. The chief guest emphasized the significance of sponsoring orphans, citing a hadith that associates such sponsorship with companionship with the Prophet and the promise of attaining Paradise.

He underscored the concept of ongoing charity and stressed the importance of participating in the



education and training of destitute children, referencing another hadith that promises rewards in the hereafter. The chief guest praised the institution for its dedication to education, training, and character development.

He acknowledged the ongoing efforts of administrators and philanthropists to improve the institution. He encouraged students to prioritize moral development alongside their education, emphasizing that education loses its meaning without good character. He urged students to embrace virtues such as truth, honesty, and commitment.

The special guest also expressed his appreciation for the teaching staff, highlighting their valuable contributions to the education and character development of the students and

emphasizing the importance of performing their duties for the sake of Allah. Dr. Faqir Muhammad Anwar, the Director of MEC, highlighted the achievements of the institution, noting that its graduates have achieved high-ranking positions in various organizations.

Arshad Masood, the principal of Mercy School, informed the audience that the institution provides standard free education, accommodation, and medical care to the students. He also mentioned that learning one occupational trade was compulsory for every student. Additionally, the principal shared that the institution achieved an exceptional success ratio, boasting a 100 percent pass rate in the recent matriculation exams. The distinction holders were given away prizes with cash on the accession.

3 brothers die of suffocation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Three real brothers died of suffocation in an unfortunate incident at Bajna road Shinkiri police station jurisdiction in Mansehra, rescue sources said on Saturday.

According to details, 36-year-old Zeeshan alias Shani who had motor batteries shop in Shinkiri bazaar, on Friday after Jumma prayers climbed down in a well of his under construction house to repair fault in water pump.

Zeeshan fell unconscious due to suffocation and his two brothers Muneeb Umer 28, and Muhammad Umer 23, who also climbed down the well to help their brother one after other fell unconscious too.

All three youth died of suffocation before some one could get information about the incident. Later upon search, bodies of all three youth hailing from Dhodial were recovered from well of an under construction house after several hours. Grief and sorrow prevailed upon in the area over sudden of three youngsters, who were laid to rest at native town later.

3 smugglers arrested

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chota Lahore Police have arrested three smugglers involved in drug trafficking and attempted murder during operations against drug dealers and recovered 915 grams of hashish and 301 grams of ice from their possession.

According to details given by the DPO Office, DSP Chhota Lahore Roohul Amin Khan, Station SHO Shafiq Ahmed and a police team carried out a successful operation against drug dealers. Naviat Shah of Mankai, the wanted alleged accused was arrested and 206 grams and a pistol were recovered from his possession, while 95 grams of ice from drug dealer Asif of Chhota Lahore and 915 grams of hashish from the possession of drug dealer Hidayat Rahman of Kunda were recovered.

SHO Zaid Munis Khan conducted a search operation wherein during the operation 3100 grams of hashish and six grams of ice, two pistols and one gun with cartridges were recovered from the arrested accused.

DC, DPO visit Chinese Camp in Tarbela: Deputy Commissioner Swat Gohar Ali and DPO Swabi Haroon Rasheed Khan Saturday visited the Chinese Camp in Tarbela and reviewed the security arrangements and other issues related to ensure foolproof security in the area.

Mumtaz Khattak, SHO Topi Subhanullah Jadoon, CPEC Security In-charge DSP Arif Khan, Tarbela Security In-charge and other officers were also present. DC and DPO Swabi checked the security checkpoint CC-TV cameras during the visit.

They reviewed the internal and external security arrangements of the Chinese camp in detail wherein on the spot DC issued instructions to the relevant officers to check the Chinese security camp and issued orders to the soldiers on duty to be alert, and it was said that any unrelated person entry inside the camp should not be allowed at all.

Reforms to ensure free, fair elections: ATP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) chairman Muhammad Faiq Shah urged the government to take proactive steps for reforms to ensure credible, impartial and transparent general elections.

Talking to different delegations here at the party's central office on Saturday, Shah said electoral reforms are crucial before the conduct of the polls, so that no one will raise questions on its credibility, fairness and impartiality. He called for elimination of use of money, pressure, rigging and corruption in the electoral system.

"We want formation of a joint forum, wherein people should make decisions and planning by their own for prompt resolution issues", He vowed ATP will continue

to raise voice for public rights and amicable resolution of their issues at every fora. He also reiterated that his party will fully participate in the upcoming general elections and field its candidates from National and provincial Assembly seats. "When law and history will be on the wishes of rulers then how will the nation and society will get progress"?

Faiq was of the view that many issues will be resolved through formation of a joint board of wisdom and honesty for which his party has already given a comprehensive plan to government and relevant quarters. The ATP chief said it is a national dilemma that a person who has stolen billions of rupees had easily escaped and run away from the country.

"How the ordinary citizen/poor people will bear the lavish spending and extravagances of the rulers by paying multiple taxes"? Faiq vowed they will hold a strict accountability and assessment of public money worth billions of rupees. He suggested creation of provinces on an administrative basis.

He said justice and services should be delivered at the public doorstep under a concrete network from Union Council and Centre level. Shah said rulers are only taking interest in gaining power and returning to parliament instead of resolving public issues wherein they have accomplished their personal desires and interests by political influence. He said this system of connivance will not run anymore.

QWP leader expresses sympathies with Palestinians

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) provincial Chairman Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao on Saturday expressed his sympathies with the people of Palestine and said that they were facing Israeli aggression in Gaza.

Addressing a gathering of party workers held in connection with 11th foundation day of QWP in Fizzagat area in Swat, he said that the time had come for the Muslim Ummah to forge unity among their ranks and find a viable solution to the Palestine issue.

The QWP also congratulated the newly elected party's office-bearers, who

were elected in the intra-party election and urged them to work for strengthening the party. Commenting on the sky-rocketing inflation in the country, Sikandar Sherpao asked the government to provide relief to the have-nots, who were facing problems to feed their children. He said that the prices of the daily use items had gone beyond the reach of the common people.

He said that holding the election at the earliest was the only solution to steer the country out of the prevailing crises. He said that an elected government would be able to take solid steps to overcome the challenges facing the country. However, he demanded that a level playing field should

be provided to all the political parties. He asked the government to create an environment conducive to the conduct of the polls.

Sikandar Sherpao said that law and order was deteriorating with each passing day so the government should take steps to bring the situation under control.

He held the previous PTI government responsible for the crises facing the country at present. He said that the people were bearing the brunt of the wrong decisions made by Imran Khan's government. He said the QWP believed in serving the people and the party had always raised voice for getting the rights of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

MMI holds seminar on World Mental Health Day

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A seminar was organized in Mehboob Medical Institute (MMI) on the occasion of World Mental Health Day in which the Chairman of the institute Dr. Mehboobur Rehman, head of faculty Asif Khan and experts and students of related fields participated.

On this occasion, Dr. Mehboobur Rehman also presented a formula for mental and physical health which was named ph.d253. According to him, people should pay attention to physical health i.e. walk and exercise as well as be busy with their duties. He said that worship will bring peace of mind while socializing with people can remove loneliness and anxiety. "Finally, I should laugh and adopt good habits," he said.

Students and other speakers also gave speeches on the improvement of mental health and made people aware of the importance of World Day. Dr. Mehboobur Rehman said

World Mental Health Day is an international day for global mental health education, awareness and advocacy against social stigma. It was first celebrated in 1992 at the initiative of the World Federation for Mental Health, a global mental health organization with members and contacts in more than 150 countries, he added. He also appreciated the students, both male and female, for their active participation in the seminar related to World Mental Health Day-2023 celebration with the theme for this year is "Mental health is a universal human right".

He said, World Mental Health Day 2023 is an opportunity for people and communities to unite behind the theme "Mental health is a universal human right" to improve knowledge, raise awareness and drive actions that promote and protect everyone's mental health as a universal human right.

He said the aim and objective of the celebration

is to raise awareness of mental health issues and the services available, Dr. Mehboobur Rehman said. A scientific brief published by WHO in March 2022 says that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the mental health and wellbeing of people around the world, so it is important to give due awareness to the people regarding Mental Health. World Mental Health Day, falling on October 10.

This day, each October, thousands of supporters come to celebrate this annual awareness program to bring attention to mental illness and its major effects on people's lives worldwide, he said. In addition, this day provides an opportunity for mental health professionals to discuss and shed light on their work, making mental health a priority worldwide, he added. In some countries this day is part of an awareness week, such as Mental Health Week in Australia and other countries including Pakistan, Dr. Mehboobur Rehman concluded.

Climate change: Challenges and responsibilities

Muhammad Fazal ur Rahman

GIVEN the significant damage that climate change poses to future generations through causing irregular rainfall in longer winters and summers, it has become a challenging issue, but it is not receiving the attention it deserves. Currently, the impacts of this change on agriculture, seasons, and human health are very alarming, necessitating effective counter-measures to be taken to offset those grave effects and provide a healthy environment for the young generation to live in.

Prime Minister of Pakistan, Anwar ul Haq Kakar also highlighted during a session in the General Assembly Pakistan's vulnerability to the consequences of climate change, describing Pakistan on the top of the list containing the most affected countries of climate change. In April of this financial year, the United Nations Meteorological Organization (WMO) said that due to frequent climate change, there were more droughts and floods in the world last year than ever before. Extreme heat waves have increased risks to lives and jobs and Pakistan experienced devastating floods during July and August last

year, resulting in over 1,700 casualties and affecting more than 33 million people.

The WMO made it clear that the overall economic loss due to this flood amounted to over \$30 billion, and by October 2022, 8 million people were internally displaced. The Dera Ismail Khan district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has the largest cultivable land area, with nearly 5.5 million acres under cultivation. However, nearly 5 million acres of land in this region is still not cultivable due to water scarcity.

Agricultural experts described Dera Ismail Khan as Pakistan's food basket, as it contributes around 42 lakh tons of wheat and 20 lakh tons of rice to the country. Last year's flood in the Chashma Right Bank Canal caused substantial economic losses. Aqeel Azhar, Superintendent Engineer of the Department of Irrigation says if we only assess the economic loss resulting from the third phase of Chashma Right Bank Canal then a alarming data comes out.

He says that CRBC is an inter-provincial canal that starts from Jumma Head and extends up to the Dera Ghazi Khan district in Punjab. It includes 94 miles of long canal that is

shared between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan and Punjab's Dera Ghazi Khan. He says in this section of the 94-mile-long canal, 30 miles of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dera Ismail Khan and 64 miles of Dera Ghazi Khan Punjab are included and through the segment a total of three hundred and sixty-two thousand areas is irrigated.

One hundred and twenty-six thousand acres of land and two hundred and thirty-six thousand acres of Punjab province are irrigated, and according to official data, when this canal was being built, the number of families benefited from it was fifty-three thousand. During this period, this part of the canal suffered damage from several places and the flow of water in the canal was stopped. Seven hundred million rupees was allocated by the federal government for the repair of the flood-affected Chashma Right Bank Canal.

Faisal Karim Kundi former Advisor to the Prime Minister and Minister of State for Social Security from Dera Asma Ail Khan, along with Minister of State for Water Resources Muhammad Ali Bacha, on May 1, 2023 for the restoration of the most affected Phase III, started the restoration work of Phase III and

issued instructions to ensure the restoration of the this part in one month. But despite the passage of four months, the restoration of the canal could not be done.

President of the Agriculture Council, Haji Abdul Rasheed Dhap, says that due to the lack of canal repair work the sugarcane crop in the area has been destroyed by 80 percent and the production of wheat has decreased by 70 percent last year. The former MPA of the constituency, Maulana Lutfur Rehman, says that for the repair of the said canal, we have requested the special assistance of Quaid Jamiat Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

According to a report published on climate change in Pakistan and India, extreme weather conditions besides threatening water scarcity, sources of income and agriculture. It is also rapidly creating threats every summer, heavy monsoon rains cause flash floods, damage to property and loss of lives in the fertile lands of Punjab and Sindh. These results are getting worse every year. Last summer, the temperature in Jacobabad reached a record high of 51 degrees Celsius (which is about 123 degrees Fahrenheit), the highest temperature ever recorded in South Asia.

Farmers in India estimated that 10-15% of their crops were destroyed by the rise in temperature. As the number of such weather shocks is likely to increase in the coming years, a senior official of the Irrigation Department, Dera Asma Ail Khan, says that one lakh people will be affected by the CRBC Phase III within Dera Ismail Khan limits alone. In light of the data collected last year, the loss to the landowners associated with the said affected part of the canal is estimated at forty-four billion in one year. In the same way, the loss to the landowners of 236,000 acres connected with the 64 miles of the canal within the boundaries of the Punjab province and then the loss to the government due to non-supply of irrigation water is much more than in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The effects of climate change where are affecting wheat, cotton, rice and sugarcane crops, while the people involved in date production in Dera Ismail Khan are also worried about climate change and related factors, said Dr. Shahzad Arshad Salim Saduzai, the well-known award-winning agricultural scientist in charge of the Food Technology Section of Rata Kalachi Research Center. He said that the date crop was being affected due

to climate change. It has a distinctive status due to its taste and other characteristics.

When the pollination phase of dates comes, if there is unseasonal rain on this occasion, the pollen is blown away. Due to the rains in this season, the date crop in Paniala area is up to forty percent. As a result the pollen was affected by the rain and according to the local farmers, the palm was left 'Khasi' i.e. it was left without the kernel. At this time, due to rain, fungus attacks the date palm and the crop is affected, and if there is no rain and the drought is prolonged, then the palm plantations are also destroyed, he remarked.

He was of opinion to invest in sustainable agricultural development practices and projects to adapt to climate change, which may include shifting to Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices such as shifting to high-yielding crops, water efficiency Management, reduction of water wastage, construction of small and medium-sized dams to deal with water scarcity and increase agricultural production, etc. However, this work cannot be done by the government alone. So, it is very important to be active to create awareness among people in this regard.



In brief

Dacoits arrested, arms recovered

FAISALABAD (INP): Sadar Jaranwala police have arrested two dacoits and recovered stolen motorcycles, weapons and other items from them. A spokesman said on Saturday that the police conducted a raid in Chak No. 23-GB and arrested Farooq and Amman, who were wanted in a number of dacoity, robbery and other cases. The police recovered two stolen motorcycles, mobile-phones, illegal weapons and other items from them, he added.

Four killed in road accident

ARIFWALA (INP): A couple and two children were killed on the spot when the motorcycle they were riding on was hit by a rashly-driven tractor-trolley on Pakpattan Road in Arifwala on early Saturday morning. According to details, rescue 1122 said that the accident occurred in Arifwala where a speeding tractor-trolley hit a motorcycle coming from opposite side. In a result, a couple and two kids including four months baby were killed on the spot, private news channel reported. The police and rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the bodies to the hospital. According to police, the driver of the tractor-trailer managed to escape from the scene after the accident.

Congo patient hospitalized

QUETTA (PPI): Another patient was diagnosed with Congo Virus and admitted to the Fatima Jinnah Hospital, health officials said here on Saturday. A resident of Kuchlak was admitted to the hospital after found Congo Virus positive in medical test, health officials said. "The tally of Congo viral fever patients has reached to 41 in Balochistan with another patient found positive of the disease," officials shared. A patient of the Congo Virus was died at the Fatima Jinnah Hospital recently. This year 15 patients have died by the Congo Virus fever in Balochistan. This is not the first instance that an epidemic of Congo virus fever has broken out in Balochistan. In late 80s and mid-90s dozens of people had died of the disease, health sources said. The virus is primarily transmitted to humans by ticks on cattle and other livestock and can cause severe fever, muscle pain, vomiting, and internal bleeding. It has a high fatality rate, and currently no vaccine or specific treatment available for the virus.

Fatima's report reveals torture

FAISALABAD (INP): The preliminary post-mortem report of seven-year-old Mehak Fatima, who was believed to have died from physical abuse, has revealed signs of rape, injuries and child abuse. According to media reports, Dr. Aaliya Sultana from General Hospital Samanabad prepared the preliminary post-mortem report, which revealed that the victim was strangled to death, however, the forensic science lab report will further confirm the actual cause of death. Dr. Aaliya Sultana also took samples from the deceased's body, which have been sent to the lab for DNA for further analysis. Meanwhile, the DNA test of both suspects – who are currently under police custody – will be conducted to gather evidence in the case. It is pertinent to mention here that the two suspects – identified as Arif and Khalid – who are believed to be closely associated with the victim were arrested by the Punjab police, after Mehak Fatima's lifeless body was found on October 11.



SIALKOT: A doctor examining an eye patient during free medical camp.

PKMT holds solidarity rally for Palestinians

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Pakistan Kisan Mazdoor Tehreek (PKMT) on Saturday arranged a protest rally at the Asbanr area of Lower Dir to express solidarity with Palestinian resistance in their struggle for freedom and liberation of their land and people. The PKMT local activists including Altaf Hussain, Ahmad Shah and others addressed the rally which was attended by workers and local area elders.

The speakers condemned the US-backed Israeli aggression and illegal occupation of Palestinian land, the expulsion of millions of Palestinians, and genocide. They said that countries of the world, which advocated human rights and democracy were silent

spectators; seemed to be blind and deaf to the violence enacted by the Israeli forces. They said the people of Gaza had been imprisoned in an "open prison" and their every human right was being violated.

According to a press release issued by the PKMT, since 1948, Zionist Israel with full backing of colonial masters of Britain and the US has occupied Palestine, inflicting terrible aggression on the region through numerous wars and political turmoil. "Israel is a threat to world peace, no doubt based on the humongous military and economic aid being given by the US", it said, adding that prior to the British mandate, the Jewish population was only 6% of Palestine's population.

Between 1947 and 1950, Zionist troops

expelled more than 750,000 Palestinians. It occupied 78 percent of historic Palestine and divided the remaining 22 percent into the West Bank and Gaza. Between 2008 and 2021, 5,739 Palestinians were martyred in various conflicts, including 1,255 (22%) Palestinian children and 565 (10%) Palestinian women, while the number of Israelis is only 251.

"The Pakistan Kisan Mazdoor Tehreek salutes the Palestinian people, especially the farmers for their courage, and perseverance. We join the people of the world who city to city, village to village, country to country and continent to continent have stood up against Israeli aggression and the US military support that has been dispatched for the help of Zionist Israel, in support of the people of Palestine", the release adds.

ANF seizes huge drug quantity

F.P. Report

QUETTA (PPI): Following the orders of the Apex committee, the Anti-Narcotic Forces (ANF) conducted an operation and seized drugs in huge quantities from warehouses in Balochistan, officials said Saturday.

According to the information, the ANF officers raided three warehouses located in the Pishin district, and a substantial amount of narcotics were seized. The narcotic officers along with the district administration burnt down thousands of kilos of drugs which are allegedly manufactured in the warehouses and supplies in the local areas, however, no arrests have been made during the operation.

Earlier to this, Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan seized 428,943 Kg of drugs worth US\$ 10,411 million internationally, arrested 36 persons including a woman, and impounded seven vehicles while conducting 35 counter-narcotics operations throughout the country.

An ANF Headquarters spokesman said Tuesday that the seized drugs comprised 79 Kg Opium, 14,346 Kg Heroin, 325,168 Kg Hashish, 9,758 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice), 660 Grams Weed and 11 Grams Ecstasy Tabs (18 Tablets). ANF Punjab recovered 148,694 Kg of drugs in 10 operations and arrested 19 persons including a woman involved in drugs smuggling and impounded 2 vehicles.

The seized drugs comprised 49,200 Kg Opium, 12,750 Kg Heroin, 77,600 Kg Hashish, and 9,144 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice). ANF North recovered 106,638 Kg of drugs in nine operations and arrested 12 persons while four vehicles were impounded. The seized drugs comprised 14,800 Kg of opium, 1,116 Kg of Heroin, 90,048 Kg of Hashish, 614 Grams of Methamphetamine (Ice), and 60 Grams of Weed. ANF KPK recovered 79,011 Kg of drugs in 11 operations while arresting two persons. The seized drugs comprised 480 Grams of Heroin, 78,520 Kg of Hashish, and 11 Grams of Ecstasy Tabs (18 Tabs).

KP IGP inaugurates command & control room in Bannu

F.P. Report

BANNU: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Police Officer Akhtar Hayat Khan inaugurated a command and control room in Bannu. The command and control room has been established at the police lines to improve law and order, control crimes and protect people's lives. Bannu regional police chief Qasim Ali Khan told the provincial police chief that more than 120 close circuit cameras installed on the exit and entrance points and busy places had been linked to the control room.

He said that technical experts had been hired to operate the system and share information with the operation staff to prevent crimes in the area. Qasim said that the setting up of the command and control rooms would help to curb crimes, counter terrorism, prevent vehicle theft incidents and ensure effective surveillance of police stations and police posts and security of important installations.

The provincial police chief also distributed motorcycles among the personnel of the Ababeel squad. He said that the command and control system would enable the police to directly monitor

security measures, detect crimes and ensure the quick response mechanism and effective traffic management.

Triage unit opened at Khalifa Gul Nawaz Teaching Hospital: An emergency triage unit was opened at the Khalifa Gul Nawaz Teaching Hospital in Bannu on Saturday. Nursing director Zaiqa Gul inaugurated the facility. Deputy medical superintendent Dr Fida Muhammad, emergency department coordinator Dr Nasir and other officials were also present.

On the occasion, Ms Gul said the emergency triage would help to enhance the performance of the emergency department besides it would prove helpful to provide standard and timely healthcare to patients and injured people. She said that the triage system in the emergency department would help the health providers to categorise the patients on the basis of severity of their ailments and injuries.

"The triage system plays a vital role in provision of proper and timely healthcare to patients and reduces risks and complications during the treatment process", she maintained. She said that the nursing staff of the teaching hospi-

tal was committed to excellence in patient care, adding that full support by the management enabled her to execute the triage system in the emergency department of the hospital.

One shot dead: Unidentified gunmen shot dead a young man and dumped his body in the fields near Paharkhel Thal area, said police on Saturday. They said that Abdul Razzaq, 30, had left home at night and did not return. "Next morning his body was found in the fields near Paharkhel Thal area", they said.

They said that some local residents spotted the body and informed police. They said that a party of city police station rushed to the site and shifted the body to the Government City Hospital to conduct a post mortem. They said that the deceased was later identified as Abdul Razzaq son of Munawar resident of Mohallah Bamozai Lakki city.

They said that the deceased belonged to Kalabagh tehsil in Mianwali district of Punjab and was settled in Lakki Marwat. They said that police were investigating the murder after registering a case against unknown killers under relevant sections of law in the city police station.

International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction marked

F.P. Report

NASEERABAD: At Taluka Naseerabad district Qambar shahdadkot, An International Organization Human Appeal celebrated International day of Disaster Risk reduction. An event was organised by human Appeal at office.

In which different stakeholders such as Agriculture department, livestock department, Sindh emergency rescue 1122 rehabilitation dept and other government officials of taluka along with community stateholder participated. Agri expert Mr. Sudheer discussed on climate smart agriculture techniques to mitigate disaster/climate change impacts on agriculture.

Aijaz Sheikh discussed on livestock management and services they are providing free of cost. where Town Chairman Warah Abdul Ghaffar Brohi, Vice Chairman Warah Abdul Ghaffar Brohi, Vice Chairman Naseerabad Zamir Masan, UC kalar Chairman, Tariq Chandio, Social Leader Abida Chana, rescue workers, agricultural experts, livestock workers, farmers, women and flood victims participated in large numbers. Sindh emergency rescue team demonstrated on basic life saving support to the participants also shared their. Divisional level services such as ambulance and . District Manager of Human Appeal briefed about Human appeal interventions in District Qambar shahdadkot. Ms.

Shahida Noor discussed on importance of IDRR and shared information on DRR.

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Human appeal interventions in District Qambar shahdadkot. Ms. Shahida Noor discussed on importance of IDRR and shared information on DRR. An awareness campaign on disaster prevention was held on the Indus Highway on the Indus Highway.

On this occasion, District Manager Adnan Saleem, Program Manager of Human Appeal G M Brohi, HR Mahab Wadho, Monitoring Officer Ghulam Rasool Kolachi Ayaz Chandio Baz Mustafa Dahar Mehru Nisa Chana Abida Chana Mudasar Khuhawar Pirh Chalgari Shahida Noor and others said that today is the International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction. This day is being celebrated all over the world for ear protection

The purpose of which is how to protect people from natural calamities, so we have given a message today that people should build their houses on high and strong places to protect them from floods. We are providing financial assistance to thousands of flood victims by transferring food and property and providing rations. Multiple activities such sessions on DRR, awareness walk and tree plantation were carried out at Taluka Naseerabad as well as in communities of intervention areas of Human Appeal. An awareness campaign on disaster prevention was held on the Indus Highway on the Indus Highway.

Shelter home, protection wall to save Reshun valley

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: The beautiful Reshun Valley of Upper Chitral district has been affecting by floods for the last 13 years. Here centuries-old glaciers lying on the peaks of mountains melting in summer season by increasing temperature causing for sudden floods due to which the people here have faced financial and human losses on large scale.

The disastrous flood that occurred in 2015 had not only destroyed the only communication bridge between two districts at Reshun, but the main highway of Peshawar Chitral was also swept away by the flood for a kilometer. Houses, shops, cultivated land, standing crops and orchards of fruit trees were also destroyed due to tremendous floods. In view of the devastation caused by the flood, many families were displaced from here and the victims were forced to take shelter elsewhere.

These migrated people facing a lot of hardships. As

Centuries-old glaciers above Reshun erupt suddenly in summer due to intense heat, causing unexpected floods in the scenic valley which changed its shape. To protect this beautiful area from damages of floods, Soil and Water Conservation department has constructed protection wall in the Reshun goal drain to protect the area from further damages. In the same place, the hall and laboratory of the Government High School were also destroyed due to flood in 2015. A shelter home was also constructed by this department in short period of 3 months to provide shelter to the people in a safe place, as this shelter home can be used by local people as a community hall as needed.

These construction works were funded by the United Nations Development Program through the Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF 2) Project. Social and Water Conservation department completed this work in a short period of only three

months. UEDP Resident Representative Dr. Samuel Rizk and UNDP Women representative visited these sites for inspecting and inaugurating these development works who greatly appreciated the work.

They also planted saplings in front of the community hall on this occasion. Director General of Soil and Water Conservation Mohammad Yasin Khan Wazir, SDFO Forest Department Umair Nawaz, and representatives of GLOF II Shahzada Iqtidarul Mulk and other staff were also present on this occasion. Iqtidarul Malik, the provincial representative of GLOF Two Project, briefed the representatives of UNDP. These guests also visited the damaged site in Reshun which was completely destroyed due to flood eight years ago and the Peshawar Chitral road was also washed away by flood after which the National Highway Authority constructed an alternative road within the village to continue traffic.

Connecting dreams: BRI's legacy of cooperation

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani

A decade has gracefully elapsed since the inception of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This timeframe, though it might seem a mere notch on the calendar, holds a significance that extends far beyond a simple marker. It represents not just the progress and achievements of the past but, concurrently, a promise of an even more promising future.

This is a journey that, by its very essence, refuses to bow to the constraints of time. It's a story still unfolding, a testament to the unyielding spirit of progress and cooperation that characterizes our era. In the grand tapestry of global cooperation and economic development, the BRI stands as a beacon of progress and potential. As the BRI commemorates its 10-year milestone, it's not just a moment for retrospection; it's the inception of a new era. The odyssey of the BRI has been nothing short of remarkable, reshaping the landscape of international collaboration, propelling economies towards growth, and threading infrastructural connections across the globe.

Initiated by Chinese President

Xi Jinping in 2013, the BRI is an audacious undertaking designed to weave an intricate web of trade routes, linking the regions of Asia, Europe, and Africa. It comprises the "Belt," symbolizing a land-based network of infrastructure, and the "Road," representing sea-based routes connecting countries worldwide. Its overarching mission is to stimulate economic development and foster cooperation among participating nations.

One of the most striking aspects of the BRI is its transcendent ability to soar above political and geographical divisions. With the involvement of over 150 countries and 30 international organizations as signatories, it has United Nations with diverse backgrounds and ambitions. This global consortium under the BRI stands as a testament to the vision of a shared destiny and mutual prosperity. The BRI has shifted from being a mere aspiration to a tangible force for change, giving rise to over 3,000 cooperative projects that span diverse sectors, from transportation to energy, trade, and technology. These endeavors have given birth to bustling ports, high-speed rail networks, and flourishing economic zones, among numerous other initia-

tives. The BRI has transformed into a catalyst for infrastructural development and economic progress.

Supporting the BRI is a massive investment, approaching the trillion-dollar mark. This substantial financial commitment, underwritten by China and other participating nations, is the lifeblood of BRI's development, ensuring the successful implementation of its projects on a global scale. Nevertheless, as we focus on the physical impact of the BRI, we should not overlook the social and economic underpinnings, often eclipsed by the limelight. For instance, within the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship BRI project, an essential emphasis has been placed on human development, even in the face of the clamor created by disinformation.

In 2019, China extended a generous \$1 billion to Pakistan for 27 projects concentrated in the domains of education, agriculture, and poverty alleviation. The majority of these initiatives are centered in the less-developed regions of Southern Punjab and Balochistan. Notably, the Gwadar Technical and Vocational Institute was established in Gwadar, offering skill-

based training in port handling and other essential areas, benefiting almost 2,000 individuals annually. According to a World Bank assessment, CPEC alone holds the potential to uplift 1.1 million low-income Pakistanis out of poverty, unveiling the socio-economic impact of BRI's undertakings. Moreover, the economic harvest of these projects is far from insignificant. As disclosed by Yang Yundong, China's Consul General for Pakistan, the 36 projects initiated under CPEC, some of which have reached fruition while others are steadily progressing, have generated a total income of \$17.55 billion, in addition to \$2.12 billion in tax contributions to Pakistan.

Realizing the full potential of these developmental projects and investments can be furthered if Pakistan effectively confronts the challenges posed by disinformation and propaganda propagated by CPEC detractors. Achieving this objective is entirely feasible if all stakeholders rally under a common banner, underscoring the importance of mutual trust while safeguarding economic policies and decision-making from the discord sown by political differences. Furthermore,

the legacy of the BRI stretches beyond bricks and mortar and economic growth. It extends into the domain of cooperation, encapsulating the spirit encapsulated by Xi Jinping's words: "A just cause finds great support, and a journey with many companions gets far." The BRI transcends borders, not just connecting countries physically but also fostering mutual understanding and shared prosperity.

As we reach this momentous 10-year mark, let us not become ensnared by the past. Instead, let us keep our eyes fixed on the limitless horizon. The journey of the BRI is not a finished tale but a story still in the making, a testament to the unrelenting spirit of progress and cooperation that characterizes our era. This decade signifies far more than a mere commemoration of past accomplishments; it serves as an unwavering embrace of the future. It symbolizes a promise of uncharted potential that beckons from the horizon, a vision that transcends the confines of history.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) isn't a relic of bygone times, an inert monument of past endeavors. Instead, it stands as a living, breathing entity, pulsating with vitality. It doesn't dwell

in the shadow of its own history; rather, it propels itself forward, tirelessly crafting new narratives, exploring new frontiers, and sowing the seeds of fresh possibilities. The BRI's journey isn't one of reminiscence and nostalgia; it's a forward trajectory, an ongoing narrative that continually unfolds, evolves, and reshapes itself in response to the changing tides of our world. It embodies the dynamic spirit of progress, ever-adapting and ever-advancing.

Within this living entity, the seeds of innovation and cooperation germinate, fostering the promise of a future where nations collaborate, economies flourish, and prosperity is shared. The BRI is not bound by the constraints of history; it is unburdened by the weight of the past. Instead, it forges ahead, an ever-expanding tapestry of hope and opportunity, charting a course toward a brighter and more interconnected world. Stepping into the BRI's second decade, we are reminded that this initiative is not static; it's a dynamic force, an enduring testament to what can be achieved when nations unite with a common purpose, creating a legacy that resonates for generations to come.



Australia votes in referendum on giving voice to nation’s Indigenous people

SYDNEY (Agencies): Australians are voting on whether their nation’s constitution should be amended to enshrine a mechanism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to advise parliament on policies that affect their lives. ‘The Voice’ referendum, as it has become known, would establish a board of Indigenous peoples who would provide advice to the federal government on issues affecting their communities.

Despite comprising only 3.8 percent of Australia’s population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to experience drastic inequalities and the long-lasting impact of colonial policies. Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese campaigned for the referendum, which asks Australians to vote ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the constitutional amendment of which he is in favour. Recent polling has demonstrated a slide in support for the amendment, with a majority expected to vote against any change.

Public debate has been marred by misinformation, racism and what some people state is a lack of detail on how ‘the Voice’ would operate.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander politicians and community leaders have also been divided in their support, and Liberal opposition party leader Peter Dutton is staunchly opposed to the proposal. Significantly, just eight out of 44 referendums in Australia’s history have been successful, with past results suggesting that bi-partisan support from both major parties is necessary to win a majority vote. Al Jazeera sought the views of several members of the public in Melbourne as they cast their votes on Saturday.

Matthew Weegberg is an Indigenous father and husband who identifies with the Mutti Mutti, Yorta Yorta and Boon Wurrung peoples. He cast an early “yes” vote, saying he was optimistic a Voice to Parliament could bring about positive change. “I’m optimistic that that Voice will achieve positive outcomes for Indigenous communities throughout Australia,” he said. “I’m a glass half-full kind of guy hoping that something good comes out of it.” He said he was voting yes to support his children’s future.

“I’m hoping they can function in

this society free of any racism or prejudice against them,” he told Al Jazeera. James Henry is an Indigenous father and partner who identifies with the eastern Yuwaalaraay and Gamilaraay peoples, and also has a non-Indigenous heritage. He voted against the proposal for a Voice to Parliament, telling Al Jazeera he “wasn’t convinced that the Voice was going to be the right path for Indigenous advancement”.

“While I do approve of community consultation and working with communities, I didn’t see [the Voice to Parliament] as the best way to address Indigenous disadvantage,” Henry said. He said the money and effort used to promote the referendum could have been spent on addressing the inequalities that exist in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. “Despite the millions of dollars put into the campaign, it’s likely to not succeed,” he added.

Christine Smith was handing out leaflets at a polling booth encouraging people to vote against the proposed Voice to Parliament on Saturday. She told Al Jazeera that the constitutional amendment would cre-

ate division. “We don’t want a division. We want everybody to be treated equal,” she said. Smith was also concerned that an advisory body such as the Voice to Parliament would utilise money that could instead be spent directly on “grassroots” service to assist Indigenous peoples. “How many schools or health clinics could they set up, instead of having another body that they just got to give millions of dollars to,” she said.

Partners Leanna Buchanan and Dan Stubbs were enthusiastic supporters of the Voice to Parliament. Stubbs told Al Jazeera that “it’s the most simplest way we can show some gesture towards including Aboriginal communities”. “We as white people lose nothing. And hopefully, we show some openness and community. A minor thing for us to embrace Aboriginal communities in Australia, it’s the least we can do,” he said. Buchanan agreed, saying it was important that “Aboriginal perspectives” are included in the government, but acknowledged that the Voice alone “is clearly not the answer to all aspects of inequality”. “But just making sure that when government

makes decisions, they’re being advised by Aboriginal community. And from Aboriginal perspectives. That has to offer some hope,” she said.

“I’m actually really emotional. If this is a no-vote, I will feel so sad,” she added. Michael Paterson is an Indigenous man who identifies with the Dja Dja Wurrung people. He told Al Jazeera that he was voting “yes”. “I’m just hoping that we can finally get a say in what our people do and hopefully get some of our land back,” he said. Paterson also said that if the vote was unsuccessful, “it would set us back about 10 years”. Nioka Mellick-Cooper told Al Jazeera that she also voted yes and had listened to a diverse range of Indigenous voices before making her decision.

“I’m not an Indigenous person. And I don’t think it’s my place to vote ‘no,’” she said. “I’ve been listening to Indigenous voices and reading as much as I possibly can because I want to get a good grasp on everything.” She said that while “there are Aboriginal people that are voting no, a lot of people that I’ve loved and respected in the Aboriginal communi-

ty are voting yes. So I’m going to support them.” Annette Maxwell and Yvonne Gu were campaigning against the Voice to Parliament. Maxwell told Al Jazeera that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people already had a “Voice” in government by way of the 11 elected members of parliament that already hold office.

She said the main problem was that the government was “not doing a good job” on Indigenous affairs, which had resulted in the inequalities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. “It’s not because they don’t have a voice,” she said. “It’s because [the government] are not doing a good job. We need to solve that problem.” Gu – a member of the Liberal Party and supporter of conservative Indigenous Senator Jacinta Price – told Al Jazeera that the “Voice referendum is actually part of a much bigger agenda, which is excluding so-called conservative people from the society”. “It’s similar to so-called Black Lives Matter in America,” she said. “At the end of the day, no one’s going to benefit from it apart from a small group of elites.”

Smoke from Brazil Amazon rainforest fires suffocates Manaus

BRASILIA (AFP): Manaus, the largest city in Brazil’s Amazonas state, has for days been engulfed by a toxic cloud of smoke from forest fires lit by what the government labeled “criminals”. The city of nearly two million people has been forced to cancel some public events including a marathon.

The fires in the Amazon have produced a blanket of grey smoke over the capital of the northern state of Amazonas since Wednesday. Air quality in the city is among the worst in the world, according to the World Air Quality Index. “This smoke is hurting us. People don’t know what they are doing by burning the forest, and many animals are dying,” said Maria Luiza Reis, a 72-year-old Manaus resident.

“It’s sad, and it causes us difficulties. I wear a mask so I don’t breathe that toxic air because I already have health problems,” she added. Health authorities have urged city inhabitants avoid exposure as much as possible. There are “significant risks, mainly respiratory diseases” for those exposed to smoke, said Marcio Garcia, a director with the government’s public health emergencies department.

Amazonas, Brazil’s biggest state, has suffered the worst October in terms of fires in the last 25 years, according to data from the National Institute for Space Research (INPE). INPE has registered 2,770 fire out-



breaks so far this month, a 154 percent increase compared to the same period in 2022. The government announced it was deploying two helicopters and an additional 149 firefighters to supplement an almost equal number already fighting the fires in the region.

Environment Minister Marina Silva blamed the fires on “criminals” who light them to clear the forest for farming. “There is no natural fire in the Amazon,” Silva told a news conference. The fires come

as the region is experiencing an exceptionally severe drought, aggravated by the El Nino weather phenomenon, which has caused the level of some rivers to drop drastically.

“It is an extremely serious situation,” said the minister. Cancellation of the marathon left some runners disappointed. “I came from Goiania specifically to run the marathon on Sunday, but it was canceled. It’s frustrating,” said Zacharias Martins.

Gaza on brink of collapse: UNRWA

NEW YORK (Agencies): The United Nations refugee agency for Palestinians said the situation in Gaza is dire, as Israeli forces issued a call to evacuate more than 1 million civilians living in the territory’s north.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini called the evacuation order “horrendous” in a statement predicting the escalating Israeli response to Hamas terror attacks will “lead to unprecedented levels of misery and push people in Gaza into the abyss.” Lazzarini said more than 423,000 Gaza citizens have been displaced since the outbreak of war on Saturday, more than 270,000 of which have taken refuge in UNRWA shelters.

Israel Defense Forces told Fox News’ Trey Yingst that Israeli forces entered the Gaza Strip, both infantry forces and tanks, to conduct localized raids. The Israeli military said the raids were an effort to eliminate militants along the border and gather information about those held hostage inside the Gaza Strip. “The scale and speed of the unfolding humanitarian crisis is bone-chilling. Gaza is fast becoming a hellhole and is on the brink of collapse,” he said. “There is no exception, all parties must uphold the laws of war; humanitarian assistance must be provided at all times to civilians.”

Lazzarini echoed other UN officials who have called for an end to the war. “I urge all parties and those with influence over them to put an end to this tragedy and provide immediate and unconditional humanitarian access and protection to the civilians, among them far too many women and children,” Lazzarini said. He added, “The time for humanity to prevail is now.”

Israel has called up some 360,000 military reservists to respond to the Hamas-led terror campaign. Those forces have gathered on Israel’s border with Gaza ahead of a possible full-scale invasion to reclaim the hostages and eliminate Hamas terrorists. Israel has warned the 1.1 million people living in the north of Gaza to evacuate the area within 24 hours as a “humanitarian step in order to minimize civilian casualties” ahead of the military’s response to Hamas’ terrorist attacks.

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Putin denies Russia behind Finland gas pipeline damage

MOSCOW (BBC): President Vladimir Putin has denied that Russia damaged an undersea gas pipeline between Finland and Estonia. Investigators found a rupture on the Balticconnector pipeline was caused by mechanical force. Finnish officials said they could not rule out a state actor being involved.

Mr Putin said it was “rubbish” to blame Russia, and the damage could have been caused by an anchor or earthquake. The pipeline shut last weekend as operators noted a sudden drop in pressure. A telecoms cable was also damaged. Helsinki said it believed the leak on the 77km (48-mile) gas pipeline was caused by “external” activity.

‘Nowhere safe to go’: Fear after Israel’s warning

GAZA (Agencies): Twenty-one-year-old Mohammed Elewa has barely gotten any sleep this past week in the Gaza Strip. The sound of Israeli bombs and Palestinian ambulance sirens is a constant background noise as Israel pounds the Strip in revenge for a surprise attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7.

He woke up to the news that the Israeli military had issued evacuation orders for more than a million people in the northern Gaza Strip – nearly half of a total of 2.3 million residents. The directive comes ahead of a feared ground invasion, but Elewa did not feel there was any point in leaving. “There’s nowhere safe to go. Where am I supposed to go?” asks Elewa on the phone from his home.

He is one of many in Gaza City who say they have to stay because they cannot make their way to the south. In a press statement, the Hamas leadership called the Israeli order “psychological warfare”. “The current developments in Gaza represent an extraordinarily audacious and brutal endeavour to forcibly remove the Palestinian people from their land,” said Izzat al-Risheq, a member of the Hamas political bureau. Elewa ended up staying in Shujayea with some cousins and sisters, while others in his family went to the schools being used as shelters or to relatives in the south.

More than 270,000 displaced people have sought refuge in 88 schools run by UNRWA, the UN agency providing assistance to Palestinian refugees, in the northern Gaza Strip. But the overcrowding was such that, in some cases, “there were already 50 people to a room”, the paracyclist, whose leg was amputated when he was injured in the

Gaza border protests five years ago, said. “I wanted to go with them [my family], but there was no space,” Elewa, said. “[Now], they’re asking everyone to leave, but there’s literally nowhere to go. They’re just telling us to go stand in the street,” he adds, a mix of panic and anger in his voice.

A loud explosion sounds on the other end of the call and the phone connection is cut. At least 1,300 people were killed in the attack on Israel, while at least 1,799 Palestinians including 583 children have been killed in Israel’s bombardment of Gaza.

The United Nations has called on Israel to rescind the evacuation order, saying the movement of people on that scale is “impossible” without dire humanitarian consequences. Thousands of people were seen heading south on vehicles and on foot, clutching their children and meagre belongings. But many cannot leave – like the many patients in Gaza’s overstretched hospitals.

“[It is impossible] to evacuate Al-Shifa hospital,” Dr Yusuf Abu al-Rish, Gaza’s deputy health minister, said in a message to reporters, referring to the Gaza Strip’s largest hospital, which is stretched well over its 500-bed capacity. “All the other hospitals are full of injured patients,” Abu al-Rish added. “Most cases are not stable enough to be transported,” he said. “Even if there is a decision [to evacuate], it’s not applicable at all.” Tarik Jasarevic, spokesperson for the World Health Organization in Geneva, said it would be impossible to evacuate vulnerable hospital patients and such a move would be a death sentence for many. “I saw a lot of people earlier today escaping on trucks, don-

keys, cars,” 33-year-old journalist Mohammed Abu Safia said from Gaza City. “I saw up to 10 people in one car.”

Abu Safia, who has already lost many members of his extended family in the past week, had come to Gaza City from Beit Lahia in the far north of Gaza after the Israeli order. He was sheltering in a church-run school with his young family of four. “If you look at the people, you can see fear in their eyes, no one can speak,” said Abu Safia. “If I try to interview someone, they start arguing with me. No one can think straight.” World leaders should speak up

“I watched those videos [of people fleeing] today and I cried,” 36-year-old Wafaa al-Qudra told Al Jazeera. “[Israel] knows we are in a state of war and there are no means of transport,” al-Qudra added, “Are they just trying to humiliate people?” “This order does not alter Israel’s obligations in military operations to never target civilians and take all the measures it can to minimise harm to them,” said Clive Baldwin, senior legal adviser at Human Rights Watch. “The roads are rubble, fuel is scarce, and the main hospital is in the evacuation zone,” he added. “World leaders should speak up now before it is too late.”

“The south is being bombed,” al-Qudra said, explaining why she decided to not try to evacuate. “My family lives there and they say the bombing didn’t stop for a minute.” Meanwhile, Elewa, the paracyclist, gets back in touch with news he has survived the earlier bombing and is preparing for another frightening night under Israeli bombardment.

“There’s absolutely no sleep that’s happening at all,” he says. “Everyone’s just on edge, just waiting.”

Finland’s defense budget targets border security

HELSINKI (Agencies): Finland’s 2024 defense budget is primed to include funds meant to strengthen the country’s 830-mile-long border with Russia as well as replenish military equipment and weapons supplied to Ukraine over the last two years.

The budget, which is on course to be ratified by the end of October, puts defense spending at about 6.2 billion (US \$6.6 billion) — a nearly 5% rise from 2023. The Defence Ministry approved the draft budget with amendments in September. The elevated level of spending is directly linked to Finland’s accession to NATO as well as heightened tension in the region following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The expected budget increases Finland’s defense spending to 2.3% of its gross domestic product, lifting it above NATO’s 2% goal for member states. A border-reinforcement plan embedded in the 2024 budget includes the construction of 125 miles of so-called smart fencing supported by advanced sensors and drones operated by the Finnish Border Guard. The smart fence, erected at strategic points along the Finnish-Russian border, costs between \$400 million

and \$500 million. The budget also includes a \$272 million reimbursement to the ministry to cover the cost of replacing military equipment and weapons donated to Ukraine. The formalized budget will provide the Finnish military with \$1.6 billion to spend on materiel procurement in 2024.

Finnish Defence Minister Antti Häkkinen described the budget increase as “fundamental to national security and enhancing defense capability.” “We cannot ignore how the war instigated by Russia has changed the security landscape in our Nordic region and in the wider neighborhood. The world around Finland is becoming an increasingly dangerous place. Despite Finland’s economic challenges, we are now part of NATO and with membership comes added costs and responsibilities,” Häkkinen said. Although Russia’s defense-industrial base is in overdrive and the country is expanding its military bases along Finland’s border, Häkkinen said the government does not feel under threat.

Russia’s Alakurtti base, which is east of the Finnish border region of Lapland, houses the Russian Army’s arctic motor rifle brigade. And construction efforts at the Petrozavodsk base, south of Alakurtti, include work on a large military storage site and new buildings to house tanks, armored transport vehicles and mobile artillery pieces. Based on Finnish Army intelligence, movements to and from Petrozavodsk suggest the base is being used as a regional depot to deliver equipment to Russian front-line motorized brigade forces attacking Ukraine. “Russia repeatedly warned us that it would strengthen its near-border bases if Finland joined NATO. We are not surprised by these activities. Our intelligence is that these new structural works at military bases are part of normal Russian operations. We do not believe they pose a threat,” Häkkinen said.

Finland spent about \$3.87 billion on defense in 2020, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which cites the figures in current prices, converted at the exchange rate for the given year. The next year, Finland spent about \$3.8 billion on defense, followed by \$4.8 in 2022, the Swedish think tank reported. Its 2023 defense budget was about \$6.3 billion.

Russia, North Korea expanding military partnership: White House

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Russia and North Korea are building a military partnership amid heavy US sanctions and support for Ukraine, according to a new assessment by the National Security Council. Council spokesman John Kirby briefed reporters on a map allegedly showing lethal aid flowing from North Korea to Russia to supply the latter’s invasion of Ukraine. In the last month or so, he said, “1,000 containers of military equipment and munitions” have followed this route.

“We condemn the DPRK for providing Russia with this military equipment, which will be used to attack Ukrainian cities, kill Ukrainian civilians and further Russia’s illegitimate war,” he said, using an abbreviation for North Korea. For the last year and a half, Russia’s war against Ukraine has emptied the military stockpiles of both parties as well as their international supporters. The fight has largely been one of attrition, in which either side advances only after pounding the other with artillery. Such combat requires a constant supply of shells. Ukraine fires about 8,000 a day, according to an official

with Ukraine’s Defence Ministry. Just as the US and its allies have increased production and donated stocks to Ukraine, Russia has partnered with other nations to sustain its war effort. Most notably, Moscow has received a supply of Iranian-made drones that it’s used to batter Ukrainian infrastructure.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met in Russia for several days last month, in which the two discussed bilateral cooperation and toured factories. The meeting concerned US officials, who watched the rare summit between two adversaries, drawn together amid American-led isolation. During their summit, Kim pledged support for Russia’s war in Ukraine. For his part, Putin mentioned North Korea’s “great interest in rocket technology,” a reference to the country’s fledgling space program that Russia could assist. North Korea has tried and failed twice to launch satellites this year, and the visit included a tour of Russia’s far east spaceport.

During March, July, August and September, Kirby said, the US and its allies have sanctioned people

involved in arms negotiations and transfers between Russia and North Korea, whose nuclear program has made it a global pariah. “In return for support, we assess that Pyongyang is seeking military assistance from Russia including fighter aircraft, surface-to-air missiles, armored vehicles, ballistic missile production equipment, or other materials and other advanced technologies,” Kirby said.

He added that the US has already seen Russian ships make deliveries to North Korea. These, he explained, may have been the first deliveries of Russian military equipment to North Korea. Kirby used the assessment to again argue for supplemental Ukraine assistance. Earlier this year, the White House requested about \$25 billion in further funding. The Senate nearly passed a bill including \$6 billion, but later dropped that provision in late September as part of a deal to keep the government from shutting down. At a meeting in Brussels of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, a set of countries supporting Kyiv, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced \$200 million more in US security aid.

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Zero tolerance policy against terrorism

PRIME Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday categorically ruled out any scope for talks with the defunct Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), by saying that the state of Pakistan was powerful enough to fight them even for the next 100 years. While responding to a media query regarding impediments in talks with the banned terror outfit, the Premier said that the biggest obstacle was that no one was willing to talk to them. The state doesn't want to talk to them now or in the future.

Terrorism has been a great challenge in Pakistan over the past more than two decades, with various extremist groups including the Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its splinter cabal carrying out attacks in various parts of the country with a specific focus on Erstwhile FATA, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Historically, the TTP and its affiliates have played a significant role in spreading terrorism and violence in Pakistan from 2003 to 2014. Pakistan's Security and Law Enforcement Agencies had been hunting down the terrorist sleeper cells and their sympathizers in major cities while brave Pakistani military chased terrorists' hideouts in far-flung hilly areas in Swat, North and South Waziristan, Kurram and Khyber districts adjoining Pak-Afghan border along the Durand line. There had been a series of major military operations against terrorist groups in KP's border regions, ending with the successful operation Zarb-e-Azb that completely wiped out the menace of terrorism from Pakistani soil, while the remains of terrorism took refuge in neighbouring Afghanistan. Later, the PTI government and then military establishment got trapped in a foreign conspiracy, brought back hundreds of TTP terrorists in the country and reimported terrorism on Pakistani soil through a treacherous accord with the terrorist outfit. Since then a death dance and bloodshed continuously pouring down in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Erstwhile FATA while hundreds of innocent civilians, and Security personnel embraced martyrdoms in acts of violence and terrorism over the past few months.

Recently, the Pakistani military has launched a fresh countrywide intelligence-based counter-terrorism campaign and inflicted heavy losses on terrorist outfits by killing dozens of terrorists, destroying their hideouts/caches, recovering arms and ammunition and arresting their facilitators in the country. Currently, the terrorists are on the run and dearly need some pause in the government campaign against terrorism while the garb of talks and dialogue is the best strategy for them to regain strength, regroup and reequip their mercenaries before the next round of bloodshed.

Interestingly, Pakistani leadership and the public had always overlooked their national and country's interests, displaying an exaggerated sense of Muslim brotherhood, the imaginary idea of an Islamic state, Khilafat and Riasat-e-Madina by failing to rationally identify the true motives of characterless, self-claimed Champion of Islam and Jihad in this hybrid world. Currently, terrorism has caused serious security risks for the country, while banned terrorist gangs consisting of a few hundred mercenaries have plans to create their separate state and want to pressure the Pakistani leadership through violence, intimidation and so-called ploy of dialogue/ negotiation.

In fact, Pakistan has had a complex history in dealing with terrorism. The successive governments have taken steps to combat terrorism, and the effectiveness of its measures has been a subject of debate. The previous PTI government used the recipe of dialogue and accord that not only revived the risk of terrorism again but exposed the nefarious designs of terrorist outfits to the nation. Pakistan has initiated various military operations implemented diverse counter-terrorism strategies and held multiple rounds of talks with banned outfits in the past. There have been calls both domestic and international to take a zero-tolerance stance against terrorism by providing no space for its revival. The current government has finally initiated a countrywide Counter terrorism campaign to eradicate this menace once and for all. All segments of society must support the government wholeheartedly in its endeavours without casting any doubts or echoing in favour of futile dialogues if we intend to secure our future generations from the clutches of terrorism forever, otherwise, this curse would not be curbed for decades.

Fake morals of French leaders

THE French government has recently announced a ban on pro-Palestinians demonstrations while citing concerns about public order in its country. The French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told French Police that pro-Palestinian demonstrations must be prohibited because they are likely to generate disturbances to the public order, and any such protests will lead to arrests of the organizers and participants in all cases. The Minister also called on the police to protect all locations visited by French Jews including synagogues and schools, so no foreigner could commit any act of anti-Semitism on French soil. Furthermore, the invaders will be immediately expelled out of France.

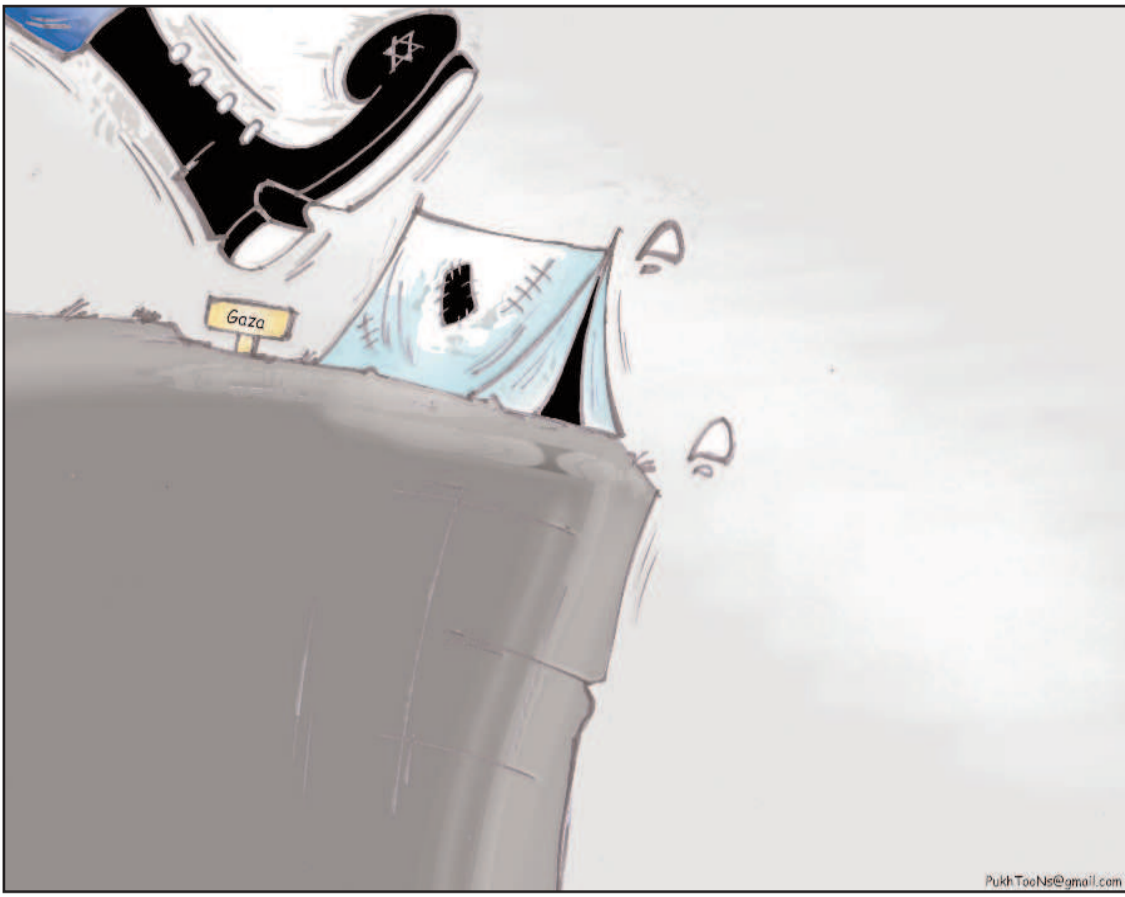
The violent conflict between heavily armed Israeli military and poorly equipped Palestinian freedom fighters have reached unprecedented heights, protests in support of both Israelis and Palestinians have been staged in major cities around the globe from Sydney to New York, while conflicting sloganeering and clashes have been reported between opposing factions in many nations. However, no loss of life or property had not been reported in such verbal exchanges so far.

Interestingly, following the issuance of the French Interior Ministry's order on Thursday, hundreds of demonstrators gathered in central Paris in defiance of a controversial ban to denounce Israeli atrocities and support Palestinians' right to self determination, livelihood and civil freedoms. Awfully, the far-right French Minister who himself was summoned by multiple courts on charges of misconduct with women and misbehaving with weak segments of the society, committed another felony by barring Muslims and people of conscience from holding pro-Palestinians demonstrations. Meanwhile, the radical leader did not forbid French Jews from collecting donations and assembling in support of Israel in almost all parts of France.

Historically, French leaders have always displayed prejudice with their Muslim populace, ranging from the scarf ban on Muslim women, to housing, employment together with the French government's definition of extremism and course regarding Muslims' beard, fasting and prayers, all actions and policies had been very narrow sighted, biased and politically motivated. In fact, the successors of Charles De Gualle and General Napoleon Bonaparte have now turned so wicked that in brutal support for anti-Semitism they weigh crusade against poor Muslims and commit anti-Islamism every other day.

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Israel is manufacturing a case for genocide

Marwan Bishara

ISRAELI and American officials, like many of their supporters, have called the Hamas incursion on Saturday "Israel's 9/11", drawing parallels between Hamas and al-Qaeda and between Israel and the United States.

"If the United States experienced what Israel is experiencing," President Joe Biden said, "our response would be swift, decisive and overwhelming." The "brutality" and "the bloodthirstiness" of Hamas, he added, "brings to mind the worst rampages of ISIS". He even repeated the sensationalist and unsubstantiated claims that Hamas fighters had "raped women" and "beheaded babies". Major European capitals reinforced the false analogy of 9/11 and the dangerous notion of "us vs them" by draping their most iconic buildings in Israeli flags as if to declare "they are all Israelis" just like they declared - with disastrous consequences - that "they are all Americans" after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, DC.

Like a well-rehearsed orchestra, Western powers condemned the "unprovoked" attacks on civilians and voiced their unconditional support for the fanatical Israeli government to do whatever it takes as long as it takes to "defend" its people against "evil". The degree of hysteria and the hypocrisy are as mind-boggling, as they are reckless.

Some of the images from Israel are no doubt gruesome - but the images from Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Libya, etc have been no less horrific. Two decades of Western and Israeli wars in the Middle East have led to not thousands, but millions of Arab and Palestinian casualties. In the eyes of the West, it seems, Israel has a "duty" to defend its people, but the Palestinians don't have the right to protect themselves as if they are people of a lesser god! Israel seemingly also has a right to defend and even expand its occupation and apartheid regime, but the Palestinians have no right to express their frustration or struggle for freedom and justice after seven decades of dispossession, oppression and siege.

For European Commission President

Ursula von der Leyen, "Russia's attacks against civilian infrastructure, especially electricity, are war crimes. Cutting off men, women, children of water, electricity... are acts of pure terror." But Israel doing the same against Palestinians in Gaza is legitimate self-defense! That's the very embodiment of hypocrisy and double

and Iraq on false pretences. Such comparisons help demonise Palestinian leaders and dehumanise Palestinian people, paving the way for a genocidal war, starting in Gaza. To be sure, demonising other leaders is ugly politics, but dehumanising a whole people, is racism, pure and simple. In that way, this false and hysterical analogy

pretext to expel Palestinians from their homeland, again.

For that purpose, it has already recalled some 350,000 military reservists and amassed 100,000 soldiers as well as a number of tanks on its southern border. Meanwhile, the attempts to create a humanitarian corridor to ship people from Gaza into the Sinai to keep them "safe" and to make it easier for Israel to invade are bound to be rejected by Palestinian and Arab leaders alike as no more than a pretext to expel Palestinians from their homeland, again. The anticipated ground invasion of densely populated Gaza with no escape routes provided for the people who live there, is bound to cause tens or hundreds of thousands of casualties among Palestinians over weeks or months of fighting, especially if, as expected, Israel uses heavy weapons and severe bombardment to try to reduce casualties among its own forces.

standard. To be clear, Hamas is an Islamist group that has routinely used and is still using controversial and unsavoury methods to further its agenda. But like other anti-colonial movements that employed questionable methods, it is first and foremost, a nationalist movement that long condemned al-Qaeda and ISIL, and never staged an attack outside historical Palestine. Unlike al-Qaeda, Hamas has won a majority in parliament in Gaza's last legislative elections in 2006, and - after surviving an American orchestrated coup - it has acted as the de facto government of the besieged strip.

Above all else, the hysterical comparisons between Hamas's operation on Saturday and 9/11 are reckless and utterly dangerous, for they serve to manufacture the case for a wider war, as we witnessed prior to the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan

amounts to a green light for Israel to follow up its unlawful siege and indiscriminate bombardment of the Gaza Strip with an even more horrifying land invasion that would devastate the more than two million Palestinians living there. Indeed, after failing to diminish Hamas with four wars and a 17-year-long siege, the Israeli government now seems determined to annihilate Hamas, both politically and militarily, through an invasion and reoccupation of Gaza. For that purpose, it has already recalled some 350,000 military reservists and amassed 100,000 soldiers as well as a number of tanks on its southern border.

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pretext to expel Palestinians from their homeland, again.

The anticipated ground invasion of densely populated Gaza with no escape routes provided for the people who live there, is bound to cause tens or hundreds of thousands of casualties among Palestinians over weeks or months of fighting, especially if, as expected, Israel uses heavy weapons and severe bombardment to try to reduce casualties among its own forces. Indeed, Israel's looming invasion of Gaza is bound to turn into the most bloody urban conflict since the Second World War - an armageddon with disastrous regional implications. Even if Israel successfully reoccupies the Gaza Strip, albeit at a high cost, and dismantles the military and administrative infrastructure of Hamas, what then? Will it simply hand it over to the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah after Israelis paid a high price for taking it over, as it did in the past? Will it hold the Gaza Strip permanently, providing food and services to its inhabitants? Will it be able to end the idea of Hamas as a resistance movement against occupation?

Israel does not seem to have any answers to these thorny questions about "the day after". Indeed, there is no telling what will happen after such a genocidal invasion and occupation in Gaza, Palestine or the region in general. There are already signs of the war spilling over to the north and east, forcing, or rather allowing, Israel to widen its circle of destruction. This could easily lead to the United States and its newly deployed naval armadas being drawn into yet another destructive regional war, as if two decades of forever wars were not enough.

Israel and the United States must not repeat the same blunders again and again as if they learned nothing from decades of war, occupation and human suffering caused by their bumbles. It is high time for Western powers to start acting like grown-ups and stop parroting Israel's debunked lies and clichés. Make no mistake, there is no military answer for the Palestine tragedy, only a political and diplomatic solution.

Aljazeera

Death of Netanyahu's myth of peace without peacemaking?

Baria ALamuddin

THE killing of hundreds of Israeli children, mothers, pensioners and innocent young people was a horrific atrocity. But the angry momentum created by this horror has unleashed a new slaughter of the innocents on an industrial scale, through massive, indiscriminate bombing across Gaza. Israel's Defense Minister boasted of the "complete siege" of Gaza's two million citizens: "No electricity, no food, no water, no gas... We are fighting human animals, and we act accordingly."

Entrapping and bombing a civilian population with tons of munitions is straightforwardly a war crime. No wonder Benjamin Netanyahu's stony face when US Secretary of State Blinken stood next to him and declared that it was "vitally important" that Israel respect international humanitarian law. "It's what distinguishes us from terrorist organizations", Blinken said.

These appalling scenes of slaughter did not erupt from nowhere. They occurred in the context of an inexorable escalation in tension over recent months - or arguably decades: in early 2023 there was sustained escalation in state violence against Palestinians, with 200 killed in the West Bank alone.

There was massive anger at military assaults against the revered Al-Aqsa Mosque, and hundreds of attacks against Palestinian farmers by militant settlers, overseen by a cabal of extremists committed to the eradication of the Palestinians as a nation. All this contributed to the increasing inevitability of an explosive response from the Palestinian side. Statements in recent days from the GCC, Saudi Arabia and the Arab world held Israel's authorities responsible for creating this situation through "depriving Palestinian people of their legitimate rights and systematic provocations against their holy sites."

These developments are catastrophic for Netanyahu's credibility. Israel was direly unprepared because it has spent the past few years at war with itself, with mass protests against Netanyahu's outright lurch toward the far right. Israeli commentators have highlighted the calamitous impact of appointing hell-raising extremists such as Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir to sensitive ministerial positions for managing security and oversight of occupied territories. With Hezbollah and Israel exchanging missile fire over the Lebanon border, Israel fears what could happen if Hezbollah fully entered the conflict, with its exponentially greater missile capabilities and the prospect that its fighters could replicate the Gaza breakout throughout villages in northern Israel.

Despite Joe Biden's warning to Iran's proxies not to exploit the situation, Hassan Nasrallah urged Arab states to rethink normalization with Israel, and pro-Hezbollah cleric Ahmed Qablan denounced Israel as a "lie which soon will be eradicated from the face of the earth." In Lebanon, memories of Israel's brutally vengeful 2006 military campaign are still deeply raw.

Western leaders who had been privately disdainful of Netanyahu's wholesale embrace of the extreme right nevertheless raced to support

Israel's "absolute right to defend itself" - offering a blank slate of impunity for whatever acts of collective punishment Israel unleashes, including a ground invasion. This excessive Western tolerance has contributed to bringing us to where we are today: offering Israel unlimited military support to perpetuate the occupation, turning a blind eye to decades of human rights abuses and war crimes, and diplomatic language that portrayed Palestinian lives as expendable. This provided immaculate diplomatic cover for 70 years of brutal occupation, and remorseless devouring of Palestinian territories. Militant West Bank settlers this year embarked on an unprecedented campaign to brutalize and displace Arab farmers, with an estimated 140 sq km of Palestinian lands seized in recent months. As demographics relatively favor Palestinian population growth, Israeli political power is increasingly monopolized by a theocratic, extremist, anti-democratic minority, among whom fantasies of extermination and genocide are mooted as long-term solutions to the Palestine question.

The images of death and trauma we have witnessed on both sides in recent days are an unforgivable tragedy. Human rights must be universal, sacred and unconditional. There have been well over 2,000 Palestinian and Israeli deaths, and Palestinians are already disproportionately bearing the brunt of thousands more fatalities, with tens of thousands of others bereaved and rendered homeless. Netanyahu's rhetoric about "eradicating" Hamas is nonsense, given that disproportionate Israeli violence only drives more disenfranchised youths toward armed groups. Young boys in Gaza will witness mothers and siblings being slaughtered, and will grow up consumed by hatred, desiring nothing more than to end their own miserable existence in a gesture of destruction against those they blame for their plight.

As with illegal West Bank settlement activity, the dense network of settlements built around Gaza was provocatively calculated to constrain and suppress the Palestinian population. As an Al-Hayat journalist in 1994, I had several days of exclusive access to Yasser Arafat immediately before his return to Palestine after the Oslo accords. He was rightly skeptical about Israel's readiness for peace, but desperately wanted to believe that peace was possible. Netanyahu's arrival as prime minister in 1996, following the murder of Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish extremist, came to represent a rejection by the Israeli public of Oslo's aspirations for a just peace. October 2023 marks another decisive turning point, when Netanyahu's assertion that Israelis could enjoy permanent peace without peace-making was decisively exposed as a lie.

If Israelis desire to spare their descendants future reruns of the anarchy, tragedy and carnage of recent days, they should compel their leaders to embrace the principles of "land for peace" enshrined in the Oslo accords and Arab Peace Initiative. Instead, these inhuman acts of vengeance playing out before the horrified eyes of the world are the surest guarantor of further generations of slaughter, genocide and annihilation yet to come.

Arab News

This eclipse is one you don't want to miss

Don Lincoln

ON Saturday morning, a dragon will eat the sun. If you're able, you should go outside and see it; it'll be a dazzling spectacle. Such poetic descriptions of solar eclipses can be seen in some of the earliest astronomical records, penned by Chinese astronomers over 4,000 years ago. In order to scare away the dragon and restore the normal order of things, people would bang pans and shout loudly. And it always worked. The dragon let go of the sun and light returned.

Our modern understanding of the phenomenon of solar eclipses is more mechanical, involving the motion of the moon, but even today, an eclipse is a breathtaking experience. But, more than that, it's a human experience, one in which people across the world

and across time can share a moment of cosmic wonder. I saw my first solar eclipse on a school playground. It was winter, and kids were making snowmen, sliding down the hill and enjoying the cold air. The sky was absolutely perfect to view an eclipse. It was one of those overcast days with a thin layer of clouds that allows just enough light through so you can view the sun without squinting.

The sun was a pale silver disk, surrounded by a light gray sky. As the moon began to pass in front of the sun, children stopped to watch. Recess was extended that day, as the moon steadily blocked the sun, until all that was left of the sun was a silver crescent. Teachers and students alike joined together to enjoy the view.

That first eclipse was only a partial one and it was many years before I

saw a full one. Indeed, the first full solar eclipse I saw took place in 2017. I had booked the hotel a full year before. The location I selected was in southern Illinois, close to the where I'd be able to experience the maximum duration of the eclipse and also close to the intersection of major highways so I could quickly relocate, in the event a cloudy sky threatened my plans. But I was lucky.

The sky was cloudless, and I stood in the hotel parking lot, watching as the moon covered the sun. As the eclipse began, I looked upward through dark glasses. And then, the moment of totality arrived, and I removed my protective eyewear. For a little over two and a half minutes, I took in my first full eclipse, seeing the darkened sun, the solar corona and the eerie color

of the rest of the sky. In that moment I wasn't a scientist. I was just a person entranced by the astronomical display. I imagined what it must have been like for ancient people who had no understanding of celestial mechanics to see the sun disappear. It had to have been a mixture of fear and religious awe.

And, for the record, I did bang a pot just for good measure. The dragon was scared away. You're welcome. On Saturday, another eclipse will be visible across a large part of the country, beginning along the Oregon coast and moving through Texas before passing over parts of Central and South America. This will be a unique event. Rather than a full eclipse, in which the sun is totally blocked, it will be an annular eclipse.

At the moment of maximum coverage, a thin ring of sunlight will encircle the moon - a "ring of fire" in the sky. Annular eclipses occur when the moon is farthest (or almost farthest) from the Earth. Because it is more distant, it appears smaller, and thus doesn't quite block the entire sun. But even that thin outer circle of sunlight is very bright, which means you must be careful when you view the event.

If you are one of the lucky people who lives under the path of maximum coverage, you should definitely go outside and look up. But even for those of you who live in places where the coverage of the moon will be only partial, it's still worth your time to take in the sight. Unless you're an eclipse chaser, you will only see a handful of eclipses in your lifetime. Be sure to see this one. As

fascinating as this eclipse will be, Americans have another celestial event to look forward to. On April 8, 2024, a total eclipse will begin in the southern Pacific and then pass through Mexico and across the United States, beginning in Texas before heading towards Detroit and then over Montreal and out over the North Atlantic. I've already booked my hotel under the path of totality, again located at the crossroads of highways in case of unlucky cloud cover. We live in a constant ebb and flow of work and family, chores and responsibilities. However, there are certain events that are worth pausing for a moment to just take in and enjoy. I hope that you, like millions of others before you, will stop what you're doing and turn your eyes to the sky. You won't be sorry.

CNN

Netanyahu’s Gaza war threatens to evolve into a regional showdown

Osama Al-Sharif

THE wave of sympathy and solidarity from Western leaders that Israel received after Saturday's surprise attack by hundreds of Hamas fighters on neighboring settlements, military bases and towns has now been offset by a shift in global public opinion. Israel says it has declared war on Hamas, but what is taking place since it began its relentless bombing of the narrow, crowded and besieged Gaza Strip is nothing less than genocide.

Hamas carried out a remarkable Palestinian version of the 1968 Tet Offensive by North Vietnam against South Vietnam, which proved to be a turning point in that war. Yes, Hamas' surprise and stunning attack has left more than 1,000 Israelis dead and many more injured. It dealt a humiliating blow to Israel's vastly superior military and intelligence bodies. And, yes, Hamas was able to take back hundreds of hostages, including senior officers and civilians. Israel has not suffered such a costly strike in all its short and turbulent history. It had to respond. But let us leave emotions aside and consider the following.

This latest cycle of violence must be viewed in the context of the decades-old Israel-Palestine conflict. This was not an isolated incident: Israel had waged war on Gaza multiple times, leaving tens of thousands of Palestinians - almost entirely civilians - dead and maimed. It rained down bombs, blew up residential towers, erased entire neighborhoods and targeted schools, hospitals, mosques and cemeteries. Still, it failed to defeat or degrade the strength of Hamas and other militant groups. In the process, it committed war crimes by killing civilians, primarily women and children, and by enforcing a total blockade against more than 2

million people, denying them access to medicines, fuel, basic needs and even the cement needed to rebuild what it had destroyed. Collective punishment is an Israeli state policy and it is a war crime. Will this new military campaign be any different? A beleaguered Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to uproot Hamas for good. But decapitating this complex organization means only one thing: wiping Gaza off the map. With the help of Western governments, Israel is using its right to self-defense to create yet another Nakba for Gazans, almost 70 percent of whom are refugees whose families were forced to leave their homes that once stood in the lands where the settlements and towns Hamas attacked now occupy. Doing so would be tantamount to ethnic cleansing, as well as a war crime and a crime against humanity.

In this latest campaign, Israel has surpassed itself with the level of wanton destruction and indiscriminate killing of civilians. In two days, Monday and Tuesday, it killed more than 120 children and annihilated more than 15 families. And the humanitarian situation in Gaza was catastrophic even before the Israeli attack. Netanyahu and his far-right partners want to vindicate themselves before an unforgiving Israeli public by shedding Palestinian blood. Netanyahu posted a video of a residential building blown to pieces on his social media account. This shameless act reflects his attempt to appease the public by showing that he is avenging Israeli victims by killing innocents.

This latest bloody cycle underlines a couple of facts. The first is that the US has failed to find a political solution to a conflict it has for years embraced and

monopolized, while sidelining the international community. The US became an apologist for an Israel that violates international law, the Geneva Conventions and UN resolutions daily in the occupied West Bank and Golan Heights and the besieged Gaza Strip. By providing Israeli leaders with political cover for decades, the two-state solution became an empty slogan rather than a genuine path to peace. The second fact has to do with Netanyahu himself. He is an egotistical, self-serving, cunning and cynical leader who, over 30 years, has managed to sabotage the Oslo Accords, neutralize the Israeli left, nurture the Jewish settlers, empower the far right, weaken the Palestinian Authority and, finally, polarize and divide Israel over his controversial judicial overhaul that would turn the country into an authoritarian entity.

He is now trying to use this war to salvage his political career. This is dangerous. He is dragging an unsuspecting Biden administration into a regional war that also aims to bring Hezbollah and Iran into the fight. Provoking Hezbollah, as Israel has been doing in the past few days, will unsettle the entire region and open hell's gates. The US and other Western governments should pause and think before they issue statements backing Israel's right to self-defense and the Palestinian "ambition" for self-determination. A ground offensive against Gaza, as now appears to be likely, would have huge repercussions for the Palestinians, Israel and Egypt - and beyond. The US should revisit the lessons of Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan before it rushes into a conflict it has already helped prolong. The region is in a mess because of

Israeli policies and the US' inability to realize that its allies in the region are waking up to a new geopolitical reality. This latest crisis is part of the labor pains of a new multipolar world order announcing its imminent birth.

And finally, the Western governments that rushed to show solidarity with Israel should look in the mirror. Netanyahu and his far-right government have hijacked Israel and turned it into a de facto apartheid state that openly practices ethnic cleansing, racism and collective punishment, oppresses Palestinians, kills and detains children and is now committing genocide. When Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant ordered a "complete siege" of Gaza - meaning no water, no food and no electricity should get in - and added that "we are fighting human animals and we act accordingly," not one Western politician came out to condemn his racist comments or the fact he had admitted to committing a war crime. If Vladimir Putin said this or bombed entire neighborhoods of Kyiv, the entire West would rise up in protest and condemnation. The hypocrisy and double standards are disgusting, and public opinion in the West is shifting.

Israel may win this round, but it will also lose big time. The massacres it is committing in Gaza will haunt the world for many years. Hamas is not an elected entity that controls the lives of more than 2 million civilians. Those civilians had nothing to do with Saturday's attack. Punishing them in this way is a war crime, no matter the motives. The US should be careful about its next move concerning this war. While morality has nothing to do with US foreign policy, it should at least think of its own interests if Netanyahu succeeds in dragging it into yet another genocidal war in the Middle East.

Israel-Hamas clashes and new GCC-EU security talks

THE Joint Council of EU and Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers started their two-day meeting in Muscat on Monday, two days after Hamas' unprecedented attack on Israel. The annual meeting had a crowded agenda but the events in Israel and Gaza took priority. Initially, many were confused about the extent and nature of the attacks and, assuming that they were a repetition of previous small-scale acts by Hamas, dismissed them.

When more gruesome details emerged, there was first disbelief and then horror and disgust at the horrific killings, torture and humiliation of hundreds of civilians. Israel's past behavior toward Palestinians should not justify Hamas' targeting of innocent civilians. It is true that there is a long list of Israel's past transgressions: massive and indiscriminate bombings of Gaza's crowded neighborhoods, collective punishment inflicted on Palestinian civilians, massive deaths, deportations, arbitrary detentions, land appropriations and home demolitions. Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank have also continually harassed Palestinians, destroyed their homes and farms and killed them with impunity at times, in addition to repeated incursions into and desecration of Al-Aqsa Mosque. Things have taken a turn for the worse under the current government, as some of these actions were supported, instigated or led by some of its senior members.

But no matter how awful those Israeli practices were, civilians on both sides should be spared. Hamas fighters' disregard for human life and dignity was horrifying, but Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the West Bank should not be made to pay for those fighters' sins. While there was consensus at the meeting on these points, there was concern about sending the wrong message to either side. Hamas should not be under the illusion that its justifications for the attacks of Oct. 7 were acceptable and Israel should not think that it has a license to retaliate by attacking civilians at will in Gaza or the West Bank. At the conclusion of its deliberations, the GCC-EU Joint Council issued a statement expressing "deep concern" about those "grave developments" in Israel and Gaza, deplored violence and condemned "all attacks against civilians." It also reminded the parties to the conflict of their obligations under the universal principles of international

humanitarian law not to harm civilians. It further called for calm and restraint "on all sides" and the release of hostages. Reacting to Israel's declaration of a total siege that sealed Gaza and completely isolated it, the ministers called for allowing access to food, water and medicines. They also stressed the urgent need for a political solution to the crisis to "avoid repeating this vicious cycle of violence." The ministers resolved to continue consulting on the matter and remain engaged.

At the same time, both sides insisted on making a clear distinction between Hamas' actions and the disciplined Palestinian Authority and maintained their traditional positions on the peace process. They supported the efforts currently being undertaken by Saudi Arabia, the EU and the Arab League to revive the Middle East peace process, in cooperation with Egypt and Jordan, to help put an end to the violence and start on the path toward peace and security. The foreign ministers reiterated their shared commitment to a two-state solution, living securely side by side, based on the 1967 lines, "in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and all relevant UN resolutions." They opposed any unilateral steps and called for the maintenance of the "historical and religious status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem," and a just and fair settlement for refugees.

While some fringe groups suggested the suspension of aid to the Palestinians following Hamas' attacks, the consensus that emerged stressed the continuation of financial support for UNRWA, the PA and for the Palestinian population's humanitarian and development needs. It is probably too early to ascertain any direct outside involvement in Hamas' decision to attack on Saturday, but Iran and its regional proxies (such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen) have declared their full support. Regardless of whether they had a hand in this operation, Iran and Hezbollah stand to gain from reigniting the conflict. Extremists in Israel also benefit. Both are opposed to compromises and are happy to derail any reconciliation or political deals.

Those attacks could also complicate ongoing mediation to release the hostages taken on Saturday. The depth of the discussions around Palestine-Israel issues anticipated the nature of the nas-

cent GCC-EU "strategic partnership," which the foreign ministers announced in February 2022. The two sides then made clear that it would include security issues and dialogue on regional crises. The Joint Action Programme (2022-2027), approved last year, also included some security cooperation. However, the details remained relatively undeveloped until the Muscat meeting, where the foreign ministers stressed the special importance of this partnership "in the light of growing serious threats to regional and international peace, security and stability," as well as "challenges to the global economy," spelling out that part in some detail. To activate that cooperation, they decided to hold a "regular and structured GCC-EU regional security dialogue" at the level of senior officials and establish joint working groups when needed, within the framework of this security dialogue, to coordinate efforts on regional and global issues.

The ministers also directed their senior officials to explore the potential for GCC-EU coordination on the EU initiative for a Coordinated Maritime Presence in the northwest Indian Ocean. In addition to these mid- and working-level meetings, the two sides agreed to organize a high-level forum on regional security and cooperation in Brussels in the near future to complement the work undertaken at official GCC-EU meetings. In June, Italy's former Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio was appointed as the EU's first special representative for the Gulf region, tasked with implementing the EU's new Gulf strategy; he will likely be instrumental in any high-level security discussions.

In some ways, dialogue has already started on a number of security-related issues, including Ukraine, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Sudan and the Horn of Africa. The next months should witness energized discussions on these and the other security issues flagged by the two sides for dialogue. They include nuclear, missile and drone proliferation; maritime security; cybersecurity; counterterrorism; terrorism financing, recruitment and ideology; human trafficking; drug trafficking; irregular migration; organized crime; and energy security, the security of global food supplies, disaster preparedness and emergency response. A very ambitious list indeed.

Protester who unfurled anti-Xi messages

A year ago, Peng Lifa draped protest banners from Beijing's Sitong Bridge. They unfurled to reveal exhortations against China's zero-COVID policy, calling it a violation of freedom of expression and demanding real elections and political reform. One banner criticized Xi as a "national traitor" and another said "We want food, not PCR tests. We want freedom, not lockdowns. We want respect, not lies. We want reform, not a Cultural Revolution. We want a vote, not a leader. We want to be citizens, not slaves."

Peng Lifa further challenged Xi on Oct. 13, 2022, by shouting through a loudspeaker, "We want to eat. We want freedom. We want votes!" Quickly arrested that day, Peng Lifa, whose online name is Peng Zaizhou, remains in detention at an unknown location, and his close family members remain under government watch, according to sources familiar with the case who did not want to be named for fear of attracting official attention. Authorities have yet to deliver to his family any legal documents related to his case, the sources told VOA Mandarin, and his relatives and friends haven't been able to hire a lawyer to provide him with legal assistance.

VOA Mandarin contacted the Chinese Embassy in Washington for comments on Peng Lifa's case and the allegations made by VOA Mandarin's sources but didn't receive any response by the time of publication. Peng Lifa's wife, Han Yang, and their two underage daughters remain in Beijing. Authorities have arranged transportation for their daily commutes to work and school. They are accompanied by government personnel wherever they go, the sources told VOA Mandarin, describing an upended family. Because the government

Ye Bing

confiscated the mobile phones belonging to Peng Lifa's wife and daughters to "protect" them, they must use ones issued by the authorities. Peng Lifa's father-in-law, Han Yueci, who used to run a small business, has been assigned by the Public Security Bureau to work and live at a small factory and is under surveillance. Peng Lifa's mother-in-law, who used to live in Beijing, now lives with her eldest daughter in Jilin Province in northeastern China, bordering North Korea and Russia. She is likely under surveillance.

Peng Lifa's brothers and sisters are farmers in their hometown of Tailai in Heilongjiang Province near the border with Inner Mongolia. They were all summoned to the local police station for questioning after the banner incident. His parents have passed away due to illness. Han Yang has two sisters. One sister and her husband work in public schools, and the other sister works in a state-owned power plant. After the Sitong Bridge incident, investigators questioned all three at their workplaces. Liang Shaohua, formerly a human rights lawyer in China, now lives in Los Angeles, where he volunteers as a rights advocate. He told VOA Mandarin there is no basis under Chinese law for restricting Peng Lifa's family. "Peng Lifa's family members, including his wife, Han Yang, and daughters, are illegally under house arrest. It is illegal collective punishment," said Liang. "It has absolutely no legal basis and is what gangsters would do."

Chinese dissident Lin Shengliang, who lives in the Netherlands and leads efforts to help and rescue political prisoners in China, said volunteers in China have taken risky trips to find Peng Lifa. He said Peng Yiping, a retired Chinese military officer, attempted to visit Peng

Lifa's family in Tailai on Sept. 27 only to be arrested when he asked directions of a person who turned out to be an undercover officer who confiscated the military man's mobile phone and arrested him. Zhou Fengsuo, who was a student leader in the Tiananmen Square protests and is now executive director of Human Rights in China in New York City, said he believes Peng Lifa's protest triggered the Blank Paper Movement nationwide, which eventually led to the end of the zero-COVID policy.

Zhou said, "It was because his voice spread overseas and domestically that it eventually led to the nationwide Blank Paper Movement, which, for the first time, used public opinion to force the Chinese Communist Party to change its absurd and cruel zero-COVID policy." In the Legal Opinion of the Citizens' Court Lawyers Group on the Peng Lifa case published in September in China Spring, an online magazine, Liang said, "If Xi believes that Peng Lifa has violated his reputation rights, he can file a lawsuit for reputation infringement according to Chinese civil law. Advocating ending the zero-COVID policy and removing Xi Jinping and calling Xi Jinping a 'national traitor' are not crimes. And the Chinese police had no legal basis for his arrest." Liang believes that the authorities' detention of Peng Lifa violates the provisions of the Chinese Criminal Procedure Law and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. "He doesn't have a lawyer. Everything is unknown. It actually violates China's own criminal prosecution laws, as well as the (United Nations') International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. It is totally illegal."

VOA

Despite its rage, Israel must keep a political solution in mind

Yossi Mekelberg

ALMOST 50 years to the day after Israel was caught totally unprepared by a coordinated Egyptian-Syrian attack and suffered immense casualties, followed by a decades-long trauma, something very similar happened in the early hours of last Saturday. Another disaster has struck, but this time it was an unprecedented murderous incursion by Hamas.

We are still in the very early stages of what is now a war between Israel and this Palestinian fundamentalist organization, to which Israel has committed itself, and there is hardly any reason to suspect the seriousness of its intention, which is to eliminate Hamas altogether. This is the mood not only among the decision-makers in Israel, but the people too. Israel is in a state of shock, still digesting the horror of the mass killings of civilians and soldiers, but also the total intelligence failure and the collapse not only of its physical defenses in Gaza, but its conceptual approach to Hamas and, more generally, to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Tragically, what is to follow is likely to become one of the bloodiest confrontations between Israel and the Palestinians since 1948 and one of the reasons for this is that Hamas surprised even itself and "overachieved" in the worst possible way. It has pushed Israel into a corner, from which it feels obliged to respond with full force. History is replete with miscalculations and unintended consequences and usually they come with a heavy price, which, catastrophically, is where the situation in Gaza is currently heading. It will take time and distance from Hamas' assault on Israel to fully understand its exact inten-

tions in launching such a land, sea and air attack, but the militants that carried out the attack left more than 1,000 Israelis dead, most of them civilians, and injured thousands more, while taking between 100 and 150 hostages. Many more are still missing. If those were the initial intentions of the organization, which I strongly doubt, then the objective was to start a war in the hope that the Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem would join them and perhaps even Hezbollah in Lebanon would wade in and, by that, ignite a regional Armageddon.

But in this unlikely scenario, as Hamas' leaders must have known, by such a course of action they were bound to sign their own death warrants. More likely is that they were preparing an operation with a much more limited set of objectives in terms of taking probably just a few Israeli soldiers hostage and causing fewer casualties. What they did not expect was that crossing the border with Israel would be so easy in terms of physical barriers and military response, which left their way clear to enter towns, villages and kibbutzes and commit a terrible atrocity - the massacre of hundreds of innocent civilians, including the very young and the elderly - and take many hostages. If Hamas also thought that internal divisions in Israel would stretch to a refusal to serve in a state of emergency, they could not have been more mistaken. Ironically, they have probably saved Netanyahu's political skin. At least for now.

This terrible blow to Israel, which has never before suffered such a huge loss of life in one day, especially not of so many civilians,

makes it even worse than the debacle of 1973. Its entire strategy in regard to relations with Gaza and especially Hamas collapsed in the space of a few hours, badly damaging its deterrence and military credibility, not only vis-a-vis the Palestinians but across the region. Israel's intelligence failure on this occasion goes well beyond the failure to gather credible information from its network of informers or its digital intelligence means, but embraces the entirety of its working assumptions about Hamas' intentions and its capabilities. The failures that led to this calamity go all the way to the top of the government, including and especially Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

For months, if not years, Israeli strategists have believed that, by some limited improvement of economic conditions in the Gaza Strip, by allowing more Palestinians from Gaza to work in Israel and more commodities to enter and leave the territory, Hamas would be more interested in engaging in governing the Strip and increasing its political power, while refraining from military confrontation with a far superior power. Although nothing can excuse the killing of innocent people, it is the refusal to grasp the fact that conditions such as those created in Gaza breed extremism that is part of this conceptual failure. When this war is over - and one can only hope that targeting civilians will not have become a priority - it is inevitable that an official inquiry will be established to investigate these operational failures and who was responsible for them. In the meantime, while Israel is in mourning and burying its dead, it has also

embarked on a prolonged and massive retaliation.

Since its deadly and unsuccessful 2014 operation in Gaza, Israel has avoided sending in ground troops to the territory, but it has now mobilized much of its reserve force and is ready to enter the Strip. From trying to find an uneasy coexistence with Hamas, Israel is now seeking a military solution for what has happened in Gaza, which might prove to be equally counterproductive. The level of anger in Israel at the carnage and the hostage-taking is profound, and naturally directed at Hamas, but there is also anger directed at the Israeli government for failing its people on the most important issues it is in charge of - their and their families' lives and security. Despite Israelis' justified rage, any operation in Gaza should not be about vengeance and revenge - and it most definitely must avoid a humanitarian disaster for the Palestinians who live there. There is an opportunity for Israel to go to war while also having a political solution in mind; one that ends the blockade on Gaza and opens the way for a peaceful coexistence with Gaza and its people, as well as the rest of the Palestinians.

As far-fetched as it sounds right now, this is what statesmen and great strategists do - look beyond the war and plan the peace in its aftermath. One of the reasons behind Hamas' attack on Israel was its desire to derail the process of Israel normalizing its relations with other countries in the region. By launching as careful and measured a response as is possible, targeting the perpetrators of the atrocity and only them, Israel will enhance its long-term security and acceptability in the region.

Russia should know that an over-extended military can break its economy

Andrew Lilico

ONE key question about the Russo-Ukraine War is: how long can the Russian economy keep it up? After all, the intention of Western economic and financial sanctions against Russia was to cripple Russian growth and render its war machine incapable of maintaining the fight. At one level this might not seem that hard. The Russian economy isn't in the world top ten largest - on IMF figures it sits between Canada and Mexico in size, and is only just over half the size of the UK's. Indeed, sanctions did have a very marked effect.

Russian inflation spiked up in early 2022, just after the war began, from under 10 percent to around 18 percent, partly because cheap imports vanished or became difficult to obtain. Interest rates rose from under 10 percent to 20 percent in response. Russian GDP, which in 2021 had been bouncing back from Covid, then contracted rapidly through the rest of 2022. Russia's heavily-oil-dependent economy is estimated to have lost over \$100 billion as a consequence of oil sanctions.

Yet economies at war often find a way to keep going for longer than

one might think, provided that domestic citizens retain faith in their leaders - as opinion polls (perhaps surprisingly) suggest Russians continue to do. Russia has greatly raised its military spending, up from around 4 percent of GDP prior to the war to 6 percent next year. In the short term, such a large rise in spending is boosting Russian economy activity. According to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, there is rapid growth in Russia's defence-related sectors such as transport (up 66.7 percent), computers and electronics (up 42.6 percent) and navigation devices (up 72.4 percent).

Recent oil price rises have also helped the Russian economy, as despite Western restrictions on the handling of oil bought from Russia at more than \$60 per barrel, recent international prices markedly above that have increased Russia's scope to evade. The current violent attacks by Hamas on Israel may even have had, as one of their goals, a rise in oil prices - after all, Russia is a significant Hamas backer. Yet, eventually, the economic effects of sanctions and war

will be very negative for Russia. Some military spending does boost GDP.

At the most basic level, a country that has no military will suffer the predations of neighbouring country invasions, bandits, pirates and domestic insurrections without being able to respond. Additional spending can also help with protecting trade, extending cultural links, inculcating a societal sense of mission that directs innovation, and through various other mechanisms. But these effects top out, and beyond them there is a significant cost.

Academic estimates of the impacts of raised military spending suggest that economic growth can drop by nearly a tenth for every additional 1 percent rise in military spending. Russia has had a 50 percent rise. Prior to that, Russian economic growth was more than 5 percent per year. So if those academic results apply this time and the Russo-Ukraine War is sustained, we might eventually expect the Russian economy to contract by 20 to 25 percent.

Russians have recent experience of military over-extension

leading to economic collapse. The late-era Soviet Union spent around 12 to 17 per cent of GDP on its military in the 1980s, as the arms race with the US and the war in Afghanistan drained its economy, eventually to the point of collapse. Russian military spending is not yet at that level, but if the war drags on and additional mobilisation proves militarily necessary, Russia could quickly find itself in a vicious spiral of high military spending delivering a contraction in GDP, meaning that military spending rises relative to GDP and the burden becomes even heavier.

Putin came to power off the back of the Russian economic collapse of the late 1990s, when its economy contracted to be smaller than Belgium's, the Russian government defaulted on its debt and the inflation rate reached 85 percent. Putin gained a high reputation with Russians for returning the economy to growth and stability. How long the Russian people will put up with his delivering economic contraction, an inability to access Western goods, and a forever war draining the economy dry remains to be seen.

The Telegraph



Shamshad for customizing IMF program in economic contexts of partnering countries

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs Dr Shamshad Akhtar on Saturday emphasised the need for customizing the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme according to the unique economic contexts of the partnering countries.

The Minister attended a significant event on the theme of "Making the IMF supported programs work" during the annual meetings of the World Bank and IMF in Marrakech.

Based on her extensive experience in financial matters and her leadership in economic affairs, Dr. Akhtar shared her invaluable insights and perspectives for ensuring effective collaboration between governments and international financial institutions.

Finance Minister underscored commitment to address climate challenges:

Caretaker Minister for Finance, Revenue, and Economic Affairs Dr Shamshad Akhtar on Saturday underscored the commitment of Pakistan to address climate change challenges through comprehensive strategies and initiatives.

The Minister attended the seminar titled "Transforming Climate Action through Country Climate Development Reports" as part of the series of engagements during World Bank and International Monetary Fund annual meetings.

The session was also joined by representatives from Tajikistan and Malawi, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Finance. During the discussions, she also expressed firm resolve of the Finance Minister underscored the government for addressing climate change challenges through comprehensive strategies and initiatives.

The diverse panel of experts brought valuable perspectives and experiences to the table, facilitating a rich exchange of ideas and best practices for fostering international cooperation and knowledge-sharing in the global fight against climate change.

CEO BGM meets Finance Minister:

The Chief Executive Officer of Global Growth & Opportunity Division, Bill & Melinda Gates (BMG) Foundation, Mr. Mark Suzman, met the Caretaker Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar. The meeting was held on the sidelines of annual meeting of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), said a press release issued by the Ministry of Finance.

Building on previous discussions in Pakistan,

the meeting centered on Pakistan Digital Stack like next generation of Raast supported Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) which Pakistan can introduce with BMG Foundation's help.

The meeting was followed by signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan with BMGF on the Pakistan Digital Stack.

This MoU solidifies the Foundation's continued support for this digital infrastructure project, following the success of the Raast - Pakistan Instant Payment System. The National Financial Inclusion Council, chaired by the Finance Minister, will oversee the implementation of the Digital Pakistan Stack, marking a significant step toward fostering inclusive economic growth and development in Pakistan.



LAHORE: Traders displaying bananas during the auction as shopkeepers participate in the bidding at the Fruit Market.

Industrialists demand cut in policy interest rate

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of Islamabad Industrial Association (IIA) led by its President Muhammad Ahmed Waheed visited Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI).

They congratulated Faad Waheed on assuming charge as the Acting President ICCI, said a press release. Addressing the delegation, Faad Waheed, Acting President, the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the 22 percent policy interest rate is a major hurdle in promoting industrial activities.

He urged the government to bring it down to single-

digit level that would help boost industrialization, promote investment, enhance exports, create jobs, and revive the economy. He said that the industry in Pakistan is facing the highest interest rate in the whole Asia as the interest rate in Japan is -0.1%, Taiwan 1.88%, Thailand 2.5, Malaysia 3%, China 3.4 %, Vietnam 4.5%, and Indonesia & Hongkong 5.75%, Bangladesh and India 6.5%. He said that the high interest rate has made our industry uncompetitive in the international market due to which our exports are not growing up to the desired level.

He said that the best way to revive the economy is to focus on export-led growth

of the economy for which single digit interest rate is the key requirement.

Muhammad Ahmed, President, Islamabad Industrial Association said that the private sector is the engine of growth for the economy, but the bank's net lending to the private sector in Pakistan has plunged 90 percent during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year, due to which the industry has experienced negative growth in many sectors. He said that it has become almost impossible for small and medium industries to get credit from banks at such high interest rate due to which its expansion has come to a halt.

He said that the high-interest rate is a major hurdle in promoting new investment in Pakistan and urged the government to look into this serious issue to facilitate the growth of business and investment in the country. Engineer Azhar ul Islam Vice President ICCI said that many investors are keen to set up industries in the federal capital but due to the absence of a new industrial zone, they are unable to make new investments.

He also urged the government to extend full cooperation to ICCI for the establishment of a new industrial estate in the region that would provide multiple benefits for the economy.

IBA Karachi organizes a certificate ceremony for graduates of the Bar Transfer Test



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Karachi, celebrated the successful conclusion of the Bar Transfer Test tutorial sessions. The event was attended by esteemed guests, including the Mayor of Karachi, Barrister Murtaza Wahab; Sindh's Caretaker Law Minister, Barrister M. Omer Soomro; and KMC representative for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Najini Alam. The ceremony was held at the City Campus.

The event served as an appreciation for the program participants' hard

work and marked an important milestone in their legal careers; bringing together legal professionals, faculty members and distinguished guests to acknowledge their accomplishments. The event was also attended by prominent individuals who shared their insights and encouraged the growth of legal education in Pakistan.

Executive Director IBA, Dr. S Akbar Zaidi, underscored the need for more law-related programs to be offered at the IBA, recognizing the demand for quality legal education. He commended the exceptional work of the IBA Legal

Skills Forum, under the capable leadership of Sohaib Saleem, Director, Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC). IBA, Mr. Mohammad Abdullah, Lawyer and Administrator, Legal Skills Forum (LSF), IBA; and Mr. Furqan Siddiqi, Lawyer and Academic Head, LSF, IBA; alongside the consistent support provided by the Center for Executive Education (CEE).

Mr. Kamran Bilgrami, Director CEE, delivered an inspiring address, emphasizing the importance of the

Bar Transfer Test program and its potential to expand across Pakistan. He commended the dedication of the participants and encouraged them to continue their pursuit of legal excellence.

Mr. Wahab and Mr. Soomro assured their continued government support for the capacity building of lawyers in Pakistan. Their presence at the ceremony conveyed the government's commitment to legal education and professional development.

The highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of certificates to the dedicated Bar Transfer Test participants. These certificates serve as a testament to their dedication and commitment to the legal profession. The participants had the opportunity to network with the distinguished guests, gaining valuable insights into the legal landscape in Pakistan and discovering new avenues to explore in their legal careers. The ceremony reinforced the commitment of both the government and educational institutions towards elevating legal education in Pakistan.

Pakistan streamlining its banking channels to attract remittances from Gulf

DUBAI (PPI): The flow of remittances from the Pakistani community in Dubai could increase manifold through banking channels with the support of financial institutions, the dedicated government scheme, and community developers. Innovative service, incentives, and community building could encourage Pakistani workers in the UAE and Gulf region to utilize banking channels to support their country's economy in challenging times.

These were the views of speakers at the daylong conference "Remitlink23: Resilient Remittances" organized by Dellsons Associate in collaboration with the Embassy of Pakistan in UAE and Foreign Exchange and Remittance Group (FERG), according to a statement released on Saturday.

The event was sponsored by Dubai Islamic Bank, JazzCash, and Instant Cash. Speaking as the chief guest, Faisal Niaz Tirmzi, Ambassador to Pakistan for UAE, said the UAE is the second largest host country in the world with over 1.6 million Pakistanis

nationals, and the number of Pakistani professionals coming to different states of this country is on the rise in recent months. Pakistani professionals and workers in different states of the United Arab Emirates are resourceful, hardworking, and patriotic, having a deep sense of responsibility to serve their homeland through their valuable contribution, including sending remittances through banking channels, he said and added. The government recently took various initiatives to enhance flow of remittances which are expected to increase the use of banking channels among overseas Pakistanis.

Salman Hasan Khan, Head of Priority Banking & PRI Dubai Islamic Bank Pakistan, said the financial institutions played a crucial role in connecting overseas Pakistanis with their relatives in their homeland, but these institutions are working continuously to facilitate the Pakistani diaspora in different states of the UAE. He pointed out that Pakistanis in different countries prefer Islamic banking mode over

the interest-based system, hence, there is a need to promote Sharia-based financial options with innovative technological solutions.

Ibrahim Amin, Chairman Dellsons Associates, said this conference aims to bridge the gap between stakeholders, including Government functionaries, regulators, and service providers such as banks, exchange companies, and fintechs.

He said the remittances from the GCC region have a vital role in shoring up the macroeconomic indicators of the country, including the current account and the stability of the Rupee against foreign currency, hence, overseas Pakistanis and their contributions should be appreciated through facilitation and incentives.

The conference also hosted a panel discussion that explained to the audience the importance of utilizing banking channels for sending remittances to their country and its positive outcomes on their relative regarding stability in local currency and containing inflation.

FWCCI forms committee for minorities development

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FWCCI) has constituted a committee on "minorities development" to protect human rights of all communities. In a statement issued here on Saturday, FWCCI President Mrs. Rubina Amjad said that it was a leading chamber in the country which formed a full-fledged committee on 'minorities development' and it was working with minorities particularly with the Christian community for human rights and women empowerment.

She said that recently FWCCI Chairperson on CSR Ms. Kanwal Saeed had visited Jaranwala and provided material support to Christian people there. "Similarly, we are also working for minorities' development at the platform of FWCCI," she added. She said that despite difficulties and low rates of female participation in business ownership in Pakistan, it was a fact that there was a positive correlation between female participation in business ownership and economic growth.

Colombo reaches debt deal with China

COLOMBO (BBC): Sri Lanka has confirmed that it has reached a deal with China, to restructure \$4.2bn (£3.4bn) of debt.

It has been trying to reach similar deals with a number of creditors to unlock the next tranche of a bailout. Sri Lanka defaulted on its foreign debt in May 2022 amid its worst financial crisis in decades. Soaring prices and shortages of essential goods sparked nationwide protests last year. Is the worst over for Sri Lanka's economic crisis?

"We thank China Exim bank (Export and Import bank) for the support in resolving our country's debt situation," Sri Lanka's Finance Ministry said in a statement. "This agreement constitutes a key milestone in Sri Lanka's ongoing efforts to foster its economic recovery." The Ministry gave no further details on the terms of the agreement. Sri Lanka has a total foreign debt of \$46.9bn, 52% of which is owed to China, its largest lender. Reaching a deal with all of its creditors will allow Sri Lanka to keep accessing funds from a \$3bn bailout programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Honesty and truthfulness in business stressed

FAISALABAD (APP): Maulana Abdul Habib Attari, Naib Ameer Dawate Islami, has said that honesty and truthfulness are imperative in the current complex business environment. Delivering a lecture on "Guiding principles for trade in the light of Quran and Sunnah" in the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that trading was not contradictory to Sharia.

"Hazarat Mohammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and all other Prophets (Peace be upon them) remained engaged in trading", he said and particularly mentioned Prophet Shoaib (Peace be upon him) who was sent for two Ummahs. "The prophet stressed them to observe fairness in weights and measures but they were eliminated from the face of earth as they refused to follow his advice."

Haji Abdul Habib said that earning profit through businesses was not prohibited but for it, we must observe honesty in our deals. Quoting a companion of the Prophet (Peace

be upon him), Attari said that the Sahabi asked the Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him), how his all prayers could be accepted by Allah Almighty (Mustajab-ul-Dua). The reply of Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him) was a one liner "keep your earning pure".

Attari further said that a true businessman would be resurrected on the day of judgement along with the honest and martyrs (Siddiqains and Suhda). He said that these examples clearly indicated the importance of weights and measures in businesses.

He said that Allah Almighty is "pak" and accepts charity from only pure earnings. "We must shun the tendency to give charity from "haram" income and consider ourselves free from the religious obligation", he added. Earlier, Senior Vice President FCCI Dr. Sajjad Arshad said that our minds and souls had been rusted as we become un-practicing Muslims by deviating from the teachings of the Holy Quran. He said, "We must

organize such religious events with regular periodicity to realign our lives according to the Islamic principles." He welcomed Maulana Abdul Habib Attari and hoped that religious scholars would continue to deliver such thought-provoking lectures in future.

He also introduced the FCCI to him and said that it had 9,000 members who hail from 118 sectors and subsectors. He said, "Muslims are being humiliated all over the world as we have deviated from the teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah."

He said that as a nation we must pledge to bring a qualitative improvement in our society. Former President FCCI Rana Sikandar Attari introduced Maulana Abdul Habib Attari and said that he was also a businessman. Vice President Haji Muhammad Aslam Bhalli, former President Chaudhary Muhammad Nawaz, executive member Maqsood Akhtar Butt, Haji Abdul Rauf and Rana Ikramullah were also present during the religious lecture.



HYDERABAD: Women workers busy in packing tomatoes in wooden boxes at vegetables market.



In brief

Ali Zafar releases new anthem

LAHORE (APP): Pakistani singer Ali Zafar created more excitement among cricket fans by releasing a World Cup anthem a few minutes before the match between Pakistan and India in the ICC Cricket World Cup at Ahmadabad. India won the toss and invited Pakistan to bat first in the ongoing cricket battle between Pakistan and India at Ahmedabad, India. While cricket fans were waiting for the match to start, Pakistani singer Ali Zafar drew everyone's attention by releasing the new anthem of the World Cup 2023. Ali Zafar has uploaded the new World Cup anthem 'Maza Aya' on his YouTube channel, which gained thousands of views in a few minutes, while the rate is increasing rapidly. Ali Zafar himself is the director, composer and producer of this two minute and 55 second video. Ahead of the song's release, Ali Zafar said, "I wish I had more time, but for the love of cricket fans and my fans, here it is again." It should be noted that Ali Zafar composed and performed for the first PSL anthem 'Ab Khel Ke Dikha' for the inaugural season in 2016, while for the second season of PSL in 2017, Ali Zafar once again sang 'Ab Khel Ke Dikha'. There is another anthem to Ali Zafar's credit, titled "Ab Khel Jame Gaa." Not only this, the singer won the hearts of fans by composing "Dil Se Jaan Laga De" for the 2018 season.

Zarobi Football League begins

SWABI (APP): Zarubi Football League was inaugurated by Additional Deputy Commissioner Swabi with a total of eight franchises participating in this league. Additional Deputy Commissioner Swabi said that our aim is to attract the youth towards sports so that they can avoid crime and drugs by participating in positive activities. He said this is the time that we could compete with the world in the field of education and sports and it is only possible that we should provide due facilities to our youth. He also appreciated the organizer for holding the League and involved the local talented players in eight different teams. ADC also assured that all facilities would be given to the organizing committee so that to hold the League in befitting manners.

Argentina's women smash record score

BUENOS AIRES (A g e n c i e s) : Argentina's women compiled a T20 International record score of 427 as they thrashed an inexperienced Chile side in Buenos Aires on Friday. The total - the highest in women's and men's T20Is - eclipsed the 318-1 made by Bahrain's women against Saudi Arabia in March 2022. Lucia Taylor hit 169 off 84 balls for Argentina as she made the highest individual score in women's T20Is. Chile, who fielded seven debutants, were bowled out for 63 in reply. The 364-run margin of defeat in the match played at the Maurice Runnacles Oval in the St Albans Club, was the heaviest in both women's and men's cricket. Taylor, whose previous top score in T20Is was 29, hit 27 fours as she shared a first-wicket stand of 350 with Albertina Galan (145 not out) - also a record for any partnership in both men's and women's T20Is.



AHMEDABAD: The Narendra Modi stadium was heavily populated during the game, Pakistan vs India, men's World Cup 2023.

NZ skipper Williamson suffers thumb fracture

CHENNAI (Agencies): New Zealand captain Kane Williamson suffered a fractured thumb in Friday's World Cup win against Bangladesh, but could return before the end of the group stage next month.

Williamson scored 78 before retiring hurt after he was hit by a throw as he ran through for a quick single.

It was his first game back after a seven-month lay-off with a knee injury.

Coach Gary Stead said Williamson will be given "every opportunity" to prove his fitness.

"Firstly, we're all feeling for Kane to have this occur after all his hard work to return from his knee injury," Stead said.

"While it's disappointing news, the initial diagnosis has given us some optimism he can still feature

later in the pool play following a period of rest and rehabilitation.

"Kane is clearly a massive part of our side and a world-class player and captain - so we'll look to give him every opportunity we can to return in the tournament."

New Zealand's final game of the group stage is against Sri Lanka on 9 November. The semi-finals are scheduled for 15 and 16 November before the final on 19 November.

Batter Tom Blundell will travel to India as cover but will not officially be part of the squad, while Williamson recovers.

Williamson, 33, was a doubt for the tournament after rupturing his anterior cruciate ligament in the first game of the Indian Premier League in March, but recovered in time for

New Zealand's third group stage match against Bangladesh in Chennai.

After passing his half-century, he looked in control before he was struck on the hand by a shy at the stumps. He tried to continue but, when the pain persisted and with the game all but won, he retired hurt and an X-ray subsequently confirmed a fracture.

New Zealand are still without seamer Tim Southee because of a thumb injury suffered during a one-day international against England on 19 September that required surgery.

Before Saturday's India-Pakistan match, the Kiwis were top of the World Cup table after three wins from their three group matches so far. Their next match is against Afghanistan in Chennai on Wednesday.

Rublev downs Dimitrov to set up Shanghai final with Hurkacz

SHANGHAI (Agencies): Andrey Rublev beat Grigor Dimitrov 7-6 (9/7), 6-3 in a gripping Shanghai Masters semi-final on Saturday and will play big-serving Pole Hubert Hurkacz for the title.

Russia's Rublev is yet to drop a set in Shanghai as he closes on his second Masters 1000 crown of the year, having triumphed at Monte Carlo in April.

In the first semi-final, the 16th-seeded Hurkacz blasted his way past Sebastian Korda of the United States 6-3, 6-4.

Rublev, the highest-ranked player left in the tournament at seven in the world, cut an angry figure at times and was especially irked by a drone flying overhead early on.

The 25-year-old composed himself to get out of a hole at 0-40 in the first set to eventually hold serve for 3-3 in a game lasting 10 minutes. Rublev then pounced at the first glimpse of an opportunity to break Bulgaria's Dimitrov for 6-5, only to be broken back immediately by the 18th seed as he served for the set.

The duo exchanged more thunderous groundstrokes in the tie break and both squandered a set point before Rublev sealed the set in 76 minutes when Dimitrov fired a forehand wide.

The 32-year-old Dimitrov is playing some of the best tennis of his career and broke at the start of the second set, with Rublev reacting by whacking the net three times with his racquet. But Rublev, who has won 14 titles, got the break back for 2-2 and then repeated the trick to race to victory as Dimitrov quickly ran out of steam.

Earlier, Hurkacz sent down 14 aces as he barreled into the final. The 26th seed Korda, who was contesting his first Masters semi-final, was always up against it in the face of a barrage. The 26-year-old Pole did not face a single break point on his powerful serve and wrapped up the last-four encounter on his second match point after 77 minutes. "Seb is a really tough opponent and great returner so you need to play well against him otherwise he ends up taking advantage of your shots," said.

Ronaldo double seals Euro 2024 qualification

PORTO (AFP): Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice as Portugal edged a 3-2 thriller against Slovakia in Porto on Friday to book their place at Euro 2024.

Ronaldo scored a first-half penalty and a second half tap-in as the Portuguese made it seven wins from seven matches in Group J. They have 21 points which ensures them a top two finish.

"Cristiano Ronaldo is having a great time, playing a lot of minutes and scoring a lot of goals for his club," said Portugal coach Roberto Martinez.

"He has a lot of experience with the national team and he's a reference point for young players."

Slovakia are eight points back in second, two ahead of Luxembourg who they play on Monday. Portugal got off to a flying start

when Ramos rose highest to meet Bruno Fernandes' cross in the eighth minute, heading the ball down and past Martin Dubravka in the Slovakia goal.

It marked a seventh goal in just nine matches for Ramos and a sixth assist of the campaign for Fernandes who almost doubled the score in the 26th minute only to be denied by a brilliant one-handed save by Dubravka. Three minutes later Denis Vavro was adjudged to have handled the ball, a decision confirmed by VAR.

Ronaldo stepped up to slot home his 124th goal for Portugal in the venue where he scored his first international goal, against Greece in the opening game of Euro 2004. Slovakia came back into the game in the 69th minute when David Hancko's shot from outside the area deflect-

ed off Antonio Silva's heel and into the bottom corner - the first goal Portugal had conceded in qualifying. Three minutes later, Ronaldo restored the two-goal advantage tapping in another lovely cross from Fernandes for goal number 125.

Ten minutes from time, however, the game was back on as Stanislav Lobotka let fly from outside the area and buried the ball in the top corner.

Portugal should have sealed it late on but Diogo Jota was denied by the outstanding Dubravka but the hosts had done enough to stamp their ticket for the Euros. "We won the match with a very good first half," said Martinez.

"The important thing was the result. In seven games we've shown a perfect attitude. I'm very satisfied, but it's only a stage."

Akhtar slams Pakistan batters for failure to 'capitalise on great pitch'

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Former Pakistan speedster and cricket critic Shoaib Akhtar on Saturday expressed disappointment over the lackluster performance by the Men in Green in the World Cup 2023 clash against India.

Pakistan were all bowled out just for a meagre 191 runs as their batting order collapsed following the wicket of skipper Babar Azam, who scored a commendable half-century in the most anticipated cricket match at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad.

Earlier, India won the toss and asked the Green Shirts to bat first, which the former pacer said was not a wise decision as the pitch is being considered a high-scoring one.

However, Akhtar's remark was soon proved wrong as the entire batting lineup trampled and Pakistan were restricted to only 191.

Reacting to the disappointing show, the former seamer said that it was a "waste of opportunity on a

great batting wicket".

He posted a video on the microblogging site, X, saying that all the Pakistani batters got a great platform to score but they failed to capitalise on it.

"Yes. So you have seen the match, what a beautiful wicket it was, what a great platform all of them got, but Pakistan couldn't capitalise. Pakistan didn't have that talent to score big and capitalise on the situation, very disheartening to see Pakistan losing on a very good track," Akhtar said in the video.

He questioned why the batters played with cross feet and bat when the ball wasn't swinging much.

For India, Akhtar commended Rohit Sharma for captaincy and utilising the bowlers.

Later, the former cricketer wrote on X that Pakistan lacked the "fire" that is required to silence such a massive crowd at the world's biggest cricket stadium.

"Sawa lakh banda akele chup kerwanay k liye fire chahiye hota hai. Yeh sirf

tab ho sakta hai jab aap k andar wo aag ho [To silence 150,000 people singlehandedly requires the fire. This is only possible when you have that fire inside you," the ex-cricket star said.

Following the dismissal of the openers Abdullah Shafique and Imam-ul-Haq, the team's innings was revived when Pakistan skipper Babar Azam and Mohammed Rizwan came to the ground.

Babar and Rizwan put on 82 runs for the third wicket to rebuild the innings. But Babar fell soon after getting to 50 in the high-voltage clash.

Pakistan reached 157-3 in 31 overs in front of a crowd dominated by Indian spectators after delays in visas for Pakistan fans.

Later, Rizwan was also sent packing, and it went downhill from there as none of the players — except Hasan Ali — scored in double digits.

The Green Shirts could only set a target of 192 against India, and the Men In Blue are expected to chase it with ease.

Jonathan Trott, Afghanistan coach ready for friends reunited

MUMBAI (AFP/APP):

Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott will try to plot the downfall of England when his current side meets his former team in a World Cup match in New Delhi on Sunday.

And yet it was only because of the illness of another fellow former England batsman in Graham Thorpe that he found himself in charge of Afghanistan at all, taking over in July last year for a Twenty20 tour of Ireland ahead of the T20 World Cup in Australia.

The 42-year-old Trott, who played over 200 international matches, worked as a batting coach for the England team on their tour of India in 2021.

For all their undoubted talent in the T20 format, where spinner Rashid Khan is a globe-trotting star of the franchise circuit, Afghanistan have struggled in the 50-over game.

Convincing defeats by Bangladesh and India in their opening two games of this World Cup mean Afghanistan have now lost 14 successive matches in the tournament -- a run stretching back to their lone win, against Scotland, in 2015.

A lack of runs, for all Hashmatullah Shahidi and Azmatullah Omarzai scored fifes in an eight-wicket reverse against India last time out, has been at the heart of Afghanistan's ODI struggles.

In Trott they have a coach who as a batsman was renowned for his concentration and an attention to detail exemplified by his deliberate marking of

guard.

Born in Cape Town to a British father and South African mother, Trott played for South Africa youth sides from Under-15 to Under-19 level.

But he then took advantage of his British passport and his relationship with Bob Woolmer, who coached both South Africa and Warwickshire, to arrange a trial with the English county.

Having established himself at the Midlands club, Trott enjoyed a spectacular entry into Test cricket with a hundred on debut in a 2009 Ashes-deciding win against Australia at The Oval.

It was the start of a fine England career that yielded nearly 4,000 runs, including nine hundreds, in 52 Tests at an average of 44.08.

- 'Get pigeon-holed' -

Yet having been dubbed a "rock" by Andy Flower, the then England coach, Trott was forced to make an abrupt exit from the 2013/14 Ashes tour of Australia with a stress-related illness that struggled against the short ball.

Trott eventually battled back to regain his England place for a 2015 series in the West Indies.

But asked to open the batting, he reached double-figures only once in six innings and suffered three ducks, with Trott announcing his international retirement at the end of the tour before bowing out with Warwickshire in 2018.

His own, highly-publicised, difficulties made some wonder how Trott

would cope with the increased demands of being in charge of a national side.

But Trott, still to set foot in Afghanistan more than 14 months since his appointment -- the team don't play matches on home soil on security grounds, with the country having reverted to Taliban control in 2021 -- told the Guardian last week: "I enjoy the pressure of making decisions."

"I think sometimes if you're just a specialist coach, a batting coach or a bowling coach, you sort of get pigeon-holed a little bit. I think it's nice to oversee things."

That position, however, comes with added responsibility, as Trott discovered during a heart-breaking finish to Afghanistan's Asia Cup campaign last month.

Needing to overhaul a target of 292 in 37.1 overs to oust Sri Lanka on net run-rate, Afghanistan fell agonisingly short as Mujeeb Ur Rahman holed out with three needed from the first ball of the 38th over.

They could still have qualified by reaching 295 within 37.4 overs but appeared unaware of that possibility as last man Fazalhaq Farooqi blocked two deliveries before being dismissed attempting another defensive shot with six needed to go through.

"I'm gutted about it," recalled Trott. "As a head coach the responsibility stays with you."

"You're in charge, you're the guy where the buck stops. So that's hard to take."

JUNCTION OVAL: Australia celebrate their series win over West Indies, Australia vs West Indies, 3rd ODI.



In brief

IRSA releases 104,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 104,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 71,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1529.09 feet and was 131.09 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 37,700 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1214.60 feet, which was 164.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 10,100 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 52,000, 57,900, 58,400 and 20,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 9,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Installation of new led lights

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has started installation of new led lights, repair and maintenance of old street lights along the Streets, Service Roads and Main Avenues of the federal capital. "The civic body has already allocated funds in this regard which will help to ensure proper lighting arrangement on these roads and streets," a CDA official told APP. He said the shortage of street lights in different sectors of the federal capital caused a recent increase in street crimes, prompting residents to raise the issue with the relevant authorities. He said the CDA was also taking concrete steps for ensuring the provision of urban facilities to the city dwellers and maintenance of infrastructure including the installation of street lights, road carpeting and resolving water-related issues, neglected in the past. "Special attention is being given to the completion of the remaining development works in the sectors I, G, H and D series, provision of civic facilities, and facilitating the home builders in these sectors in pursuance of the directives of Chairman CDA Capt (R) Anwar ul Haq," he said. Now, he said the work of installation of streetlights in the main roads and within the sectors to ensure proper lighting management in Sectors, G-7, G-8, G-9, G-10 I-11, I-10, I-14 and Sector I-16, D-12 and other sectors was in full swing, he added.

Two RO plants inaugurated

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatta has inaugurated two reverse osmosis (RO) plants, near Qari Khushi Muhammad Park and Education Complex on Murree Road to provide clean drinking water to the citizens. According to an RDA spokesman, the project has been completed in collaboration with Saylani Welfare International Trust. He informed that the trust had signed a MoU with RDA to install RO plants at various places in the town. The Commissioner appreciating the work of RDA and Saylani Welfare International Trust said that efforts were being made to provide clean drinking water to the citizens. Speaking on the occasion, Director General, RDA Mohammad Saif Anwar Jappa said that the RO plants project had been completed for the welfare of citizens.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Jawad Sohrab Malik in a meeting with Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to partake in the emerging manpower opportunities for the Saudi Vision 2030.

SAPM urges Saudi Arabia for intake of over 1 mln Pakistanis annually for Saudi Vision 2030

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) Jawad Sohrab Malik held a meeting with His Excellency, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) here to partake in the emerging manpower opportunities for the Saudi Vision 2030.

Malik requested the KSA to employ a significant number of workforce from Pakistan for the completion of the Saudi Vision 2030, said a press release here Saturday.

"Currently, about 5 million Pakistanis proceed to Saudi Arabia annually. There is a real prospect of this figure rising to over 1 million," he con-

tinued. According to him, this mix of skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled manpower from Pakistan has enabled Saudi Arabia to meet its diverse workforce needs effectively.

SAPM underlined Pakistan's capacity to provide over 1 million persons having varied skills to be employed under the job opportunities created by Saudi Vision 2030, according to which the Saudi economy is diversifying and embracing further areas. He apprised the Saudis of how our government is building a skilled Labour Force Pool in order to tap the huge potential of our bulging youth in areas of digitization, services, and tourism.

The Saudi Ambassador expressed support for the proposal forwarded by

Jawad Sohrab Malik on enhancing the share of Pakistan's manpower resources. Appreciating the dynamic and visionary leadership of the Kingdom, Jawad Sohrab Malik expressed his gratitude to His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince, Muhammad Bin Salman for extending his consistent and resolute support for Pakistan on various economic, strategic and bilateral issues.

Both sides agreed to launch further deliberations on the prospects of new employment opportunities for Pakistanis in KSA through a forthcoming meeting of SAPM on OP&HRD, Jawad Sohrab Malik, scheduled to be held in Saudi Arabia with the Labour Minister and other high-ranking officials of the Kingdom.

Thunderstorm with hail lash parts of country, turn weather cold

ISLAMABAD (APP): The first westerly of the autumn season brought scattered thunderstorms with hail in various parts of northern parts of the country including capital city on Saturday which brought the mercury considerably down forcing people to remain indoors and take out their cozy clothe stuffs to prevent themselves from seasonal diseases. As per details, the rain and hailstorm have rung the bells of winters in the country, said a report aired by a private news channel.

The weather system started affecting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan late on Friday which later spread to Kashmir and upper Punjab as the Met Office has predicted that the system will remain over the region till Oct 17 (Tuesday). Khyber, Peshawar and the surrounding areas were the first to receive thunderstorm and hailstorm followed by Swat, Abbottabad, Mansehra and other parts in the north of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well as North Waziristan, Kohat and Karak in the south of the province. The twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Mangla, Mandi Bahauddin, Attock, Sialkot and Narowal too were hit by scattered thunderstorm with isolated fall of hail on Saturday.

World Bank loan for flood relief not in jeopardy: Ministry

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives on Saturday asserted that the World Bank loan amounting to \$400 million for flood relief in Pakistan is not in jeopardy and that pledges made by donors exceed the requirement.

In a statement issued Saturday, the Planning Ministry clarified that as per the financing agreement agreed in the 4RF (Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Framework), the external financing required is US\$8.15 billion for three years.

The Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives (PDSI) of Pakistan has issued a statement informing the public that the World Bank loan amounting to US\$400 million for flood relief is not in jeopardy and that pledges made by donors exceed the requirement.

Against that requirement, Pakistan has successfully obtained pledges worth \$10.9 billion, which is US\$2.70 billion in excess of the requirement, the statement added.

The ministry further stated that it has so far approved 13 projects from CDWP/ECNEC worth \$3 billion, which is way ahead of the yearly target. Moreover, project identification against committed projects commitments by the donors is complete. "The PDSI is committed to the timely and effective implementation of the 4RF to ensure that the flood-affected people are rehabilitated and reconstructed as early as possible," read the statement.

The ministry claimed it has also established a robust mechanism for the implementation and monitoring of the 4RF. In addition to this, a dashboard has also been prepared for the flood-related projects in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) that will be functional by the end of this month and will provide real-time information on the progress and implementation of the projects. "It will ensure transparency by making physical and financial progress accessible to all stakeholders," said the planning ministry.

ANF recovers 107 kg drugs in eight operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country managed to recover over 107 kg drugs and arrested seven accused including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Saturday. He informed that in an operation near Sohawa, ANF recovered 26.4 kg hashish and 12 kg opium from a vehicle. Two accused residents of Taxila were arrested during the operation.

In another operation in Kahana Lahore area, six kg charras was recovered from the possession of an accused, resident of Okara. In third operation, 4.8 kg hashish was recovered from a local resident arrested from Hayatabad Peshawar area.

The spokesman informed that in fourth operation, 6 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle intercepted on Ring Road Peshawar. An accused resident of Charsadda was rounded up during the operation. In two different operations, 18 kg hashish concealed for smuggling was recovered in Khyber. In seventh operation, 5 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of two accused including a woman resident of Karachi netted at Super Highway Jamshoro bus stop. He informed that in eighth operation, 29 kg hashish concealed in Miami forest near National Highway Hyderabad was recovered. Separate cases have been registered against the accused under the Anti-Narcotics Act while further investigations are under process.

Search operation conducted at Khanna police station jurisdiction

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Islamabad Capital Police, Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) conducted a search and

combining operation at Khanna police station jurisdiction, a public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the search and combining opera-

tions are being conducted in different areas of the city, to ensure the safety and security of the Islamabad citizens. Following these directives, a search and combining operation was conducted in different areas of Khanna police stations jurisdiction by CTD, FC and local police team under the supervision of SP CTD.

During the search and combining operation, 03 pistols, 2 KG heroin and 120 liters liquor were recovered, while 12 suspicious individuals and 05 motorcycles were shifted to the police station for verification purposes.

ICCP Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan said that the purpose of the search and combining operations was to heighten the security in the Federal Capital.

Halwa Puri breakfast, a weekend tradition loved by all ages in twin cities

ISLAMABAD (APP): The delectable combination of Halwa Puri, Channay and Achar has emerged as the ultimate breakfast indulgence for people of all ages, even those who are conscious of their diets.

Every weekend, a number of families in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi flock to their favorite restaurants to savor this mouthwatering meal. The tradition of enjoying Halwa Puri breakfast with Channay and Achar has deep roots in the culinary culture of Pakistan. It is a meal that embodies the essence of indulgence and comfort, making it the perfect choice for a leisurely weekend morning. The twin cities boast several renowned restaurants and eateries that specialize in serving this iconic breakfast. Places like 'Chaaye Khana' in Islamabad and Rawalpindi have gained a reputation for their exceptional Halwa Puri breakfast.

In an exclusive talk with APP, Franchise and Marketing Director of Chaaye Khana, a famous chain of foods spanning across the country and abroad, Mujtaba Ali said Halwa Puri breakfast with Channay and

Achar has become an integral part of the weekend routine for residents of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

He said it is a celebration of flavor, tradition and togetherness that transcends age and dietary preferences. As the weekend approaches, anticipation builds, ensuring that this beloved breakfast will continue to be a cherished tradition in the hearts and taste buds of the people in these twin cities, he maintained.

Mujtaba Ali said on any given weekend morning, the restaurants witness a bustling atmosphere as families from all walks of life gather to enjoy this beloved meal together. The aroma of freshly fried Puris and the sound of sizzling Channay waft through the air, creating an irresistible allure, he added.

Either you are a child, an adult, or a senior citizen, this breakfast spread has a universal appeal. That is the reason, the foreign dignitaries are also witnessed at their favorite restaurants to take taste of this local cuisine particularly on weekends.

Exchanging his views with this premier news agency, a Saudi nation-

al Dr. Naif Al-Otaibi who serves as Press Attaché at Kingdom's Embassy in Islamabad, said he even diligently watches his diet throughout the week, but finds it hard to resist the temptation of Halwa Puri with Channay and Achar on weekends. He said the rich and flavorful Halwa, accompanied by fluffy and crispy Puri, complements the savory and spicy Channay, creating a symphony of tastes that transcends calorie counting.

Dr. Al-Otaibi said the Halwa Puri breakfast tradition goes beyond the food itself; it's about community bonding as families and friends come together over shared plates, exchanging stories and laughter, making the experience not just about eating but also about building connections.

It is worth mentioning here that the combination of Halwa Puri, Channay, and Achar provides a perfect balance of sweet and savory flavors. The Halwa, made from semolina, ghee, and sugar, adds a touch of sweetness, while the Channay, seasoned with spices, offers a satisfying savory element. Achar, with its tangy and spicy kick, ties everything together.



ISLAMABAD: Country Representative of UN for Rights of women in Pakistan in a group photograph with ministers and chief secretary of GB after a meeting regarding GB Commission on Status of Women at GB House.

‘Protection, promotion of human rights cornerstone of Pakistan’s domestic policy’

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The protection and promotion of human rights is a cornerstone of Pakistan's domestic policy.

In an Interactive Dialogue with the working group focused on human rights and transnational corporations as well as other business enterprises of the United Nations, Third Secretary Hadeeqa Qureshi highlighted Pakistan's ongoing commitment to advance environmental protection and climate change adaptation.

She said that Pakistan is actively directing its efforts towards increased investments in renewable energy projects. She said we are also working on various aspects of responsible business conduct, including due diligence practices, labor rights, child labor prevention,

equitable wages, according to a Radio Pakistan's report.

The Third Secretary said Pakistan has ratified several key international human rights instruments, which have been transposed into a wide range of Federal and Provincial laws and policies. Pakistan successfully launched a comprehensive and targeted National Action Plan (NAP) in 2021, on Business and Human Rights (BHR), manifesting Pakistan's commitment towards overcoming the challenges, and fulfilling its international and domestic obligations relating to the protection of human rights.

Hadeeqa Qureshi apprised the gathering that some of the achievements in line with implementation of NAP include;

National Clean Air Policy 2023, passing of a resolution on equipping of industrial areas with solar parks, solarization of 200,000 houses, and solarization of 700 reverse osmosis plants. Additionally, Pakistan has committed to invest Rs30 Billion in the solarization of 50,000 tube wells across the country in its Budget 2023. She informed the meeting that Pakistan has been making consistent efforts to invest more in renewable energy projects to promote environment protection agenda and make progress in climate change adaptation.

At the same time, it has also been making persistent efforts in regard to due diligence practices, labour rights, child labor, fair wages practices, community involvement and consultation practices.

Drugs processing factory destroyed

TIRINKOT (Pajhwok): A drug processing factory has been discovered and destroyed in the Dehrawood district of central Uruzgan province, police official said on Saturday. Police spokesman Bilal Uruzgani told Pajhwok Afghan News police destroyed a drug processing factory during a special operation in the Zartali area of the district on Friday. He said 300 kilograms of ephedra plant, 100 litres of diesel, acid, gypsum and other materials used in the production of narcotics were seized in this factory.

Flour, cooking oil & fuel prices down

KABUL (Pajhwok): The prices of Kazakhstani flour, cooking oil and fuel decreased, while gold rate surged during the outgoing week in Kabul, market sources said on Saturday. A worker at the Ahmadyar Group of Pump Stations said the price of one litre of petrol decreased from 78afs to 74afs and diesel from 74afs to 71afs. Mohammad Sharif, a liquefied gas seller in Kalola Pushta locality, said the price of one kilogram of the commodity cost 60afs.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

Kabul rejects Putin’s remarks about threat posed by Afghanistan



The Islamic Emirate rejected the recent remarks made by the Russian President Vladimir Putin on threats coming from Afghanistan, saying they are baseless. The Islamic Emirate's spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, said that Afghanistan's territory is secure and that no terrorist organization is present here to pose a threat to other nations. "According to us, the statements made by the President of Russia may be

based on incorrect information because Afghanistan has not been a threat to any country during the past two years," Mujahid said. On Friday, the president of Russia at the meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Bishkek, expressed his concerns regarding the situation in Afghanistan. Vladimir Putin at the CIS summit said: "I think it is justified to support Tajikistan's concerns related to the threats emanating from the territory of

Afghanistan. The situation in this country continues to be complex and there are enough threats." Meanwhile, some political experts believe that the current government should reduce the presence and activities of terrorist groups to zero in order to solve the concerns of the countries in the region and the world. "It is needed that each ruler should be accountable to its people, the countries of the region and the world, because no government can

work alone," said Omar Nuhzat, a political analyst. "He uses this to find friends for himself and at the same time put pressure on the Islamic Emirate by showing the issue of Afghanistan to the regional level and for lobbying," said Hadi Zazi, another political analyst. Tajikistan has expressed concern about the presence of terrorist groups in the country several times, but the Islamic Emirate has always called these concerns baseless.

Islamic Emirate again declares support for Palestinian people

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate once again declared its support for the Palestinian people. In a statement, the Islamic Emirate said that Israel's attacks, cutting off water and preventing the entry of food and medicine into Gaza are a great human "horror." The Islamic Emirate asked the international community, especially the Islamic countries and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to address the Palestinian issue as soon as possible and prevent Israel's "barbaric" attacks on Gaza. "The Islamic Emirate strongly condemns this great human crime. The Islamic Emirate declares its sympathy and support for the oppressed people of Palestine and asks the rest of the Islamic world to support the people of Palestine," the statement reads. The conflict between Israel and Palestine entered its eighth day in Saturday. More than 1,900 people have been killed and more than 7,600 have been injured in Gaza as a result of these conflicts, according to the official numbers provided by the health authorities of Gaza. "This is a genocide, not a war, it's genocide. And it's an attempt to displace the



people of the Gaza Strip, but this will not happen," said a resident of Gaza, Mohammad Sadeq. The United Nations, the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Arab League, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Egypt and several other countries have called for an end to this war. Israeli authorities have reportedly said that 1,300 people have killed and 3,400 have been injured as a result of Hamas attacks

on Israeli cities. They added that Hamas forces have taken 120 Israeli civilians hostage. "We are striking at our enemies with unprecedented might. I emphasise: This is just the beginning. Our enemies have only begun paying the price. And I won't detail what is yet to come. But I tell you that this is only the beginning," said Benjamin Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel. Meanwhile, António Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN, wrote on social media that

"Moving more than one million people across a densely populated warzone to a place with no food, water, or accommodation, when the entire territory of Gaza is under siege, is extremely dangerous – and in some cases, simply not possible." This comes as once again hundreds of citizens of Pakistan, Iran, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, America, France, Bangladesh, Japan, South Korea and several other countries marched and called for an end to the Israeli airstrikes on Gaza.

Families in Baghlan urge Islamic Emirate to ensure security

BAGHLAN (TOLONews): Baghlan province residents who lost loved ones in the attack on Friday at the Imam Zaman Mosque in Pul Khumri urged the security agencies to stop similar events from happening again. Sayed Abbas, who lost two family members in this attack, claimed that his cousin, who passed away in the attack, had recently gotten engaged. "He graduated from the Faculty of Economics. He was not working in the government and he was the breadwinner of his family," he told TOLONews. Some of the injured in this bloody event have different and bitter stories about the suicide attack. "There were 250 to 300 people there when the explosion occurred and we fell on the ground," Sayed Sarwar, an injured person, said. Some religious clerics consider attacking civilians to be against Islamic teachings. Clerics and residents



of Baghlan asked the Islamic Emirate to prevent such events from happening. "We ask the Islamic Emirate to ensure the security of people's life, property, honor and dignity. The Islamic Emirate must ensure the security of people's parties and mosques,"

said Mohammad Yasin Mahdiyar, a religious cleric. According to Shir Ahmad Burhani, spokesman for the Baghlan Security Command, seven people were killed and fifteen injured in this event. Burhani also addressed the ongoing investigations over

this incident. "Regarding the safety and security of our citizens, we pledge that it will not happen again," Burhani said. The Daesh group took responsibility for Friday's suicide attack at the Imam Zaman Mosque in Pol-e-Khomri city.

Government urged to explore more pine nuts export markets

KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): Pine nuts businessmen in southeastern Khost province have demanded other market venues besides china to prevent smuggle of the dry fruit to Pakistan and benefit people associated with this business. They said every year hundreds tonnes of pine nuts smuggled to Pakistan and they sold them in the international market under their own label due to which Afghan businessmen suffer million afs in losses annually. According to the businessmen last year some pine nuts exported to China through the air corridor which is so far not sold. According to the available information Khost and Loya Paktia pine nuts yield was down by half this year comparing to the past year. The reason behind reduced yield was hail and other natural disasters. Afsar Ali Khan, one of the pine nuts businessmen, said he purchased pine nuts cones worth 30 million afs and said if pine nuts market in China remained cold he will suffer loss. He said last year some pine nuts exported to China which are still unsold. "Our first demand is that pine nuts should be sold on afghani currency here, pine nuts are sent to Pakistan from where the product is exported under Pakistan label, and there is need for market exploration so that pine nuts are exported

Afghanistan," he said. Another pine nuts businessman Mirza Ali told Pajhwok Afghan News they did not want to send their pine nuts to Pakistan because they had to sell it at half rate. He asked Afghan authorities to explore more market venues for pine nuts besides China. "Pakistan want to purchase pine nuts at low rate, we want permanent route to export pine nuts to China," he said. According to some statistics, around 15,000 tonnes of pine nuts are harvested from jungles in Paktia and Paktika provinces. The rate of 52 kilograms of pine nuts is accounted for 100,000 afs.

Hundreds of vulnerable women and children are buys separate pine nuts seeds from its cones in front of the Administrative complex in southeastern Khost province. They take the empty cones as wages for themselves at the end of the day. Alam Khan, 55, is one of the workers who separate pine nuts from cones and work until 5:00 am in the evening. He said: "I leave home at 6:30 in the morning. I arrive here at 7:00. I fill a sack with cones until the afternoon. I just do this. I will go back home in the afternoon." Nawab Ameerzai, head of the Khost Chamber of Commerce and

Industry, said Afghanistan exported other products besides pine nuts and said reliance should not be made only on Chinese market. He said in order to address this issue the acting government should negotiate with other countries of the International Trade Organization to strengthen economic ties. He said: "Only Chinese market is not sufficient, we have a lot of export and it should be exported other member state of the WTO which Afghanistan also a member, we want the government to interact and this interaction should be not only political but also economical."



IFRC calls for “immediate Int’ support” to Afghans



KABUL (TOLONews): The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) said that it "urgently reiterates" its call for immediate action and international support as Afghanistan is facing an escalating humanitarian crisis following a devastating series of earthquakes in the western provinces. The IFRC in a statement stressed that an existing appeal for 120 million

Swiss Francs remains critically underfunded, with only 36 percent raised. Two deadly earthquakes shocked the western province of Herat on October 7 and 11, the first caused over 2,400 deaths and injuries to over 2,000 people. Around 140 people were wounded in the second earthquake that happened on October 11. The US special envoy for Afghanistan, Thomas

West, said on X that Washington is providing "\$12 million in immediate humanitarian assistance following the earthquakes that struck northwestern Afghanistan October 7 and 11." "Assistance will provide much-needed supplies: safe drinking water; emergency shelter kits; materials to cook & collect water; blankets," he said. Beijing has also announced emergency humanitarian assistance of

30 million yuan (\$4.11 million) to the victims of earthquakes, Chinese media reported, quoting Xu Wei, a spokesperson for the China International Development Cooperation Agency. Mir Shikib Mir, an economist, said: "The people of Afghanistan, particularly the vulnerable people in Herat, need the international assistance. The aid now has a vital importance to the people of Afghanistan." Speaking at a press conference, Stéphane Dujarric said that the response to the people affected by the earthquake continues and the "international colleagues are working with local partners to support impacted communities." "The International Organization for Migration distributed humanitarian aid to 930 families in the affected area and in sites in Herat city hosting families who have been displaced by the disaster," he said. "This includes shelter assistance to more than 700 families whose homes were completely destroyed by the earthquakes." The World Bank also said that assistance to the people affected in the Herat earthquake is its priority.

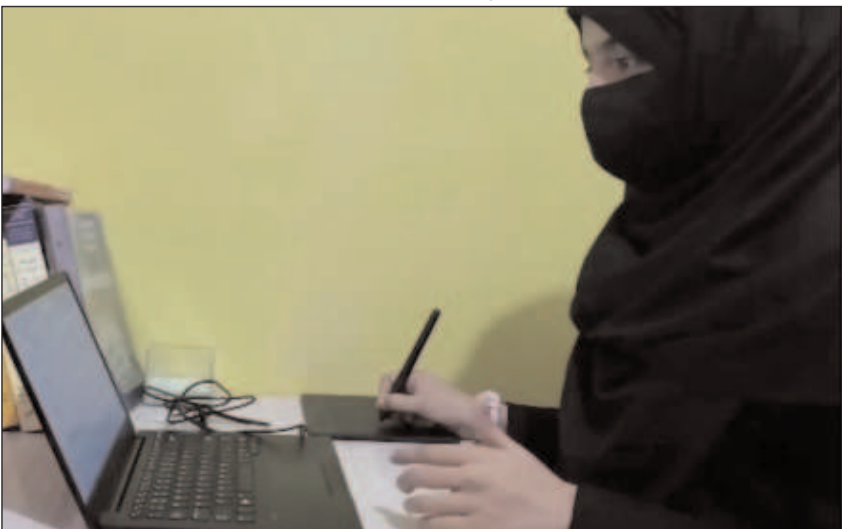
Online learning provided for girls in Kandahar

K A N D A H A R (TOLONews): A teacher in Kandahar province is providing online education for girls deprived of education. Nabia Modasser was a teacher in one of the girls' schools in Kandahar. After the imposed restrictions on the education of

girls above the sixth grade, she has been forced to stay at home, but now she provides physics, chemistry, and computer education for deprived girls students. "After the school gates were closed, my students asked me to organize

teaching for them online. They were very happy to continue their studies," said Nabia Modasser. Modasser has asked other teachers to use the facilities to provide various education for students who are deprived of education.

"I want other Afghan sisters to come and teach online the topics they specialize in," said Nabia Modasser. Meanwhile, girls who are deprived of education want the Islamic Emirate to reopen the gates of schools and universities for girls in Afghanistan. "We want the government to open schools so that girls can study and build a future for themselves and have a duty," said Sonya, a student. "We face many problems, those who are deprived of education, now can't do anything," said Samya, a student. While more than 750 days having passed since the closing of schools for girls above the sixth grade, the Islamic Emirate has always emphasized that they provide the ground for girls to go to school and universities based on Sharia.





CHARSADDA: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan leading an awareness walk on World Sight Day.

Reforms to enhance taxes share in Pak's economy: WB

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The World Bank has said tax reforms could enhance taxes share in Pakistan's economy by two percent, according to a report on Saturday. Imposition of tax on the agriculture income could increase taxes share in the economy by one percent, according to a WB report. In Pakistan 114 million people are employed, while only 8 mln are registered as income taxpayers, the bank stated.

"Direct taxes have only 33 percent share in the country's tax revenues as indirect taxes have major share in taxation revenues," World Bank report said. The bank's report pointed out that the real estate sector enjoys more investment owing to lesser rate of taxation in the sector. There is lesser value of investment in production sector owing to investment in real estate, according to the lender.

Taxation rate on land has been less in Pakistan, "Ninety percent cultivators are not liable to pay tax," bank report stated. "Agriculture land could also be utilized for other objectives for revenue generation," World Bank suggested. "Pakistan have a complicated taxation system. Jurisdictions of the federation and provinces are unclear in taxation matters and an overlapping among the centre and provinces also affects the tax collection revenues," report added.

"The people in two major areas in the provincial jurisdiction — real estate and agriculture — had most of the untaxed wealth, which should be taxed by the provincial governments to be able to improve services and reduce the financial burden on the centre," a media report earlier quoted the WB officials as saying.

Hamas leader apprises Fazl

PESHAWAR (Agencies): Hamas leader Dr Naji Zuhair on Saturday apprised Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman of the current situation in Palestine. During their meeting, the Hamas leader shared insights on the conditions in Palestine and the ongoing Israeli aggression.

The gathering was also attended by former Senate chairman Raza Rabbani, Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidari, Senator Talha Mehmood, Mufti Abrar Ahmad, and Syed Salman Gilani. According to the JUI spokesperson, Dr Naji Zuhair, the Hamas leader, will take part in the Mufti Mahmood conference organized by JUI. Additionally, it is expected that the founder and former head of Hamas, Khalid Meshaal, will address the conference via video link. Earlier on Tuesday, Fazlur Rehman commended the role of the Islamic scholars in the running government affairs.

Addressing the workers' convention in Multan, Rehman said: "The JUI-F has always struggled for the masses' rights. The JUI-F's Million March had proved the party to be one of the country's biggest political forces." "We did not create obstacles for the power for which we were kept out of parliament," Rehman rued.

He made it clear that his party will stage protests if there is rigging in the upcoming elections. "We are not going to give away our rights if they are snatched," he added.

Vision is a precious gift of God: KP CM

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan, on Saturday paid a short visit to Charsadda, where he attended an event to mark "World Sight Day". The event was organized by a local private sector hospital. Addressing the event as chief guest, Muhammad Azam Khan said that World Sight Day is observed worldwide in 2nd week of October every year to mark the importance of sight in human life adding that the day is dedicated to raising awareness about visual impairment and the importance of vision care.

He remarked that World Sight Days served as a reminder that we must strive to make vision care accessible to everyone, regardless of their economic, social and geographic circumstances. He termed vision as most vital sense and precious gift of God, and said that it is imperative for everyone to take special care of this precious gift.

"We acknowledge the remarkable work being done by organizations, researchers, doctors and volunteers to prevent, treat and cure vision related issues"; the Chief Minister maintained adding that we express our gratitude to those who tirelessly tried to provide accessible eye care to underserved communities, ensuring that individuals in need can regain their sight and hope.

Azam Khan said that according to World Health Organization, an estimated 2.2 billion peoples worldwide are visually impaired, with all most half of these cases being preventable or treatable, and continued that these statistics underscore the urgency to provide quality eye care to all regardless of their socio economic status "we must continue to promote early detection, treatment of eye conditions, especially in children as their future depends on healthy vision"; Azam Khan stressed and added that we must advocate for eye health education in schools, in communities to raise awareness

about the importance of regular eye examination and adopting healthy eye care practices.

The Chief Minister highlighted the importance of research and innovations in the field of ophthalmology and said that its essential for developing new treatments and technologies to address eye diseases and vision loss, ultimately offering hope to those living with visual impairments.

Azam Khan lauded the role of Darul-Rehmat Medical Complex Charsadda in provision of quality and valuable services in the field of eye care to the local people. Addressing the event, renowned ophthalmologist Dr. Daud highlighted the importance of "World Eye Day" and other related matters in detail. Advisor to Chief Minister on Health Dr. Riaz Anwar, doctors, medical students and citizens attended the event in large number. The Chief Minister also led an awareness walk on this occasion and met with eye patients being treated in the hospital.

KP Governor urges doctors to serve humanity

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali Saturday urged doctors to work with professionalism, dedication and compassion to serve humanity abiding by norms of politeness and love.

He was addressing the 4th Convention of Saidu Medical College (SMC) Swat. The ceremony was also attended by Vice Chancellor SMC, Dr. Zia-ul-Haq, Vice Chancellor University of Swat, Dr. Hassan Sher, Principal SMC, Israr-ul-Haq, Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Qasim Ali and District Police Officer Swat, Shafiullah Gandapur.

Governor said that youngster should choose emerging fields of modern technologies and explore new opportunities. He said that federal and provincial governments are spending hefty amount on education and it is responsibility of students to venture into research and innovations for development of country. He said that our resources are incompatible to growing needs of medical education but the situation can be addressed through research and added that medical institutions should introduce research base studies for capacity building of students and to make advancement in medical field.

Haji Ghulam Ali said

that doctors should serve people with love in their practical life and work for the maximum facilitation of ailing humanity. He said that young generation must adopt a positive approach for their development and prosperity of the country.

Later he distributed degrees among students and 40 gold medals to outstanding students. He also went to historic Government Dar-ul-Uloom Islamia Swat and met with its administration and teachers. During meeting with administrator of the institution, Mufti Muhammad Wahab, he assured cooperation to install solar energy system in the Dar-ul-Uloom.

Karakoram Highway poised for a world-class makeover

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a historic collaboration to reshape the landscape of international trade and connectivity, Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar is all set to visit China and this momentous occasion is teeming with promise for the future of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and, in particular, the dramatic acceleration of the Thakot-Raikot section of Karakoram Highway.

As Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar prepares for his significant visit to China, the Karakoram Highway looms as a prominent highlight of this historic partnership. It signifies more than just a road; it's a symbol of friendship, cooperation, and a shared vision for a brighter, more interconnected future. The Karakoram Highway is indeed poised to become a world-class marvel, ensuring top-notch travel throughout the Karakoram Highway and the broader CPEC network.

The Thakot-Raikot section, a linchpin in the Karakoram Highway (KKH), is on the brink of a substantial transformation that will have far-reaching implications on mutual connectivity. This crucial route, linking Thakot and Raikot, holds a central role within the broader KKH and the

expansive CPEC infrastructure network, forging an indispensable link between Pakistan and China's burgeoning trade and commerce sphere.

The Karakoram Highway, affectionately known as the Friendship Highway in China, stands as an enduring testament to the profound partnership between Pakistan and the People's Republic of China. Spanning an awe-inspiring 1,300 kilometers, with 806 kilometers traversing Pakistan's majestic landscapes, it was a remarkable feat of engineering that took 16 years to construct, from 1962 to 1978. Fast forward to 2005, Pakistan and China embarked on an ambitious journey to upgrade this iconic highway. The completion of Phase-I of the Karakoram Highway upgrade, from Raikot to Khunjerab, a staggering 335 kilometers in length, in November 2013 marked a significant milestone in its transformation.

The launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in 2013 breathed new life into the vision for the Karakoram Highway. It ceased to be just a road; it was poised for a comprehensive makeover into a world-class thoroughfare, characterized by heightened safety standards, improved

road geometry, and a myriad of modern features. This revitalized KKH introduced significant improvements, including tunnels, high-level bridges, stable slopes, and bypasses around congested towns. These enhancements aligned it with international road standards, providing travelers with a safe and extraordinary journey through the heart of the mountains, extending from Mansehra to Thakot.

The second phase of CPEC witnessed the transformation of the E-35 section from Havelian to Thakot, covering roughly 120 kilometers. This redevelopment introduced a motorway section that links Havelian to Mansehra, streamlining travel and serving as an emblem of both nations' commitment to efficient transportation infrastructure. The continuous development of the Karakoram Highway symbolizes the enduring bond between Pakistan and China, epitomizing their shared commitment to cooperation, development, and prosperity. This iconic road, a testament to the unwavering friendship between the two nations, opens up new horizons for travelers, cargo transporters, and economic development.

Operation against repatriation of illegal Afghans

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A plan has been chalked out by the Police with the estimated cost to start special operations against illegal foreigners staying in the province without any legal documents.

A letter in this connection has been sent for an operational plan against illegal residents with estimated expenses, DIG Operation said in a letter to the Department of Interior and Tribal Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa asking the IGP and Commissioner Afghan Refugees for details of plan and expenses.

Police have started estimating expenses for special operations, the letter says. DIG Operations seeking details regarding operational plan expenses. The letter was also sent to RPOs, Special Branch, CTD and all relevant institutions about their needs. The concerned departments should also provide the required fund details within two days as the operational plan will be prepared based on the detailed expenses for fuel, vehicle repair and food required for the operation will be provided. It is worth mentioning here that necessary recruitment will also be done on the basis of this fund, the letter says.

Meanwhile, the repatriation of undocumented Afghan nationals to their homeland from different parts of Pakistan continues. According to the Afghan Commissionerate, more than fifty families consisting of seventeen Trucks have been sent back to Afghanistan at Torkham border in latest development.

The Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees has made appropriate arrangements at Torkham border to facilitate the repatriation of illegal Afghan nationals. During the last eight days more than 600 Afghan families have been repatriated to their native land Afghanistan via Pak-Afghan border at Torkham.

PML-N plans another show today

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has decided to arrange another massive power show in Lahore today (Sunday) ahead of the homecoming of its supremo Nawaz Sharif on October 21. The PML-N has decided to hold a giant rally in the suburban area of Mustafabad on Kasur Road Lalyani on Sunday (tomorrow).

PML-N Vice President and former Punjab chief minister Hamza Shehbaz Sharif will address the gathering. Party Senior Vice President and Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz will participate in various conventions in Model Town, Lahore before October 21. However, she will participate in other workers' conventions to be held in different cities via video link. She will also address the participating workers.

Former information minister Mariyum Aurangzeb also said that the right to govern is of the party voted into power by the people. Nawaz didn't flee from courts and prison, she remarked, adding that he would fix the state of affairs yet again, she told media persons in Lahore.

She recalled that cases had been initiated against them during the PTI chairman's stint in the government and those currently in jail were facing the wrath of Almighty Allah. Mariyum said that Shehbaz Sharif during his 16-month government saved the country from defaulting like Sri Lanka. "The country [now] needs Nawaz Sharif. He will return on Oct 21 and share his vision," she told reporters. The people of Pakistan considering Nawaz Sharif — the PML-N supremo — as the last hope and he would rescue Pakistan from the turbulent times, said senior party leaders Saturday as the former prime minister will land in Pakistan next week on Oct 21.

Talking to reports on this occasion after appearing before an anti-terrorism court, Javed Latif, who is considered to be one of the diehard supporter of Nawaz, said it was the three-time prime minister who had made Pakistan a nuclear power and tackled the terrorism and loadshedding crises.

India beat Pakistan by seven wickets



Monitoring Desk

AHMEDABAD: India outclassed Pakistan in all departments of the game as they beat the Green Shirts by seven wickets at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, improving their ICC Men's World Cup tally against their arch-rivals to 8-0.

Pakistan were routed by seven wickets in a disappointingly one-sided clash. They collapsed from 155-2 to be all out for 191 before India coasted home to their target with 117 balls to spare. Skipper Rohit Sharma's 86 and an inspired bowling display helped India hammer Pakistan, who were bowled out for 191. They overhauled the total with 117 balls to spare to extend their unbeaten streak against their neighbours to eight in the 50-over showpiece tournament.

Rohit stood out in his 63-ball knock laced with six fours and six sixes to keep India, who began the event as favourites to win the title, unbeaten in their three matches in this edition. Pakistan now have two wins and one defeat in the 10-nation tournament.

"It felt good," said man of the match, Indian fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah who had figures of 2-19 off nine overs. Rohit hit the ball to all parts of the ground with his delightful flicks and pulls to entertain an almost all-Indian crowd at the world's biggest cricket stadium after Pakistanis were effectively banned from attending. India lost Shubman Gill and Virat Kohli — both for 16 — before Rohit and Shreyas Iyer, who hit the winning four to reach 53, put on 77 runs for the third wicket and placed India comfortably on course for victory. Rohit fell attempting another hit off Shaheen Shah Afridi to get caught at mid-wicket, but Iyer and KL Rahul took the team home with ease. Bowlers set up victory after India elected to field and Mohammed Siraj, Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya, Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja took two wickets each. Pakistan were bowled out in 42.5 overs, losing eight wickets for 36 runs in 80 balls.

The total was Pakistan's third lowest against India in the World Cup after their 173 in Sydney (1992) and 180 at Manchester (1999). Pakistan started

strongly but lost their openers before skipper Babar Azam (50) and Mohammad Rizwan (49) attempted to rebuild and hit back in their stand of 82.

Azam reached his fifty off 57 balls with a boundary but fell in the next over, bowled by Siraj as the crowd roared to see the back of the world's number one ODI batsman. Kuldeep Yadav soon struck twice in an over to send back the left-handed Saud Shakeel and Iftikhar Ahmed, bowled around the legs for four after the ball deflected off the batsman's gloves.

Bumrah denied Rizwan his fifty with a slower-off cutter that rattled the stumps as Pakistan slipped to 168-6. Bumrah, playing in front of his home crowd, had a spring in his step and struck again in the next over to get Shadab Khan out for two before Pandya and Jadeja combined to wrap up the tail.

"You try to analyse the wicket as soon as possible so when we started bowling, we came to know that the wicket was on the slower side and a hard length would make run-scoring more difficult," added Bumrah. "There was no consistent turn but it was turning a little bit and I count my slower ball as a spinner so I thought it might be an option. I was trying to do that and it gripped - it was one of those days."

The hotly-anticipated match raised enormous interest with city hotels booked and desperate fans even booking full-body check ups in local hospitals to be sure of a place to sleep. A prominent hotel in the city usually charges 6,000 rupees (\$72) for a deluxe room but on Friday, Saturday and Sunday the price for a day had been hiked to 70,000 rupees (\$841). Only a trickle of Pakistanis, many expatriates, made it to the game after fans from across the border endured visa delays.

Pakistan: 1 Abdullah Shafique, 2 Imam-ul-Haq, 3 Babar Azam (capt), 4 Mohammad Rizwan (wk), 5 Saud Shakeel, 6 Iftikhar Ahmed, 7 Shadab Khan, 8 Mohammad Nawaz, 9 Hasan Ali, 10 Shaheen Afridi, 11 Haris Rauf

India: 1 Rohit Sharma (capt), 2 Shubman Gill, 3 Virat Kohli, 4 Shreyas Iyer, 5 KL Rahul (wk), 6 Hardik Pandya, 7 Ravindra Jadeja, 8 Shardul Thakur, 9 Kuldeep Yadav, 10 Jasprit Bumrah, 11 Mohammed Siraj.

PM's visit to China

Zaheer Ud Din Babar

ANWAR Haq Kakar's visit to China has become so important that 15 agreements and MoUs are likely to be signed between the two countries during this visit, government sources are saying that the \$67.6 billion ML1 railway between Pakistan and China is a project that will be signed, it should be remembered that the speed of the ML1 rail will already be reduced from 160 kmph to 120 kmph. During the visit of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar Haq Kakar to Karchka, a protocol agreement for the export of donkey skins will also be signed. Under the CPEC, there are bright possibilities of signing agreements for the urban development of Godar for Godar.

During the visit of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, there will be practical progress on the agreements to export dairy products and meat to China.

India's defeat by China in 1962 laid the foundation for many changes in South Asia, while Pakistan and China began to discuss border demarcation issues. China should establish warm relations with neighboring countries that will help in establishing lasting peace in the region. On the other hand, the United States started giving military aid to India, which gave the impression that Washington is preparing New Delhi to compete with China and Pakistan.

Documented progress on the space center project is being shown.

Historically, Pakistan-China friendship was founded on May 21, 1951. In fact, Pakistan was the only country in the Muslim world that recognized China. It is a relationship with spirit of goodwill and then in the next month and year the relations between the two countries reached new heights. The border delimitation agreement was signed between Pakistan and China in March 1963, which was certainly a proof of the ideal atmosphere of trust between the two countries. Unreasonable objection was raised by India, meanwhile Dhaka-Shanghai air services were established between Pakistan and China, directly or indirectly maintaining pressure on India during the 1965 war.

For example, on September 16, 1965, China gave India an ultimatum that if it did not withdraw its troops from the Chinese border in Sikkim within three days, it would bear the consequences. And the pressure increased on Russia to bring a ceasefire between Pakistan and India, the historical truth is that China helped Pakistan in every hour of difficulty. For example, in 1966 when the United States stopped the delivery of war weapons to Pakistan, China stepped forward, successfully tried to fulfil Pakistan's needs, in the same days, on the occasion of Pakistan Day, China-made weapons such as MiJ-15 will be displayed, which was seen as increasing military cooperation between the two countries. In the same year, China signed a military aid of 120 million between Pakistan and

China, which was a blunt message from Beijing to India that now China stands side by side with Pakistan. The connection of China also proved to be of key importance, the connection of China's Sincang province with the Hunza Valley had far-reaching effects, and later the connection of Pakistan and China through the Karakoram Highway also brought political, economic and cultural benefits to both countries. Links are extended

History shows that China has proved itself as a friendly country of Pakistan, which has always taken the lead in increasing the economic and military capabilities of Islamabad. On the contrary, as a long-time friend, China is also keen on Pakistan's prestigious role at the global level. This fact cannot be ignored that caretaker Prime Minister Anwar Haq Kakar is actually not only aware of the long-standing relations between the two countries but also believes in expanding them wholeheartedly. The balance is changing, it is no longer surprising that in the coming years, China will take a decisive role in the United Nations. Even today, important Western countries including the United States recognize China's political and economic power, so the solution to the conflicts faced by the world. Therefore, the Chinese perspective is given key importance

According to experts, the caretaker prime minister's visit to China can actually create opportunities for Pakistan that will prove to be a milestone for our economic as well as political independence.