

ISLAMABAD: The Caretaker Chief Minister of the Punjab Mohsin Naqvi calls on the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

IRSA releases 103,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 103,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 71,000 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1528.98 feet and was 130.98 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 1213.75 feet, which was 163.75 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 53,900, 57,900, 57,000 and 20,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 4,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

3,953 FIRs for violating dengue SOPs

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 3,953 FIRs had been registered on violations of anti-dengue SOPs from January 1 to date in various areas of the Rawalpindi district, said District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control Dr Sajjad Mehmood here Sunday.

Giving details of the penalty actions, the health officer said that the district administration, in collaboration with allied departments, had sealed 607 premises, issued tickets to 1,131 and a fine of Rs 73,26,000 was imposed on violations of dengue SOPs in 2023. Dr Sajjad informed that around 1,855 confirmed cases had been reported in the district this year, while the number was 738 in 2021, and 3,507 in 2022 during the period. The health officer further stated that presently 126 patients were admitted to the district's hospitals, including 41 to the Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 26 to the District Headquarters Hospital, 47 to the Holy Family Hospital (HFH), eight to Wah General Hospital, and two of each to Kalar Syeda and Taxila Hospitals. Dr Sajjad informed that 1,774 patients were discharged after treatment while presently one patient was in critical condition. During the last day's indoor vector surveillance, the teams checked 9,376 houses and larvae were detected at 331 sites while during outdoor surveillance larvae were found at 64 spots while inspecting 3,316 places.

Dengue surveillance continues

LAHORE (APP): The anti-dengue drive initiated by the district administration, is in full swing under which surveillance is being carried out at various points in the provincial capital. In this regard, Assistant Commissioner Cantt Nabeel Memon on Sunday visited Toufel Road Cantonment no 5, where he inspected anti-dengue arrangements and instructed the house owner about dengue preventive measures.



LAHORE: Families enjoying at Lahore Zoo during holiday in the Provincial Capital.

Federal Minister meets CM Naqvi

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Dr Abdullah Kausar Malik on Sunday met caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi and exchanged views on steps aimed at increasing yield of Rabi and Kharif crops.

According to official sources, Dr Abdullah Kausar Malik congratulated the Punjab CM on record production of cotton in Punjab.

The prices of wheat and other commodities were discussed while proposal to keep wheat price same was reviewed.

Special steps for keeping cotton price stable was also discussed.

There was a consensus to keep price of cotton stable through support of Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP).

The CM said that stability in cotton

prices was essential for providing reasonable return to cotton growers.

He said the federal government should play its role in stabilizing cotton price by purchasing cotton through TCP.

Good yield of cotton was welcoming and value-added products would help in fetching good amount of forex, he added.

Federal minister Dr Kausar Abdullah Malik said that releasing of sewerage water in River Ravi, canals and other rivers was harmful for water inhabitants and environment. Ban on releasing sewerage water into rivers was inevitable to conserve environment.

The CM directed the WASA Managing Director and Deputy Commissioner Lahore to evolve a strategy under the supervision of Federal Minister Dr Kausar Abdullah Malik in this regard.

Gas theft crackdown 199 connections disconnected in Punjab, KP and Islamabad

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 199 connections while imposing fine of Rs.5.5 million and 190 under billing cases processed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 17 connections on illegal use of gas, another 06 connections on the use of compressor. In Bahawalpur, the regional team disconnected 06 connections on the use of compressor and Rs.0.14 Million Booked against under billing cases. The company disconnected 05 connections on illegal use of gas, another 04 connections on the use of compressor and 15 under billing cases have been processed in Multan and amount of Rs 0.07 Million have been booked against gas theft and Under billing cases. In Sheikhupura, 10 connections were disconnected by the region and 42 under billing cases processed, the team also booked Rs.3 million against gas theft and under billing cases.

In Peshawar, the company disconnected 50 connections on account of direct

use of gas and illegal connections and also booked Rs. 1.65 million against gas theft. The team also lodged 01 FIRs against gas thieves. SNGPL's team in Mardan imposing fine of Rs 0.05 million against gas theft. In Sialkot, the company fine imposed of Rs 0.27 million against gas theft and Under billing cases. In Sargodha, the regional team disconnected 01 connection on the use of compressor. The regional team in Gujranwala, 02 meters were disconnected on the use of compressor while another 08 on illegal use of gas and 35 Under billing cases processed. The region also imposed fine of Rs.0.19 Million Rupees on gas theft and under billing cases.

The company disconnected 23 connections on illegal use of gas and 11 Under billing cases processed in Islamabad. In Sahiwal, 3 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas and 13 Under billing cases processed. The regional team in Faisalabad disconnected 06 connections on illegal use of gas and 12 under billing cases have been processed. The team also lodged 01 FIR against gas thief. In Rawalpindi, the company disconnected 58 connections on illegal use of gas and 62 Under billing cases processed.

International Rural Women Day celebrated

ISLAMABAD (APP): The speakers and the participants at the 16th Annual Rural Women Conference on the International Rural Women Day here Sunday urged the government to devise effective mechanisms involving communities, while taking into account innovative solutions utilizing digital technologies.

15 October is celebrated as International Rural Women Day every year according to the UN General Assembly's resolution A/RES/62/136 of 18 December 2007. Through the resolution, the member states recognized the significance of the role that is played by the rural women admitting their contributions in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and end poverty. Culminating on Tuesday, 17th October, the Conference will hold award distribution ceremony by celebrating the successes of the rural women who are participating actively in the three-day conference representing 150 plus districts of the country.

PODA's 3-day conference is a regular feature in Islamabad since 2008. The theme of the ongoing conference is "Stop Child Marriages for Sustainable Development, Climate and Democracy".

"Due to lack of official identity (ID), girls are deprived of their fundamental human rights including right to legal identity, citizenship, education, marriage, reproductive health, inheritance, government assistance, services and lead a dignified life as these are the rights enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan," said Sameena Nazir who is a Founder and President of PODA.

Birth registration helps to decreasing the risks of child marriage, child labor and children being treated as adults in the

criminal justice system, she said.

"This very basic human right will provide a strong foundation for achieving gender equality and empower women and girls. Gender equality is goal 5 of SDGs which is translated into all SDGs," she explained. After the inaugural plenary, the day's proceedings were focused on the rights of girl-child and registration issues linked with an alarming neglect to register birth of girl children.

The PDHS survey of Pakistan identifies that here 42% children under the age of five are not registered. However, in newly merged districts of FATA, the birth registration rate is far low. According to UNICEF it was 1% in 2017 in former agencies. Being a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Government of Pakistan is committed to provide children their basic rights to survival, development, protection and participation.

The speakers included Lehrer Mirza, Sudi Kohli from Sindh, Sofia Javed from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, women boxer Sughra Rahman from Sahiwal, Dr. Yasmin Gul from Swat, Shahida Wafa Alvi from Muzafargarh, writer and journalist and Sadaf Raza from Justju Foundation Sindh and Fareeha Ammar from UN Women. Darakhshan Saleh from Sindh Commission on Status of Women, MPA of PML-NMs. Kanwal Liaquat from Lahore and Ms. Sabeen Rizvi, PML-N MNA and General Secretary Parliamentarian's Forum. PML-N also spoke on the occasion. Ms. Raina who represented transgender community said that government institutions should come forward to ensure hundred percent birth registration. It should not be left to the will of the families and others, she explained.



KARACHI: Ameer Jamaat-i-Islami Siraj ul Haq addresses "Al Aqsa Palestine March" organized by JI at Shahr-e-Faisal.

CM seeks reports from SBCA, BoR, Police over complaints within a week

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar has sought a report from the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA), Board of Revenue (BoR) and Police over various complaints. He directed the SBCA to provide a detailed report on how many building maps were passed every month before August 17 and how many were passed then, according to a CM House spokesman.

He asked how many illegal buildings were sealed every month before August 17 and how many had been sealed now.

Furthermore, he also sought a report from the Board of Revenue on how many registries were done in different categories every month in the sub-registrar offices before August 17 and how many were being done then.

He said that complaints were being received that sub-registrar offices had also slowed down the

work of registries. Moreover, the Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh also directed measures to prevent the illegal use of police mobiles and official vehicles. He said that Police and other government agencies had been directed to maintain the log book of their vehicles. They should write in the log book about where the vehicle went and for what purpose as well as how far was the vehicle from the official work and how much petrol was consumed. After how much mileage, when the oil and oil filter of the vehicle changed and when should it be changed again, he added that the log book should be verified by a senior officer, which would also be checked by the inspection teams from time to time.

All these reports should be sent to the CM Secretariat within one week.

CM Complaint Cell resolves 486 complaints out of 747: The Sindh Chief Minister's Complaint Cell has resolved 486 complaints out of total

747 complaints so far.

According to a report submitted by the Public Compliance Cell to the Caretaker Chief Minister on Sunday, 486 complaints had been resolved and the work on 260 complaints was underway.

The people of the province could register their complaints related to any government department at the Public Grievance Cell of the Chief Minister's House.

On the directives of the caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar, the Public Complaint Cell had been activated for 24 hours a day.

The Caretaker Chief Minister said that the Complaint Cell was active to serve the people of the province.

He warned the Sindh government departments of action if failed to resolve the complaints of the people.

He further said that strict action would also be taken against government employees, who demanded for bribes.

Punjab safe blood transfusion service to be restructured with Rs400m

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has decided to restructure the Safe Blood Transfusion Service with Rs400 million in the government teaching hospitals across the province. A new updated system of blood screening would be launched shortly in hospitals, sources in Punjab Health Department told APP on Sunday. Policy on provision of Safe Blood Transfusion Service has been formulated during the ongoing fiscal year 2023-24, they added.

Noted Hematologist Dr. Shahida Parvin told APP that blood transfusions

are generally considered safe, but there is some risk of complications. Mild complications, and rarely severe ones, occur during the transfusion process and sometimes after the process, she added. The government initiative of launching state-of-the-art blood transfusion service and its up-gradation would help reduce common reactions, which can most often cause allergic reactions, such as hives, itching and fever, said the expert.

Likewise, she said that upgraded transfusion service would help blood banks screen donors and test donated blood to reduce the risk of transfusion-

related infections. Through this process, infections, such as HIV or hepatitis B or C, could be prevented, she added. According to a document of Pakistan Red Crescent, in Pakistan, B-thalassemia (B-thal) trait frequency ranges between 5.0-7.0 percent and, there are more than 10 million carriers in the country. Every year, around 5000 children are diagnosed to carry B-thal major (B-TM) in the country, it revealed. In this sector so far, no standard management protocols exist in blood transfusion, which remains the mainstay of management.

HR bodies slam Israeli siege of Gaza, as 2mln Gazans wait for water

LAHORE (APP): The global human rights bodies condemned on Sunday the Israel's inhuman blockade of Gaza and demanded immediate restoration of supply of water and electricity to the Palestinian territory, one of the most crowded places on Earth.

Gaza has been under war and siege since Saturday under a constant bombardment that has killed more than 1,000 people. Israel has imposed a total siege on the Gaza Strip since last Monday, cutting-off the water supply while as it kept bombing targets in the crowded Palestinian enclave. Gaza's health ministry said on Sunday that there were dozens of Palestinians killed and wounded in Israeli air strikes on the Jabalia refugee camp. It is worth mentioning here that Arab foreign ministers on Wednesday have denounced Israel's siege of Gaza demanding that aid be "immediately" allowed to enter the blockaded enclave.

Meanwhile Israel has imposed a "complete siege" on the Gaza Strip, cutting off the water supply, food, electricity and other essential supplies, Philip Lazzarini, Commissioner General of the United Nations Refugee Agency for the Palestinians, says that Israel has cut off the water supply by attacking Gaza, due to which water has become a big problem for the Palestinians.

According to the United Nations, water has become a matter of life and death for Gaza after the Israeli military siege. Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini said that 2 million people currently do not have access to

water, which has made their lives even more difficult, for which it is necessary to allow the delivery of fuel to Gaza. He further said that humanitarian aid has not been allowed in Gaza for a week, due to the non-availability of clean water, Palestinians have been forced to drink dirty water, which is also spreading diseases.

On the other hand, in a statement from Israel, it has been said that it is preparing attacks on Gaza from all three routes (land, air and sea). In this regard, the Zionist forces have ordered the citizens of Gaza to emigrate. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also signaled to his troops that the next phase of the war is coming, in which Israel is expected to launch a ground attack on Gaza. In addition, the World Health Organization (WHO) has condemned Israel's decision to evacuate Palestinians, saying that forcing hospital patients to relocate would be a death sentence. Former Senator Shehar Kamran, and President of Centre for Pakistan and Gulf Studies (CPGS) told APP that the people of Muslim states stand united in support of Palestine, yet the collective voice of Muslim nations lacks strength and remains unheard.

The disappointing response of international organizations like UN, and UNSC despite the alarming number of civilian casualties and Israel's use of phosphorus bombs on civilians is deeply concerning.

To a question Kamran said that till now, the escalating violence in Gaza has claimed the lives of more than 1,799 Palestinians, including 583 children and

351 women. Given the current circumstances, it won't be possible for any Muslim state to disregard the will of their people and restore ties with Israel, she added.

Amnesty International on Friday said its Crisis-Evidence-Lab (CEL) on Friday has verified that Israeli military units striking Gaza areas, are equipped with white phosphorus artillery rounds.

"We are investigating what appears to be the use of white phosphorus in Gaza, including in a strike near a hotel on the beach in Gaza City," the rights group said in a statement.

Amnesty said white phosphorus "burns at extremely high temperatures when exposed to air can continue to burn inside flesh," "causes horrific pain life-changing injuries" and "can't be put out with water." This is why white phosphorus should never be used in civilian areas. Gaza is one of the most thickly populated areas in the world. As we continue to closely investigate these deeply concerning cases," the Amnesty further added. "It urges Israel to ensure respect for Humanitarian Law, (IHL) in all circumstances and at all times, civilians must be spared." Similarly Human Rights Watch (HRW) late Thursday said it has verified videos showing multiple airbursts of artillery-fired white phosphorus over Gaza and Lebanon on Oct. 10 to 11.

"Israel's use of white phosphorus in military operations in Gaza and Lebanon puts civilians at risk of serious and long-term injuries," the HRW further said.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch in a statement at a weekly briefing on Thursday has strongly condemned the "indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force" by Israeli forces against the civilian population in Gaza and called for an urgent intervention by global powers to cease hostilities.

"We are deeply concerned over the fast-deteriorating and dire humanitarian situation in Gaza due to the inhumane blockade and collective punishment by Israeli forces, she added."

"The decision to cut off electricity, fuel and water supplies is unjust and should be reversed, as it would severely impact the lives of the Palestinians residing in the enclave," she said. The spokesperson demanded Israel to "bring an immediate end to its campaign of indiscriminate bombing against the people of Gaza". Pakistan was deeply concerned by the fast deteriorating and dire humanitarian situation in Gaza due to the "inhumane blockade and collective punishment by Israeli forces, she further informed."

It is worth mentioning here that the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has called an "urgent extraordinary meeting" on October 18, in Saudi Arabia to discuss the Israel-Gaza war, to address the "military escalation" and "threat to defence-less civilians in Gaza".

The extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee of the OIC will meet to address the escalating military situation in Gaza and its environs as well as the deteriorating conditions that endanger the lives of civilians and the overall security and stability of the region," the OIC said in a statement on its website.



Alleged culprit acquitted F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Judicial Magistrate Peshawar Shafiq-ul-Aman acquitted a culprit in vehicle robbery over lack of evidence. According to prosecution, Zahid Ullah resident of Kohat was nominated vehicle theft case at Machni Gate police station on 9th May 2022 while pleading under 294A during trial of case. The counsel argued that evidences recorded in the case is self contradictory as well as prosecution has also failed to establish link between crime and the petitioner. The court had acquitted Zahid Ullah over lack evidence after conclusion of arguments.

ATD releases terrorists lists — head money announced

PESHAWAR (APP): Surprisingly, the Anti-Terrorism Department Sunday published the pictures of 128 more wanted criminals with the head money of each of the criminals enlisted in the released list. The price on the head of wanted terrorists has also been fixed, along with the pictures, CNIC number, place, father record. The head money of the terrorists have been fixed from Rs. 300,000 to Rs. 10 million, the document issued by ATD here Sunday says. The name of the informant will be kept confidential, a CTD official said. The list of 128 more wanted criminals has been published. Among the wanted terrorists, Syed Qaiser's head money has been set at 8 million rupees, the document says. Zaheer Qadir, 7 million, Habib-ul-Haq and Syed Naseeb Shah's head money has been fixed at 6 million rupees. The price of Akhtar Hussain, Kafait and Syed Ajab Shah's is fixed at Rs 5.5 million, the document revealed. It is worth mentioning here that CTD had issued a list of 166 wanted terrorists earlier on as well.

Police arrests seven alleged culprits F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Police had arrested seven alleged culprits including four land mafia members in two separate actions in the premises of Badabhier police station. Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Badabhier Zia Ullah Khan on intelligence based report deployed teams for actions against culprits as well as land mafia under Station House Officer Nasir Farid Khattak immediately. The alleged land mafia members were identified as Riaz along with two sons named Saqib, Zakria and Wahid Gul residents of Telabad Fidadab area of Peshawar. Moreover, police another action arrested Behzad, Sultan and Zakria while recovering two Kalashnikovs, three pistols and bullets of different caliber from their possession.

Uncontrollable inflation continued

PESHAWAR (APP): Uncontrollable inflation in Peshawar, prices of fruits including non-perishable items beyond purchasing power of the people with ginger hitting all time high and is being sold on Rs. 1400 per kg while garlic is being sold on Rs. 570 per kilogram.

When visiting the vegetables and fruits markets, the prices of the vegetables and fruits have reached beyond the purchasing power of the people while the officials concerned of the district administrations have failed to provide food items on the rates issued by them.

Onion 100, Tomato 90, Cattlefish 130, Green Chilli 120 and Capsicum 200, Ginger 1400, Garlic 570, Lemon 200, Potato 140, Cauliflower 110, Bhandi 130, Tenda 150 and Karela 100 per kg are being sold.

In fruits, apple 360, pomegranate 340, pear 250 and banana 140 rupees are being sold per dozen. Price of live chicken also increased. The price of live chicken in the market has increased to 405 per kg.

Police's crackdown continued

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar Police have started a crackdown against anti-social elements in different localities across the provincial capital and succeeded in arresting five wanted criminals in Badaber Police Station jurisdiction.

According to details, the Police team have arrested five wanted criminals involved in various crimes. The arrested accused are involved in illegal arms and other crimes, Police officials said here Sunday.

The alleged wanted criminals were identified as Inayatullah, Hafeezullah, Shahzada Akbar, Bilal and Miskeen. Police have also recovered two kalakovs, three pistols, magazines and cartridges of various bores from the arrested suspects.

A report in this connection has also been registered with further investigation and interrogations from the arrested alleged criminals continued.

Weather to remain partly cloudy in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The weather is likely to remain partly cloudy in most districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an official of the Meteorological Department said here Sunday.

There is a possibility of rain with thunder and lightning in some places of the province, snowfall on high and high mountains as well, the official confirmed. However, rain expected in Nowshera, Charsadda, Mardan, Swabi and Mohmand, while Abbottabad, Haripur, Munsheer, Battagram, Torgar, Kohistan and Shangla are likely to receive rain, the official of the Meteorological Department said.

The rain is also expected in Chitral, Upper Dir, Swat, Buner, Kurram, Kohat, Khyber, Hangu and Orakzai, the official said.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali distributing certificates among participating at Governor's House.

Body registered to further cause, interests of industrialists

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The industrialists of Peshawar has registered a new representative body named Hayatabad Industrialist Association Peshawar to further the cause of stakeholders and to give them a proper platform to inform authorities about their issues.

The Hayatabad Industrialist Association (HIA) has been registered with Office

of the Registrar of Trade Unions Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in greater interest of industrialists and registration certificate has been received by former President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Muhammad Ishaq.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, Muhammad Ishaq who is also group leader expressed gratitude to industrialists and said their cooperation

and continuous support helped in materializing of this achievement.

He said thirty year dominance of former association of industrialists (IAP) have been ended that is a good omen for industrialists who since long were in dire need of having a body that would represent their genuine concerns and problems.

He said registered association was indispensable

for industrialists as their concerns were not addressed according to their wishes due to unavailability of a dedicated forum.

He said the new association would work for facilitation and betterment of community with devotion and zeal adding that sufferings that were faced by industrialists would come to end after formation of their new representative body.

Badar Munir — a real and first hero of Pashto films

PESHAWAR (APP): The grand celebration of the 15th anniversary of the great Pashto cinema hero Badar Munir, the senior hero film star of Pakistan films industry while addressing the 15th anniversary celebration organized by the cultural organization All Afghan Pashtun Federation and Badar Munir Welfare Organization at Archeology Hall Peshawar.

Leading films stars including Aman, Jameel Babar, Ishrat Abbas, Hazrat Gul, Juma Khan, Badar Munir's son Syed Munir, Naeem Mukhlis, Muhammad Javed Yousafzai and

other speakers paid tribute to the late Badar Munir, the great hero of Pashto films.

The speakers said that Badar Munir, the deceased, was the first and foremost hero of Pashto films. His first Pashto film was Yousaf Khan Sher Bano, which was based on a folk tale. The deceased played the lead role of Yousaf Khan in the Pashto film Yousaf Khan Sher Bano in a manner that was immortalized forever.

The late Badar Munir was a simple and kind person. He founded the Pashto film through Yousaf Khan Sher Bano. In the last eight and nine years, more than

fifty cinema houses were demolished in Peshawar, Mardan, Nowshera, Mingora, Swat, Kohat and other cities and shopping centers and plazas were built in their place.

It was a golden and successful era, but with his death, there were no more cinemas and the business also ended. Badar Munir's depiction of the society through Pashto films is not seen in today's Pashto films, every film of Badar Munir had a lesson and a positive message. It used to be free from obscenity, which is the reason why people used to watch these movies with their families.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali presiding over a meeting of Capital Metropolitan.

Seminar to empower women organized

PESHAWAR (APP): Seminar held at Women University Swabi regarding women empowerment.

Dr. Shehla, lecturer from Islamia University Peshawar, illuminated the critical issue of women's empowerment in Pakistan.

The event, was organized by the Department of Pakistan Studies, brought together passionate advocates for women's rights and gender equality.

Dr. Shehla's keynote address focused on the core challenges surrounding

women's empowerment in Pakistan, shedding light on the need for continued efforts to uplift and support women in all aspects of life.

At the seminar, Atia Quresh, the esteemed Head of the Department of Pakistan Studies, engaged the audience with a discussion on the multifaceted issues faced by women in Pakistani society. Her insights and expertise added depth to the conversation, highlighting the importance of addressing these challenges.

Dr. Sania, the Director of Academics, discussed the evolving role of women in the contemporary era, emphasizing their active engagement in various fields and their pivotal contributions to society.

This enlightening seminar served as a platform for thought-provoking discussions, raising awareness about women's empowerment and the necessity of gender equality in Pakistan. It was a significant step forward in the ongoing dialogue on this crucial issue.

Premarital thalassemia screening test mandatory to overcome this disease

PESHAWAR (APP): The government should make premarital thalassemia screening test mandatory so that to overcome on the ever increasing Thalassemia cases among the children, Chairman Hamza Foundation Ejaz Ali Khan said during a meeting with Medical Director Dr. Tariq here on Sunday.

The number of registered patients in Hamza Foundation has exceeded 1475, so the test should be made mandatory for all the affected families and other

before marriage to prevent the dangerous disease.

He said Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Hospital Peshawar proposed to conduct thalassemia screening of the affected family before marriage to prevent the dangerous disease thalassemia.

The number of registered patients in the institution has exceeded 1475 and the number is increasing day by day. In addition to the founder of the institution, Ejaz Ali Khan, Medical Director Dr. Tariq,

relatives of the patients participated in the meeting held at Hamza Foundation.

On this occasion, it was said that in families where there are children suffering from thalassemia disease, thalassemia screening of the affected family members should be made mandatory. He said with such steps the disease does not spread further after marriage. He said that when two thalassemia carriers get married, they must get a prenatal test so that a child suffering from thalassemia major is not born.

Thalassemia children under treatment are in desperate need of blood every 10 to 15 days and this is a painful process.

Hamza Foundation is providing blood components and medicines to 40 to 50 sick children daily free of charge. People of all schools of thought should also cooperate for the treatment of hundreds of poor and indigent patients under treatment because this disease is found mostly in poor families.



PESHAWAR: Secretary Ziaul Haq presenting flowers bouquet to caretaker Minister Zafarullah Khan Umarzai at Directorate of Transport.

Study on 'Life time Cost of Public Servants' held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), A Premier National Think Tank's current study has investigated the burden that each newly recruited individual (ranging from Grade 1-22) brings on the national budget.

However, politicians raise political slogans of offering public employment to a substantial number of individuals, without acknowledging that the Government's job is to create new opportunities and not offering jobs, said in a press release here on Sunday.

However, by providing employment opportunities to many individuals, especially within their own party or patronage network, politicians can cultivate a base of supporters who are more likely to vote for them in elections.

According to the findings of the study titled "Life time Cost of Public Servants", it is identified

that the net present value of a Grade-1 employee hired in July 2023 would be PKR 8, 17, 27 million including salary & pension, perks & benefits and operating cost respectively.

It has also been calculated that the sums of PKR 49, PKR 136, and PKR 245 million will be required by the state of Pakistan to afford a Grade-17 officer for a period of thirty years.

BPS Salary & Pension Expenditure (30 Years) Salary & Other benefits (30 Years) Salary, benefits and Operating Expenses (30 Years) 1 8.0 million 17.0 million 27.0 million 17 49.0 million 136 million 245 million.

These sums represent what the State and Government of Pakistan will have to spend on a worker. This prompts the question of whether or not we have sufficient revenue streams to support the compensation for the next 30 years; if not, it's a good time to pause and consider the implications of adding a new worker to the system,

given that the State of Pakistan and the government will be responsible for covering the cost through taxation.

According to the Press Release issued from PIDE, it was said that to break free of its debt spiral, Pakistan needs long-term planning; salaries and pensions are a major expense for the institute, so PIDE has proposed being extra careful and cost-effective before deciding to keep an employee.

This way, the institute can figure out how it can afford to pay the person for the rest of his or her working life.

It is essential for governments to evaluate the long-term financial implications of immediate job creation and to find a balance between short-term benefits and sustainable fiscal policies.

While the creation of immediate jobs can have a good effect, it is equally important to note that rapid job creation can have negative effects.

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Local Government Department's Water and Sanitation Cell (WatSan), in collaboration with the University of Peshawar, UNICEF, and other sector partners will hold the Inter-Universities Skit Competition, an event that aims to raise awareness about Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WatSan) issues and their possible solutions.

The event coincides with the forthcoming Global Handwashing Day falling on October 17, 2023 will be

organized in Agha Khan Auditorium University of Peshawar.

A total of seven universities from Peshawar, Mardan and Charsadda are participating in the inaugural round.

Furthermore, they will creatively communicate vital ideas about water, sanitation, hygiene, and the importance of handwashing in preventing disease by utilizing the art form of skits.

The competition would not only showcase the talents of the students but also serve as a platform for

advocating for better hygiene practices.

Likewise, the event will be attended by students, sector partners, and media representatives, all of whom will play an integral role in furthering the cause of clean water, improved sanitation, and enhanced hygiene practices.

The Inter-Universities Skit Competition represents a collective effort to address the pressing issues related to WatSan and celebrate the significance of Global Handwashing Day.



PESHAWAR: A view of Peshawar historical bridge 'Mughal Pul'.



In brief

Three killed for resisting robbery

AHMEDPUR SHARQIA (INP): Unidentified gunmen shot dead three members of a family for resisting robbery in Ahmedpur Sharqia, Punjab. According to details, the incident occurred in Azeemwala, Ahmedpur Sharqia, Punjab, where three people including a man, his wife and a six-year-old were shot dead for resisting a robbery. After getting the information, police reached the spot and shifted the bodies to the hospital. The investigation has been launched.

Two killed in Shikarpur

SHIKARPUR (INP): Two people were killed in a clash between two groups of Dahani and Jeeha tribes near Town Madeji in Shikarpur on Sunday. Although a heavy contingent of police reached site of the incident to calm the situation down, still the exchange of fire between the two groups continued even in its presence. Police said that the incident was the consequence of old enmity. The Force further said that bodies had been shifted to hospital.

Prime suspect of murder held

KOHAT (INP): Kohat Police has arrested the main suspect involved in the gruesome incident of the Jangal Khel triple murder here on Sunday. According to Kohat police, accused Yasin resident of Jangal Khel was arrested by ASI Faisal Khan along with a police force from the Ghamkol camp, while 1 pistol was recovered from the possession. The arrested accused has reported the presence of the victims to sons of Farooq residents of Camp No. 3, as a result of which 3 persons were killed. The arrested accused has been transferred to Jangal Khel police station for further legal action.

Motorcyclist killed

FAISALABAD (APP): A motorcyclist was killed while another sustained injuries in the area of Sadar police station. Rescue 1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that two speeding motorcycles collided with each other near Bara Muhammad Wala on Jaranwala Road. As a result, a motorcyclist Danish Muhammad (26) resident of Chak No. 205-RB received serious injuries and died on the spot while the other biker was provided first aid. Later, the body was handed over to his relatives for burial after completing necessary formalities, he added.

Two injured in roof collapse

FAISALABAD (APP): Two persons received serious injuries in a roof collapse incident in the area of Sadar police station. Rescue 1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that old and redundant roof of a house caved in at Jaranwala Road in Chak No.109-RB after broke of its garter. As a result, two persons Sabir and Waris buried beneath the debris and received serious injuries.

Doctor stresses regular checkup

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Principal, Quaid-e-Azam Medical College and Eye Specialist, Prof-Dr. Sofia Furruk has stressed the need that people suffering from eye-related diseases should undergo medical check-ups regularly. She said this while addressing a ceremony held under the Health and Nutrition Program at Quaid-e-Azam Medical College here. She said that a number of people in our society were suffering from eye-related diseases.

Voting: Necessity, civic duty, says DEC

MARDAN (APP): The District Election Commissioner (DEC), Mardan Zia-ul-Rahim said that voting is not just a necessity but it is the duty of every citizen to choose the best candidate through his vote, who can solve the problems of the people, which will help the country.

For the benefit of nation, he said that according to the constitution of Pakistan, women, men, youth, disabled persons, transgender and minorities all have equal right to vote. Raise awareness that they should register their vote before the elections and use it properly during the elections.

He expressed these views while addressing a meeting organized by Sai-

baan Development Organization Mardan with the support of non-governmental organization Shirkat Gah. Muhammad Arif of Saibaan Development Organization Mardan also addressed the meeting and said that the vote is the trust of the nation, so not using it properly is a betrayal.

He highlighted the importance of registration and said that apart from voter's registration, he urged the voters to vote in maximum number on the day of the election, especially the measures to ensure the vote registration of the women and the youth class was a positive step.

Zia-ul-Rahim said that the people elect their representatives from the local

level to the national level through the power of vote, so it is absolutely necessary for every individual who has an identity card to vote.

The vote is a national trust which should be used properly to elect better representatives, he added. Personal interest should be taken for getting a national identity card and vote's registration. He said that District Voter Education Committees have been formed at the district level.

The District Election Commissioner has urged the public to fulfill their national responsibility by making a National Identity Card and registering their votes immediately after they turn 18 and give proof to be a responsible citizen.

Huge quantity of smuggled cigarettes seized



F.P. Report

KOHAT: In a major operation, the Giant Anti-Smuggling team seized a huge quantity of smuggled cigarettes in Kohat on Sunday.

According to official

details, the Giant Anti-Smuggling Team under the supervision of Collector Customs DI Khan, RPO Kohat, DPO Hangu and AC Customs Kohat conducted a major operation and seized two trucks from the North Waziristan

route.

Four hundred and fifty cartons of smuggled foreign branded cigarettes were recovered.

The seized cigarettes and trucks are worth approximately Rs 150 million (15-crore) rupees.

‘White Cane Day’ celebrated in Abbottabad

ABBOTTABAD (APP): The White Cane Day here on Sunday was observed like other parts of the country to commemorate this special occasion.

The event, held under the auspices of the Blind Association, featured an awareness rally that started from the Jalal Baba Auditorium and culminated at the Abbottabad Press Club.

The rally was led by Commissioner Hazara Division, Syed Zahir ul Islam.

In the rally participants included Lieutenant General R. Ayaz Saleem Rana, President of the Blind Association Qari Khurshid, and the Head of the Blind School, Sardar Ayaz. Visually impaired individuals and other stakeholders were present.

While addressing the rally Commissioner Hazara Division, Syed Zahir ul Islam, highlighted the importance of White Cane Day.

He recalled that in 1964, the decision was made to globally to celebrate a day

dedicated to ensuring the safety, security, and dignified travel of visually impaired individuals.

This day serves as a reminder to uplift their spirits and work towards their protection.

The commissioner pledged to provide job quotas for visually impaired special individuals and ensure age-related accommodations.

He emphasized the exceptional skills and courage possessed by these special individuals, asserting that their contributions should be recognized and appreciated.

To address the issues faced by visually impaired individuals, he proposed the appointment of a focal person who would prioritize problem-solving.

Additionally, it was announced that Rs 100,000 would be allocated for the welfare and well-being of visually impaired individuals.

The event concluded with the distribution of awards to visually impaired persons.

Prior to this, members of

the Blind Association had also highlighted the significance of the White Cane, shedding light on its importance and the challenges faced by those who rely on it.

‘White Cane Safety Day’ observed

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Special Education Complex Mardan on Sunday observed the White Cane Safety Day with zest and zeal. The main objective of observing the Day 'may is to create awareness among the general public about the mobility issues of visually impaired people.

In this regard, Special Education Complex Mardan organized a walk that highlighted the importance of observing the day.

White Cane Safety Day is observed annually on October 15. It's a day dedicated to visually impaired people.

Speaking on the occasion Deputy Director Special Education Aneeq Ahsan said that the white cane represents remarkable achievements and symbolizes the independence of visually impaired persons.

White Cane is a tool used by many people who are blind or visually impaired. White Cane is a symbol of freedom, which allows the visually impaired people to travel from one place to another, safely and freely, he added.

DC chairs meeting

KOHAT (APP): An important meeting regarding the prevention of dengue virus was held on Sunday under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Kohat Dr. Azmatullah Wazir.

In the meeting, the officers gave a detailed briefing about the measures to eliminate and prevent dengue virus. The DC was informed about the available medicines, equipment and machinery used to eliminate dengue virus.

The officers of all the concerned departments attended the meeting.

The DC issued instructions to the officers of the concerned departments to display banners regarding the prevention of dengue in mosques, union councils and offices and to clean the water tanks as soon as possible and also to teach students in the morning assembly in schools. "Awareness should be given regarding the elimination of dengue virus", he added.

He directed the ACs to conduct awareness campaigns regarding dengue in their areas.

20 couples tie knot in Landi Kotal

Ahmad Nabi

LANDI KOTAL: Twenty couples tied the knot in a mass wedding ceremony held here in Kando Khel village of Landi Kotal district Khyber on Sunday.

The welfare activity was organized under the auspices of Shinwari Welfare Organization.

Beside office bearers of the organization, a large number of tribal elders, administration and police officials, political and welfare associations' workers, relatives of the bride grooms and brides and local tribesmen participated in the moot.

The main attraction of the collective wedding ceremony was 20 young bride grooms wearing garlands

on the occasion.

Beside cash, the couple was given dowry comprising commodities of daily usage including furniture and home appliances worth of Rs.0.2 million.

Haji Aslam Shinwari, the Central President of the welfare organization said that the aim of wellbeing activity was to assist the downtrodden families who could not afford to marry their children.

Although keeping in view high demands, this year, they financed the expenses of marriages of 20 couples that were selected from Shinwari, Afridi and Shelmani tribes.

According to the organizers selection had been made on age and elderly bridegrooms were given



MULTAN: People participating in a rally to show solidarity with Palestine at Abdali Road.

Childhood classrooms open in primary schools

SWABI (APP): United Nations UNICEF and Hashoo Foundation in collaboration with the Elementary and Secondary Education Department (E&SED) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, launched 500 ECE classrooms in 23 districts of KP.

Funding for these projects is provided by the Global Partnership for Education and Education Keynote, which support 1,600 centers and 100 centers respectively. This initiative will benefit more than 96,000 children in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

UNICEF has a long-standing partnership with E&SED, which provides technical and financial support to expand educational opportunities, particularly for girls, and improve education service delivery through evidence-based planning. Offers assistance.

Their contributions focus on a number of areas including access, equity, inclusion, quality, governance, and education management. In communities, emphasis is placed on advancing women's education. Hashoo Foundation, with a rich history of promoting education, has reached 550,278 children since the inception of Hasho Schools in 2002.

Notably, 25,500 girls and 24,500 boys are benefiting from the Child Education Support Program, and the 2022 Quality Education Program exemplifies the foundation's dedication to expanding the education landscape.

The ECE centers to be inaugurated are among the 500 centers being set up by

the Hashoo Foundation in collaboration with the Implementation Support Unit of E&SED and E&SE Directorate spread across 23 districts of KP.

The inaugural event brought together key stakeholders, including UNICEF, Elementary and Secondary Education Department (E&SED), Hashoo Foundation, KP Government, and local community representatives.

Their significant contribution and support is greatly appreciated. Hashoo Foundation Acting Country Director Abdul Waheed expressed his hearty satisfaction at the launch of the ECE project, which promises a bright future for the children of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Highlighting the profound impact the establishment of 500 ECE schools has had on the lives of children across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the UNICEF education expert reiterated his unwavering commitment to support partners like Hashoo Foundation and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The Secretary commended the tireless efforts of GPE, UNICEF and Hashoo Foundation and reiterated their firm commitment to provide full support.

Acknowledging that the success of the project will empower children with education while strengthening communities and contributing to the overall development of the region, he emphasized the department's commitment to this transformational journey.



priority.

With limited sources they tried their best to serve the poor and deserving couples; he added and asked the philanthropists to join them in the noble cause.

Sadaqat Khan, a bridegroom from Pased Khel village, appreciated the right-

eous act of the organization and said those youth who could not bear expenses of marriage would certainly benefited from it.

Local people lauded the efforts of the organization and said such kind of activity motivates other philanthropists to work for the

welfare of the poor segment of the society.

Food had also been arranged for the guests who attended the ceremony.

At the end relatives of the bride grooms and tribal youth expressed their jubilation by presenting a dance.

Adventure tourism seeks digital media exposure for foreign investment

CHITRAL (APP): The cold breeze with chirping birds coming from the majestic Trich Mir Mountain peak that recently received winter's first snowfall takes adventure tourists into a lap of serenity.

Amid hide and seek between clouds and sun over Trich Mir, the highest mountain peak of Pakistan outside of the Gilgit Baltistan region carrying 7,708 meters height above sea level and 33rd tallest peak in the world, grabs visitors' attention soon after entering Chitral city.

"I have visited many countries and mountainous tourist resorts but Trich Mir's breathtaking beauty was beyond my imagination," said Abu Zafar, President, Alpine Adventure Sports Club of Pakistan while talking to APP.

Offering great challenges to mountaineers and adventure sports enthusiasts to explore, he said Trich Mir was first ascent on July 21, 1950, by a Norwegian expedition team

and depicted in the world documentary film 'Trich Mir Til Topps (to the top of Trichmir)' take tourists into the lap of serenity after entering its base camp amid thick deodar forest and waterfall.

"Trichmir is ideally suited for mountaineering and adventure sports in May-September", Zafar said, adding Trichmir, Falask Sair (5957 meters height) peak in Swat in Hindkosh range and Malaka Parbath peak(5290m) in Kaghan Manshera made Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's an ideal destination for mountains and adventure sports.

Besides exploring Trich Mir, a tourist could also enjoy the centuries-old Kalash culture that came here in the 18th century when 12 people of Kalasha migrated to Chitral from British India for trade, and business and established their base camps in various places for residence and settled in Chitral.

Kalash culture is a unique identity of Chitral that also attracted UK

Prince William and his wife, adding underrated Trich Mir, Falak Sair and Malka Parbath if promoted on digital media with improved road infrastructure could prove the best winter sports destinations.

Muhammad Ali Syed, General Manager, KP Tourism Authority told APP that northern areas of KP, especially Swat and Chitral were going to become the winter tourism capitals of Pakistan due to its seven unique features including river rafting, trout fish, snowfall, paragliding, mountaineering, biking and skiing.

He said Trich Mir, Kalam and Malama Jaba were most suited for skiing due to regular snowfall during winter while Kalam in Swat and Kunhar rivers at Kaghan for river rafting.

Zilakat Malik, former Chairman Economics Department, at the University of Peshawar said that adventure tourism has been overlooked in the past despite its significant potential in Pakistan espe-

cially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in respect of economy, investment and development.

While citing World Travel & Tourism Council Report 2021, he said the travel and tourism sector had contributed \$8.8 billion, approximately 2.9% of the total GDP of Pakistan in 2017. Pakistan's total GDP contribution of tourism remained \$15 billion in 2019 which was 5.7% of the total GDP. However, this growth was slashed to USD 11.6 billion i.e. 25% in 2020 while tourism jobs fell 11.1% from 3.45 million in 2019 and further down to 3.63 million in 2020 due to COVID-19.

He claimed that China had earned about USD 814.1 billion from the tourism and travel industry in 2022, Malaysia's 13.13 billion ringgit and Indonesia's tourism share remained 413.73 trillion rupiah in 2021.

Despite being home to Gandhara and Indus civilizations together with five

mountain peaks of over 8,000 meters in height, he said Pakistan was unable to earn much from tourism and there was a need to promote the country's splendid sites and mountains wealth enriched with enormous beauty by using digital technology.

He said tourism in Pakistan especially in Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would flourish after completion of CPEC projects and the time has come to increase linkages between Pakistani and foreign tourist companies.

The KP government has established camping pods at Sharan Saiful Malook lake, Gabeen Jaba Swat, Mahaband Buner-Swabi, Allai Batagram, Bamburait Chitral, Tandyani Abbottabad, Bisigram Swat, Yakhtangi Shangla, Shaheed e Sir, Malka Swat and Sheikh Badin DI Khan. Bishigram, Shran, Yakhtangi, Shaheed e Sir and Malk camping pods have already been opened for tourists after completion

of renovation works.

Each pod has two to four beds for families, a wash-room and a small kitchen, Muhammad Ali Syed said, adding Rs3500 to Rs5000 per day/night stay was being charged against Rs15,000 to Rs 20,000 per room by a private hotel at Khagan, Naran and Galiyat valleys.

He said that 10 more camping pods at Jargo and Sulatanir in Swat, Lashkargha Broghal Valley and Surlaspur Shandor valley Upper Chitral, Kumrat valley in Upper Dir, Laram Top and Shahi Bin Shahi in Lower Dir, Lilowani Alpuri in Shangla Samanah Top in Orakzai/Hangu and Kalam Swat were planned.

He said that a two-kilometers long new chairlift was being constructed at Ayubia Nathia Gali to promote adventure sports.

Omair Khattak, General Manager of Investment, KP Tourism Authority said that Chitral would become a hub of adventure sports and tourism after the construc-

tion of a cable car between Madaklasht Chitral and Kurmat Dir Upper.

The proposed cable car would be constructed with an estimated cost of USD 200 million with financial assistance from the World Bank, adding the 16 kilometres long cable car would have 5280 meters in height and would pass through different valleys and mountainous ranges with facilities of a base station at Kumrat, stops stations and car parking plazas for 500 to 600 vehicles with security.

The base station would include mosques, restaurants, walking tracks and a final station at Madaklasht. A feasibility study of the mega project has been started and will be completed in eight to 10 years.

The cable car project on completion would attract an estimated 1.2 million tourists and adventure sports lovers per year which would turn the entire Malakand division into a hub of tourism and business at large.



Amid international crises, US Congress handcuffed by Republican feud



WASHINGTON (Reuters): As the flames of war burn in the Middle East and Ukraine, the U.S. Congress is immobilized by a brawl among Republicans, a dysfunction that even some in Donald Trump's party worry is giving comfort to the nation's adversaries. The House of Representatives has drifted leaderless for 12 days since eight of its 221 Republicans ousted Speaker Kevin McCarthy. That has held up any legislative action, from debating further aid to Ukraine as it battles a Russian invasion to a statement of support for ally Israel in its war with Hamas. Republicans on Friday nominated hardliner Jim Jordan for speaker, but it was not clear if the longtime antagonist of party leadership would have the support needed to win a floor vote this week. McCarthy's removal was the latest in a series of self-created crises Congress has faced in a year that saw lawmakers bring the federal government to the brink of defaulting on its \$31.4 trillion in debt and just two weeks ago narrowly avert the fourth partial U.S. government shutdown in a decade. That latter move led to McCarthy's ouster by colleagues angry that the spending bill passed with more Democratic than Republican votes, even though any measure passed by the House needs to clear the Democratic-controlled Senate and be signed by Democratic President Joe Biden to become law. Some House Republicans voiced frustration and anger that they have gone so long without being able to choose a leader. "The world is on fire. Our adversaries are watching what we do and ... quite frankly, they like it," said Republican House Foreign Affairs

Committee Chairman Michael McCaul. Speaking to reporters as his colleagues huddled to discuss their next moves, McCaul added, "I see a lot of threats out there. One of the biggest threats I see is in that room because we can't unify as a conference." The dysfunction was undermining Americans' already weak confidence in Congress, with two-thirds of respondents to a Reuters/Ipsos survey this month saying they did not believe Washington politicians could set aside partisan differences for the good of the nation. Half said they did not believe lawmakers could carry out their most basic function of passing laws. Former President Trump, the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican nomination, has at times been a cheerleader for the chaos. The logjam continued as fighting in the Middle East intensified with Israel launching an assault on the Gaza Strip following a surprise attack by Hamas fighters. Lawmakers of both parties have voiced support for Israel, but a leaderless House has been unable to take any official action. Republican Representative Zach Nunn said the conflict hit home in his Iowa district. He said a local family struggled to fly out of Israel until a private airplane was arranged, a Des Moines family was "trapped" in Gaza and some military friends aboard U.S. ships now in the Mediterranean would see their paychecks suspended if Congress does not avert a government shutdown next month. "Let's start passing budgets. Let's start moving forward with our national security. Let's stand with our strongest ally in the Middle East right

now. And most importantly, let's have a government that is functioning," Nunn told reporters. House Democrats echoed that stance. "We hope our Republican colleagues will put an end to the self-inflicted chaos so that we can begin to govern on behalf of the American people," Representative Pete Aguilar, a member of House Democratic leadership, told reporters. The troubles are not confined to the House. In the Democratic-controlled Senate, a Republican has since February single-handedly held up the confirmations of hundreds of military officers, including many top commanders. Senator Tommy Tuberville is protesting a Pentagon policy that reimburses service members for out-of-state travel to access abortions. After the attack on Israel, Tuberville said he will not drop his blockade of Biden's nominees. Meanwhile, 20 months into Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, many Republicans in Congress want to back away from additional military and economic aid to Kyiv, feeding uncertainty about the U.S. commitment to stand up to Russian President Vladimir Putin. "With the pressing needs we have right now for additional support for both Israel and Ukraine, the lack of a speaker ... is very problematic," said Elizabeth Hoffman, director of congressional and government affairs at the Center for Strategic & International Studies. "The needs are very urgent and are not getting less urgent," she said in a telephone interview. All year Congress has been locked in a bitter struggle as hardline House Republicans demand profound government spending cuts as a way of starting to tame a budget deficit that reached about \$1.7 trillion in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30. As a result, federal agencies face many of their operations ceasing on Nov. 17 unless a deal can be reached. "I just sense a real clash coming here in early November," said William Hoagland, senior vice president at the Bipartisan Policy Center. Some Republicans were not fazed by the House's lingering stalemate. "We can go without a speaker for a long time because Congress doesn't actually have to be in," said Representative Scott Perry, who chairs the right-wing House Freedom Caucus. "The American people are at work today. Babies are being born today and this isn't the first thing on their priority list."

Anger, sorrow as Indigenous Australians weigh referendum defeat

SYDNEY (AFP/APP): Aboriginal Australians on Sunday voiced anger and sorrow over the rejection of a landmark push for Indigenous rights and recognition, which was spurned by the country's white majority in a binding national referendum. Indigenous leaders called for a "week of silence" to mourn the "bitter" outcome of the poll, after Prime Minister Anthony Albanese had urged his divided nation to heal "in the spirit of unity". With more than 70 percent of ballots counted Sunday morning, around 60 percent of Australians said "no" when asked if the 1901 constitution should be changed to recognise the country's first inhabitants. The reforms would also have created a consultative body -- a "Voice" to Parliament -- tasked with working on solutions to the pervasive inequalities plaguing Aboriginal communities. The proposal was defeated in every state across the country. Aboriginal advocacy groups said Sunday that millions of Australians had ignored the chance to atone for the "brutal dispossession of our people". "Now is the time for silence, to mourn and deeply consider the consequence of this outcome," a joint statement read. "The truth is that we offered this recognition and it has been refused. We know now where we stand in our own country," it added, before calling for a "week of silence" to grieve and reflect. Indigenous voter Auntie Shirley Lomas was defiant in defeat, saying it had done nothing to crush her resolve. "Aboriginal people have been here for 60,000 years and we'll continue to be here," she told AFP in



the wake of the result. "Voters voted no because they fear change. Most of them wouldn't even know an Aboriginal person." Just under four percent of Australia's 26 million population are Indigenous. Political gains have not come easily for Aboriginal Australians, who have fought tooth-and-nail over the years to secure basic voting rights, own traditional lands, and win election to parliament. Against this backdrop, Indigenous "yes" campaigner Dean Parkin said the crushing outcome was "painfully familiar" and just the latest "chapter in the story of our struggle". Supporters saw the referendum as a way to unite the country while addressing the historical injustices inflicted upon First Nations people. Instead, it has exposed the deep racial fault lines that still run through the country more than two cen-

turies since British colonisers dropped anchor in Sydney Harbour. Albanese has vowed that his government will continue working to deliver Indigenous recognition -- although it is unclear what options remain. Prominent Aboriginal activist and scholar Marcia Langton declared that decades of work to build trust between Australians had failed. "Reconciliation is dead," she told an Indigenous television broadcaster. While the vast majority of Aboriginal Australians supported the referendum, some opposed it as a token measure that would not drive meaningful change. Indigenous "no" campaigner Warren Mundine told national broadcaster ABC on Sunday he was thankful the referendum had failed. The opposition campaign had deftly channelled fears about the role and effectiveness of the "Voice"

assembly, encouraging people to vote "no" if they were uncertain. The debate was accompanied by reams of online misinformation suggesting the "Voice" would lead to land seizures, that it would create a South African-style system of apartheid, or that it was part of a United Nations plot. Conservative opposition leader Peter Dutton, who staunchly opposed the referendum, expressed his relief on Saturday evening. "It is clear obviously that the referendum has not been successful and I think that is good for our country," Aboriginal Australians, whose ancestors settled on the continent around 60,000 years ago, are today celebrated as the flag bearers of one of the world's oldest continuous cultures. But 235 years since the first British colonisers arrived, they are still far more likely to die young, live in poverty, and wind up in prison.

Poland votes in 'most important' election since communism



WARSAW (AFP/APP): Poland votes on Sunday in parliamentary elections that could greatly affect future ties with the European Union and neighbouring Ukraine, as the ruling populists bid for a third consecutive term in power. Opinion polls indicate the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party will get the most votes but may struggle to build a governing coalition, giving a chance to the opposition led by former EU chief Donald Tusk. Polling stations across the EU and NATO member open at 0500 GMT and close at 1900 GMT, with exit polls expected immediately after and final results on Monday. Some 29 million people are eligible to vote, including half a million registered abroad in a large diaspora. A PiS victory could exacerbate tensions with the EU and Ukraine and will dismay campaigners concerned about the future of media freedoms, women's and migrants' rights. "We have ceded some of our powers to the EU but now that's enough, nothing more. We are in the EU, and we want to stay there, but in an EU of sovereign countries," PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski said at the party's last major rally in Sandomierz on Friday. At his own final

rally ahead of a day of electoral silence on Saturday, Tusk told supporters in Pruszkow that PiS had "secret plans" to leave the EU and said they were "leading the country down the wrong path". "This is the most important day in the history of our democracy since 1989," Tusk said at the rally. "We will also be voting for Poland to remain in the European Union. Poland is the heart of Europe," he added. PiS has vowed to press ahead with controversial reforms of the judiciary which it says are aimed at rooting out corruption but which the EU sees as undermining democracy.

The row has blocked billions of euros in EU funding. The most likely coalition partner for PiS would be Confederation, a far-right party that has called for an end to Poland's large-scale assistance for Ukraine and has campaigned on a strongly anti-migrant platform. But Confederation has publicly ruled out such an alliance and some analysts say it is unlikely to happen because of simmering tensions between the two parties. The hope among liberals is that, even if Tusk's Civic Coalition comes second, it will have enough votes to form a government with two smaller potential allies. The elections are for the lower and upper houses of parliament and PiS has organised a referendum on the same day with leading questions on migrants and the economy, which the opposition has called for people to boycott. Supporters of PiS say victory on Sunday will allow the party to fulfil its vision of a strong, sovereign Poland based on traditional Catholic values. The campaign has been characterised by personal attacks on Tusk by the ruling party, which has accused him of working in the interests of Germany, Russia and the EU. PiS has also ramped up anti-migrant rhetoric, with Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki saying the country should be protected against illegal immigrants "who have no respect for our culture".

Amid escalating drug war, Ecuadorans elect a new president

QUITO (AFP/APP): Ecuadorans vote for a new president Sunday in the midst of a bloody drug war and a rash of political assassinations that cut short the bid of a popular candidate. The remaining finalists -- lawyer Luisa Gonzalez, 45, and banana empire heir Daniel Noboa, 35 -- campaigned in bullet-proof vests as a climate of fear grips the once-peaceful country. Both have vowed to prioritize the escalating violence. The main concern of Ecuadorans, according to recent polls, is crime

and insecurity in a country where the murder rate has quadrupled in the four years to 2022. Some 54,000 police were deployed to keep the vote safe. Long a haven between major cocaine exporters Colombia and Peru, violence in the South American nation has exploded in recent years as enemy gangs with links to Mexican and Colombian cartels vie for control. The fighting has seen at least 460 inmates massacred in prison since February 2021 -- many beheaded or burned alive

in mass riots. And the bloodbath has spilled into the streets, with gangs dangling headless corpses from city bridges and detonating car bombs outside police stations in a show of force. Some 3,600 Ecuadorans have been murdered so far this year, according to the Ecuadorian Organized Crime Observatory, including nearly a dozen politicians. In August, the violence claimed the life of anti-graft and anti-cartel journalist and presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio, mowed

down in a barrage of sub-machine gun fire after a campaign speech. He had been polling in second place. A state of emergency was declared after Villavicencio's assassination, and Noboa and Gonzalez both campaigned with heavy security details. Reporters following them have also had to don protective jackets and helmets and travel in armored vehicles. Many have received death threats. Seven suspects in Villavicencio's assassination were killed in prison.

70% of north Gaza's population deprived of healthcare services

ANKARA (AA/APP): Amid an Israeli order to evacuate the region and continued bombardment, 70% of the population in north Gaza is now deprived of health care, the Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip announced on Sunday. "After the UN evacuated its centers and stopped providing health care, 70% of the population in North Gaza is now deprived of medical care," said a ministry statement. On Friday, the Israeli army ordered over 1 mil-

lion people to evacuate north Gaza for the southern strip, with a ground operation seen as likely soon. The order was widely condemned, with the UN and other international actors warning it would lead to a humanitarian catastrophe, and hospitals in Gaza saying many patients were not well enough to travel. The strict Israel blockade of Gaza since last week -- cutting off water, electricity, food, and medical supplies -- is also taking a

heavy toll on healthcare providers. In a dramatic escalation of Middle East tensions, last weekend Israeli forces launched a sustained military campaign against the Gaza Strip, a response to a military offensive by the Palestinian group Hamas in Israeli territories. The conflict began when Hamas initiated Operation Al-Aqsa Flood against Israel, a multi-pronged surprise attack including a barrage of rocket launches and infiltrations into Israel via

land, sea, and air. Hamas said the operation was in retaliation for the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem and Israeli settlers' growing violence against Palestinians. The Israeli military then launched Operation Swords of Iron against Hamas targets within the Gaza Strip. Israel's response has extended into cutting water and electricity supplies to Gaza, further worsening living conditions in an area that has suffered under a crippling siege since 2007.

Iran warns 'no one can guarantee' control of situation if Israel invades Gaza



DOHA (AFP/APP): Iran on Sunday warned that any Israeli ground offensive in the Gaza Strip could escalate conflicts elsewhere in the Middle East. Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian held talks with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, as Israeli troops massed on the border. "No one can guarantee the control of the situation and the non-expansion of the conflicts," he said, according to an Iranian foreign ministry statement. "Those who are interested in preventing the scope of war and crisis from expanding, need to prevent

the current barbaric attacks... against citizens and civilians in Gaza," he added. Amir-Abdollahian also criticised the United States, which has given its unequivocal backing to Israel since the October 7 attacks by Hamas fighters that left 1,300 people dead in Israel. Israeli air strikes aimed at Hamas leaders behind the deadly attack have killed more than 2,300. On both sides, the toll was mostly civilians. In Washington, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said the United States feared an escalation of war, and the

prospect of Iran -- Israel's long-time foe and supporter of Hamas -- becoming "directly engaged". Iran's top diplomat was in Qatar on Sunday as part of a regional tour that also included stops in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. Israel has stationed troops and tanks on its UN-patrolled northern border with Lebanon and closed a four kilometre (2.5 mile) wide zone to civilians after deadly exchanges of cross-border fire with Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah. Western countries who support Israel have warned against a regional spillover

of the conflict. The United States has deployed a second aircraft carrier to the region in an effort to "deter hostile actions against Israel", Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said. Hamas took more than 100 hostages in last weekend's attack. Sunday's Iranian foreign ministry statement said Amir-Abdollahian had met high-ranking Hamas officials in Beirut and Doha who described "the issue of civilian prisoners as a priority" and would "take the necessary measures". But there was no further detail on what those would be.

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 415-3704551

WB report and Pakistani economists

A recent report from the World Bank has revealed that only 8 million people are registered in the tax net out of 114 million workers currently employed in multiple sectors. The report further said that tax reforms could enhance tax share in Pakistan's economy by two per cent, while the imposition of tax on agricultural income could increase tax share by one per cent. The global lender further said that direct taxes have only a 33 per cent share in the country's tax revenues whereas indirect tax poll constitutes the remaining 67 per cent of government income. The bank's report pointed out that real estate enjoys more investment owing to a lesser rate of taxation in the sector.

Realistically, Pakistani leaders and their economic advisors never came up with the sincere effort to set up the economic foundations of the country on a purely professional, sustainable and long-term basis without compromising national interests and public well-being. The economic policies of successive governments have always been heavily influenced by the vested interests of political groups, national entities, feduals, landlords, business cartels and other pressure groups in the society, which led to adhocism, interval economic growth, persistent current account deficit, recurrent economic depletion, along with an all-time expanding poverty throughout in the past. Thus politically motivated policy strengthened the cartelization in the national economy, contracted the national tax base, and promoted a non-digitalized and informal economy which resulted in unceasing economic instability in the Country. Previously, the World Bank highlighted the eye-opening revelation about rapidly worsening poverty with a shocking rate of 5% increase on a year-on-year basis, posing serious risks to the survival of the South Asian economy and its over 240 million populace. According to statistics, around 12.5 million Pakistanis are currently living below the poverty line, and nearly 95 million are embattled with poverty and fighting for their survival amid serious economic challenges.

Realistically, global financial institutions, international think tanks, media houses and economic rating agencies have been highlighting the pros and cons of the fiscal policies and governance of the Pakistani leaders along with continuous commentary on remedial measures to fix problems and reset the country's economy on the right track, yet no Pakistani government could ever come out of its self assumed politically motivated economic doctrines that mostly ended up in failures throughout in the past. So far, no Benazir card, no Insaaf or Ahsaas program and no Sharif Medical City could provide relief to poor masses except by tagging banners of publicity and advertism.

The economic situation in the country is very dire, as skyrocketing inflation, cartelization, and the absence of governmental control together with a bulk of indirect taxes have made the lives of the poor masses miserable. Neither the Pakistani leaders nor west turned economists are so ignorant or professionally incompetent to assess the problems or evaluate solutions to the persistent economic depletion of the country, yet all those lack patriotism and loyalty to the nation. Otherwise, the World Bank, the IMF and other economic and monetary institutions had time and again sensitized the Pakistani government about the policy's flaws along with putting forth several suggestions to help the country redefine its economic model and revive its growth. There is a dire need for the adaptation of rational, unbiased and apolitical economic policies including broadening of tax base, and rationalization of direct and indirect taxes to increase revenues and provide relief to the poor masses. The Pakistani elite has wasted much time in past, hence it should not hesitate to implement regressive economic, legal and administrative measures essential for the economic recovery and prosperity of the country.

The legacy of Ale-Saud

The long-awaited news has finally surfaced in the global media that Saudi Arabia has suspended talks on potentially normalising ties with Israel, amid heightened hostility between the Jewish Army and the Palestinian resistance groups, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. Saudi Arabia has decided to pause discussion on possible normalisation and the Kingdom's Foreign Ministry has criticized Israel and denounced the displacement of Palestinians within Gaza and Israeli military attacks on civilians. The Saudi government has used tough language against their newly discovered friend and long-held foe since the war broke out in Palestine. Riyadh reaffirmed its categorical rejection of calls for the forced displacement of the Palestinian people from Gaza, and its condemnation of the continued Israeli invasion against defenceless civilians in the Palestinian coastal enclave which is encircled by Israeli territory from all around.

Historically, the Ale-Saud and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia once again fell prey to American diplomacy and set the stage for the normalization of its diplomatic and trade ties with the worst enemy of Islam, Muslims and the Arabs in this world. The Saudi leadership failed to assess its worth and strategic importance in the Muslim world and was ready to get prepared to auction its nation on a very low bid, just for the provision of civil nuclear energy along with US security guarantees that had never been upheld by the Americans throughout the past. The shortsighted Saudis forgot about the US's anti-KSA policies. Biden's calls for a Pariah state and the retrieval of a US missile defence shield amid Houthi airstrikes against the Kingdom. Historically, the Saudi Arabian government has largely abandoned the legacies of their grandfathers and Saudi Arabia's leading role in the Muslim world being the guardian of two holy Muslim sites in Makkah and Madina. In fact, Saudi Arabia's softness for the Jewish state and journey toward normalization of relations with Israel has sharply declined its reputation and public rating among Muslims around the globe, while Riyadh's slackness in echoing voice against Israeli atrocities and warcrimes against innocent civilians in Gaza and lack of support for Palestinians has further eroded its role at the global level. In fact, Saudi Arabia will prosper and will be strong enough until Riyadh does not get entrapped by the Western alliance. As the Jewish Embassy sits in Riyadh, no one would be able to defuse another Arab Spring and political uprising against Al-Saud. So, the KSA must demonstrate vigour and political wisdom by continuing its leading role without showing weakness against the staunch enemy. Civilian nuclear energy is currently for sale in the world and 1.5 billion Muslims are always ready to defend their sacred land.

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Libya — another year, another all-too-familiar failure

Hafed Al-Ghwell

As the world busies itself with newer crises and conflagrations, the UN continues to stumble through its bargain-making efforts in Libya, having foregone any serious attempt at actually striving for peace in the country.

The organization — through its Support Mission in Libya — has been too reliant on problematic bargains with the ruling elite, ambitious deadlines, and myopic assessments of the realities on the ground, resulting in a series of missteps that have increasingly undermined the prospects of stabilizing the nation. Its approach has been characterized by an alarming degree of naivete, much like expecting a pack of wolves to shepherd a flock of sheep.

Each iteration of often highly touted peace-building strategies has largely hinged on negotiations with the very elite who have been instrumental in perpetuating Libya's malaise. These so-called “elite bargains” often serve as little more than thinly veiled attempts to protect highly vested interests that are far removed from the concerns and aspirations of the ordinary Libyan citizen.

A stark example of this misguided approach is the UN's attempt to broker a political settlement between the nation's two rival governments through an arrangement that is akin to the Iraqi “muhasasa” model, in which unaccountable elites divvy up power and subject average citizens to some unwritten social contract.

Naturally, all it has achieved is the entrenchment of corruption, the perpetuation of structural violence, and the acceleration of the consolidation of power among Libya's illegitimate rulers, further marginalizing the majority.

Moreover, the UN's current strategy remains shackled by the pursuit of overly ambitious deadlines, as a consequence of external pressures rather than a careful analysis of prevailing realities. The rushed push for elections in 2021, which were ultimately postponed due to deep-rooted disagreements over the electoral framework, was a stark illustration of this flawed approach.

Yet, the UN risks repeating the same mistake, following its envoy Abdoulaye Bathily's emphatic declaration that elections “can and should occur” this year, despite the serious structural, legal, governance, legitimacy and inclusivity issues that remain unresolved, as well as ongoing disputes within and among rival factions.

This year, the UN Security Council adopted an initiative, proposed by Bathily, to establish a Libyan High-Level Panel for Elections, with the aim of facilitating the establishment of a legal framework and road map for holding elections by the end of the year.

However, this panel will serve only as a consultative body, with the UN stating that the authority to draft election laws would remain with the 6+6 Joint Committee, a constitutional body formed by an equal number of representatives of the two rival Libyan fac-

tions.

Through the panel, therefore, both of the rival administrations in the east and west of the country will retain the power and means to stall any political resolution they feel threatens their hold on power.

Most stakeholders, both local and international, were cautiously optimistic about the panel offering a potential path out of an enduring stalemate, given that although any elections that eventually take place will have stemmed from a very problematic political settlement behind closed

or the hybrid actors they are aligned with, which casts a long shadow over any potential resolution since it would more than likely undermine their self-interested objectives.

Yet it appears as though the UN will persist with its same old tactics. This is likely to be confirmed in the coming weeks when the Security Council renews the mandate of the support mission in the country, which is due to expire at the end of this month.

Not even the tragedy of Derna has sparked any sort of introspection about why

The current security situation in Libya is nothing short of a chaotic nightmare. A country once known for its significant oil reserves is now a playground for local militias with shifting allegiances, making a mockery of the very concept of national security. Their territorial and political objectives often clash, turning cities into war zones, with citizens mere collateral damage. Not to mention the rampant external interference, with problematic meddlers stubbornly refusing to withdraw their forces or the hybrid actors they are aligned with, which casts a long shadow over any potential resolution since it would more than likely undermine their self-interested objectives. Yet it appears as though the UN will persist with its same old tactics. This is likely to be confirmed in the coming weeks when the Security Council renews the mandate of the support mission in the country, which is due to expire at the end of this month. Not even the tragedy of Derna has sparked any sort of introspection about why the embattled UN repeatedly trips over the same stumbling blocks, year after year. One would think the stark governance deficits, poor infrastructure and appalling lack of emergency planning that led to the deaths of more than 4,000 Libyans, with 9,000 still missing and many more displaced from their homes, would at least have jolted the Security Council into taking a long, hard look at why its interventions in Libya keep failing.

doors, it will be a settlement nonetheless.

But after the man-made flooding disaster in Derna, in which one of the competing factions is culpable for the widespread destruction in the coastal city, the massive loss of life and the forestalling of any accountability for it, it is clear that the idea of any anticipated elections this year is a complete non-starter.

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Instead, a strange consensus seems to be forming around facilitating some type of agreement between the rival administrations in the east and west of Libya, which could entail the establishment of a new interim, caretaker “government of national something,” as long as it leads to elections.

It is a major shift from the UN's previous assessment that appointing a new “player” would only serve to incentivize the elites to

backtrack on their so-called electoral commitments and reinforce the status quo.

Strangely, the US also now concurs with this shift, in the hopes it will lead to what Washington desires to be “free and fair” elections — despite initially opposing any plans to depose Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh's Tripoli-based, UN-backed Government of National Unity.

However, a call for elections in the current climate underscores the myopic understanding of the convergence of varying crises in Libya, which are further complicated by developments beyond the nation's borders, since the North African country is one of several battlegrounds for rival geopolitical interests.

Almost as if it is avoiding confronting that dynamic, and accounting for it as part of a sustainable, feasible peace-building strategy, the UN would rather place too much focus on visible expressions of violence while neglecting the deep-rooted structural issues that fuel them.

As already seen in Iraq and Lebanon, an elite-driven, post-conflict consensus often masks a more insidious form of violence: The perpetuation of inter-elite competition, corruption and the erosion of state capacity, all of which cause significant harm to the public interest.

In Libya, the UN's strategies often favor stability over accountability in these situations. Unfortunately, that only ends up preserving the status quo, for fear of triggering violence or even civil war, resulting in a series of short-term deals that, in reality, simply solidify corrupt and unrepresentative political systems and deny the Libyan people any agency.

These flawed systems, driven by corruption, then just go on to incite the very violence the international community was seeking to avoid, as a result of the inequalities they inevitably create.

Thus, the UN's approach to Libya needs to be seriously reevaluated. Peace-building efforts must be grounded in a nuanced understanding of the challenges the country faces that goes beyond the visible and acknowledges the structural.

Furthermore, the UN must resist the temptation to look for quick fixes and set unrealistic deadlines. The road to peace in Libya is likely to be long and arduous, full of bizarre twists and turns that are likely to frustrate any envoys or any external actors invested in Libya's reemergence.

Elections, while aspirational, will not suddenly turn the page in the second decade following the downfall of Muammar Qaddafi. They cannot be rushed and, much like the broader collective vision for the democratization of Libya, they must also be rooted in the aspirations of the Libyan people, rather than the short-term interests of a select few.

Only then can there be any hope of achieving a durable and inclusive peace in Libya, a peace that is more than simply a shimmering mirage in the desert.

Europe's leaders flounder while bloodshed in Gaza worsens

Chris Doyle

Many things have been missing since last Saturday's horrific Hamas attacks on Israeli civilians. Humanity is on holiday. Empathy, the ability to understand other people's loss and suffering, has become a rare and prized commodity. International law has been missing in action. Yet, aside from the brutality and inhumanity on display, international leadership represents perhaps the most shocking absence.

That the US gives unequivocal, unalloyed support for Israel on such occasions is nothing new. The examples are legion and the US has always given Israel diplomatic protection at the UN Security Council from any attempt to hold it accountable for its violations of international law.

But what is most striking about this past week is the way so many European states have lost sight of their legal and ethical obligations. All understandably condemned the Hamas attacks. Did any European leader not? Yet, when it came to handling Israeli crimes against Palestinian civilians, it was not just silence but active support for Israel to carry out its collective punishment and bombing of civilians.

The Quint statement of Oct. 9 was typical. The grouping of the US, France, Germany, Italy and the UK offered total support for Israel, total blame for Hamas, and expressed no reservations or qualms about international law.

Take Britain. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said he would give “unequivocal support” to Israel. Support after those attacks, yes; but to give unequivocal support to a state that has a record of violations of international law and war crimes is something else. Such language represents the brightest of green lights to Israeli leaders to do whatever they wish. They clearly noticed. But following him into this position was the leader of the Labour Party, the progressive party of British politics, and probably future prime minister, Sir Keir Starmer. All the initial statements failed to make any reference to international law, a huge break from the past when Israel had bombed Gaza.

President Emmanuel Macron of France was slightly better. “Israel has the right to defend itself by eliminating terrorist groups, including Hamas, through targeted actions, but also by preserving civilian populations because that is the duty of democracies.” He made no reference to obligations under international law.

Many states have also criminalized aspects of showing support for Palestinians. In France, pro-Palestinian marches have been banned and also in Germany. So much for the freedom of expression. In Britain the home secretary has tried to ban the waving of Palestinian flags under certain circumstances.

One of the most bizarre and despicable responses was from Oliver Varhelyi, the EU commissioner for neighborhood and enlargement. On Oct. 9, he suspended all EU payments to the Palestinian Authority. This was reversed after many member states protested. But here was the EU about to cut aid to Palestinian civilians just when they needed it most. Rather than suspend or cut, the EU should be looking to increase aid given the need.

The monumental scale of Israel's bombardment also caused no rethink. Whole neighborhoods were flattened. The Israeli military said it had dropped 6,000 bombs in five days. Palestinians in Gaza told me that the 2014 war on Gaza was a cakewalk compared with this conflict. More than 580 children have been killed in Israel's bombardment of Gaza in less than one week. This is more than the 551 killed in the 51-day 2014 assault. Israel's alleged use of white phosphorus shells, a claim made by a human rights group, has also not been condemned.

Ignoring the plight of Palestinians in Gaza

reached new levels in the EU responses to the Israeli announcement of a siege of Gaza. Remember, Israel had been blockading it for 16 years to zero international protest or concern, but a siege is far worse. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Galant said: “I ordered a complete siege of the Gaza Strip. There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel; everything is closed. We are at war with ‘human animals’ and act accordingly.”

A siege. Surely international leaders would condemn or even criticize the imposition of what is a brutal medieval tactic redolent of the era of the Crusades and the Hundred Years' War? Not at all. British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly and Labour leader Starmer both refused to condemn the imposition of this siege. The Labour Party did revise its position, but not the British government, which has just doubled down on this. Foreign Office sources tell me it is all driven by ministers, not officials.

As for the EU, Ursula von der Leyen, president of the EU Commission, had no hesitation last year in stating that “Russia's attacks on civilian infrastructure, especially electricity, are war crimes. Cutting off men, women, children of water, electricity and heating with winter coming — these are acts of pure terror.” She was right, but has gone all coy and shy when it comes to Israel doing the same.

If supporting the siege was off the diplomatic reservation, what about supporting the threat of forcible transfer? This is exactly what the Oct. 13 demand is — insisting Palestinians flee northern Gaza. These 1.1 million could not all leave, not least under bombardment. Some were killed while attempting to flee. What about the elderly, the infirm, the disabled and children? Many Western politicians openly insist Egypt opens its borders for hundreds of thousands of refugees, the very same countries that turn their backs on refugees without hesitation.

Israeli leaders have also kept their intentions secret. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised to turn parts of the territory “into rubble” in revenge for a “black day,” and told Palestinians to leave Gaza, yet they cannot flee this prison. One Knesset member, Simcha Rothman, claimed that the main goal of the assault on Gaza is that “a Jewish kid can walk freely in Gaza. If there would be Gaza.” According to one Israeli official, “Gaza will eventually turn into a city of tents. There will be no buildings.”

And where are the calls for de-escalation and ceasefire? The risks of where this all could land up are acute. Many ask, how much worse can this get? The possibilities are off the scale. Most likely the West Bank will descend into even worse levels of bloodshed, with Israel's National Security dishing out rifles to settlers. Did any international figure speak out about Israel's obligations here? The most worrying, arguably, would be the Israel-Hezbollah front, but even Syria can be sucked into this, given that Israel has just bombed Damascus and Aleppo airports. Attacks on Western targets in the Middle East or further afield, or violent attacks on synagogues or mosques, cannot be ruled out.

Responsible leadership should see a deluge of diplomacy, not a diplomatic desert. Those with influence must work together to stop the bloodshed, end the bombing and get hostages released, including the Palestinians under siege.

Above all, who is articulating a political horizon? Everyone bar zealots on the Israeli far right and Hamas knows there is no military solution save ethnic cleansing.

As leaders flounder, consider the words of Noi Katzman, who lost her brother: “The most important thing for me, and also for my brother, is that his death will not be used as a justification for killing innocent people.”

Gaza and the Beirut exit scenario

Abdulrahman Al-Rashed

Hamas is not an exceptional organization in the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. If boasting about operations were the case, other Palestinian organizations have preceded it with operations that were no less significant. The difference was that the means of photography in those times were limited and the media outlets were closed.

The “Fatah Revolutionary Council” group, known by the name of its leader “Abu Nidal,” killed about 2,000 people in 20 countries, hijacked aircraft and ships, and assassinated politicians. “The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine,” another leftist group, whose leader was George Habash, carried out massive operations, including kidnapping oil ministers at an OPEC meeting in Vienna and taking them on a plane that ended up in Algeria. In another operation, it blew up three airliners at once at Amman airport.

“Abu Nidal” and the PFLP disappeared in Syria and Iraq, while the Fatah movement has persisted, and has established itself on Palestinian land. Its movement and armed activity are part of a national political project.

Hamas may not survive the major attacks of Oct. 7. I imagine that the movement’s leadership was aware of this when it adopted the attack project, and that is because the conflict is usually governed by the balance of losses. In the past, Hamas did not lack volunteers trained for combat; yet the individuals involved in the operation could be counted on the fingers of two

hands. Balance was part of the calculations of the conflict that both parties had to bear and live with. Similarly, Israel, despite numerous minor skirmishes, rarely attacks Hezbollah, perhaps only once every decade, when Israel sees that its human and military capabilities have grown to what it considers a threat.

Armed militias do not settle the stages of conflict,

Armed militias do not settle the stages of conflict, and no matter how much their echoes reverberate in the world, they are quickly forgotten. The Palestinian Authority, when it was the “Palestine Liberation Organization,” led by “Fatah,” lived in exile and managed Palestinian affairs politically, militarily and socially. After being exiled from Beirut, it returned through the Madrid Conference, then was transformed into a legitimate authority through the Oslo Accords, and on its promised land, the West Bank. Today, it may be the hope for the Palestinian who wants both to improve his or her difficult daily living situation, and to establish an independent Palestinian state.

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may be the hope for the Palestinian who wants both to improve his or her difficult daily living situation, and to establish an independent Palestinian state.

The Israelis still refuse, claiming that the PA is incapable of assuming its responsibilities, and that its leadership — i.e., Mahmoud Abbas and his colleagues — has grown old, and is not as compe-

facing an extremely dangerous crisis that could grow and expand. In addition to Gaza, the destruction may extend to the West Bank; a war might break out in Lebanon, and the fires might spread further geographically, and for a longer indefinite period.

I see a resemblance between this war and the Beirut war of 1982, when Ariel Sharon invaded after

tent as the organization’s previous leadership.

On the other hand, we can say that Israel is now devoid of historical leaders such as Yitzhak Rabin. Benjamin Netanyahu, the current prime minister, is viewed by many Israelis as being corrupt and opportunistic, and that he has not been a partner in peace in any of the previous efforts. Indeed, in order to save himself from prison, he is engaged in a struggle with his rivals and colleagues in the party.

The region is currently

most of its militants, including expelling them from the Gaza Strip through Egypt.

In the north, Hezbollah is unlikely to get involved in the war because that would mean the Israeli army would return to southern Lebanon. It is aware that destroying its capabilities would weaken it in Syria, which has become more important to it militarily and politically, and that it might lose its complete dominance over Lebanon itself.

We return to the question: Why did Hamas carry out this massive attack, or as some call it, the “Israeli 9/11”? Is it a mass suicide or a way to resolve the power balance dilemma? After its attacks, Al-Qaeda members shifted from an organization ruling the state of Afghanistan to living in caves, and ended up with Osama bin Laden hiding in Pakistan, and his children in Iran. But Al-Qaeda differs from Hamas in that its project was the Caliphate, a historical fantasy that has no place in the modern era, while the Palestinian project is real and holds great hope.

Nevertheless, we now face an opportunity, and as Winston Churchill said at the UN following the devastation of the Second World War: “Never let a good crisis go to waste.”

Hamas has chosen this path, and Israel has decided to change the reality in Gaza by force and put an end to Hamas. Neither party will settle the conflict the way it wants. Hamas will not liberate Palestine with its gliders, and Netanyahu will not extinguish the Palestinians’ determination to establish their state.

Deciphering Turkiye’s attitude to Israel-Hamas conflict

Sinem Cengiz

interests. Secondly, Ankara is concerned about the potential spillover effects of the conflict, particularly on Syria. Thirdly, it recognizes the complexity of the conflict, with various actors and motivations involved, including Iran’s role and Netanyahu’s domestic interests, which means a cautious approach is necessary. Lastly, it seeks prestige on the regional stage in taking on this role.

Although Turkiye was one of the first countries to recognize the state of Israel in 1948 — for which it was criticized for years by the Arab world — it has always remained sensitive to the rights of the Palestinian

ous escalations, focusing more on de-escalating tensions. Ankara has called on both sides to exercise restraint and act reasonably, emphasizing that a just peace would benefit everyone.

However, after a few days, Erdogan slightly harshened his tone, describing the latest actions in Gaza as “not a war, it is a massacre.” While this statement may test Turkiye’s recent rapprochement with Israel, it preserves the president’s image as a world leader who is in support of the Palestinian cause. The change in his tone was most likely related to pressure from both the Turkish public and the opposition parties. It was also related to

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan last month met Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in person for the first time as they held a discussion on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. A few days before this meeting, Erdogan hosted Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in an effort to unify the Palestinian factions. Turkiye not only manages a delicate balancing act between Israel and Palestine, but it also strikes a balance between the two main Palestinian groups. Ankara also aims to exert its influence on Hamas to minimize the latter’s engagement with Iran and Hezbollah. Turkiye continues to advocate for a two-state solution while advancing its relations with Israel on various fronts, including economic, energy and political matters. Erdogan has spoken with both Abbas and Israeli President Isaac Herzog, offering to mediate upon their request, but Israel believes it is too early for such talks. Turkiye has also talked to other regional actors, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Egypt, regarding ways to end the conflict. For Ankara, there are several reasons to assume this role. Firstly, it genuinely wants to prevent the conflict from escalating and perhaps growing into a regional war, which would be detrimental to its own interests. Secondly, Ankara is concerned about the potential spillover effects of the conflict, particularly on Syria. Thirdly, it recognizes the complexity of the conflict, with various actors and motivations involved, including Iran’s role and Netanyahu’s domestic interests, which means a cautious approach is necessary.

cause. Despite their differing motivations and ideas about how best to stand up for the rights of the Palestinian people, all the political parties in Turkiye unite under the same banner to call on the world to take a stand for Palestinian rights. The Palestinian cause is a matter that all Turkish political parties can agree on and adopt a shared rhetoric toward.

Erdogan has long been an advocate of the Palestinian cause personally, often bringing it to the world’s attention and clashing with Netanyahu. However, in the current episode, it has been noticeable that Turkiye initially adopted more measured rhetoric compared to previ-

the changing dynamics in the conflict, which caused a tremendous amount of bloodshed and suffering.

Just as the world was taken by surprise by the Hamas attack on Israel, Turkiye was similarly caught off guard. Ankara remains uncertain how events will unfold, which is reflected in its cautious approach. Turkiye faces domestic political and economic challenges, the risk of the conflict expanding regionally and pressure from segments of society that support the Palestinian cause, all of which urge it to find a way to act proactively. However, as the conflict escalates, it might prove challenging for any actor to pursue a mediation role.

Regulatory reform could transform MENA societies and economies

Sara Al-Mulla

The Middle East and North Africa region is striving for progress on all fronts and a key pathway to achieving that goal is through regulatory reform. In recent years, the trailblazing regulatory enhancements introduced by many of the region’s countries have highlighted a need for visionary and streamlined regulatory transformations that deliver incredible value to individuals, businesses and governments.

Regulatory reforms can create momentum in countries, contributing to several immediate advantages that are crucial for development. These include fostering economic growth by reducing the regulatory burdens on businesses, thereby facilitating global and local trade and investment, reducing corruption and increasing investor confidence. Laws detailing industry standards can spur innovation, entrepreneurship, productivity and job creation.

Public interests are safeguarded by many laws that pertain to consumer rights, criminal codes, public health and transportation and traffic safety. On the social front, revisions to laws pertaining to child rights, elderly rights, people with special needs, welfare benefits and family protection from domestic violence have boosted well-being levels. For instance, revisions to the UAE’s employment laws led to the deployment of a universal unemployment insurance scheme and the introduc-

tion of a 4.5-day working week that strives to balance economic growth with work-life balance. Additionally, local natural environments are preserved, enabling a healthy balance between economic growth and sustainability.

Many revised regulations have delivered exceptional benefits for countries. A prime example is the revision of immigration and citizenship laws in Saudi Arabia and the UAE to attract long-term foreign talents to live, invest and work locally. For instance, the Kingdom’s Premium Residency Visa offers foreign talents a pathway to permanent residency or limited-term residency without the assistance of a sponsor. The UAE’s Golden Visa is a long-term residency status that is valid for five to 10 years, with the option for renewal. It targets investors, entrepreneurs, skilled professionals, inventors, creative workers, outstanding students, pioneering humanitarian workers and frontline heroes who have demonstrated extraordinary efforts during crises. Furthermore, in 2021, the UAE government approved revisions to the Executive Regulation of the Citizenship and Passports Law, enabling certain groups of foreign nationals, along with their spouses and children, to attain Emirati citizenship.

Governments should consider a number of key areas when embarking on regulatory reform strategies. It is vitally important

for governments to design a definitive legislative agenda to prioritize the laws that need to be introduced, revised or rescinded based on rigorous evidence-based sources to validate their value and feasibility. It is equally important to harmonize some regulations according to international treaties and standards.

Evolving trends in the economic, technological and societal spheres are significantly influencing the development and adaptation of regulations in different industries and sectors, sparking the ideation of new regulatory avenues that protect public interests and ensure compliance to new norms. As such, it is important that central governments have dedicated units that monitor their emergence and adopt a proactive, preemptive and futuristic approach to regulatory interventions. For instance, the growing number of data breaches and abuses of personal data has spurred the enactment of stringent data protection laws in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Many governments have introduced regulatory impact assessments to measure the projected value and risks associated with introducing or revising regulations. Additionally, government agencies must conduct periodic reviews of existing regulations to identify any outdated, redundant or unnecessary articles. After enactment, government agencies are

required to provide regular performance-based reports on the progress of the laws to promote accountability and assess success. Administrative legislative processes must also be simplified, expedited and streamlined.

Governments should enhance all training and qualifications programs pertaining to legal professions. Special attention must be paid to cultivating subject matter experts in specialized areas in order to cater to the evolving legal landscape, such as the economy, family, welfare, the environment, immigration, healthcare, technology and maritime. It is pivotal that legal professionals within government agencies are enrolled in regular training and capacity-building programs to improve their understanding of industries and evolving trends.

Engagement with stakeholders is key to soliciting insights and ideas that could shape the thinking behind regulations. It is vital that representatives of various levels of government, citizens, industries and experts are regularly invited to engage with regulators. Government agencies may conduct public consultations or surveys to gather feedback from individuals on proposed laws or regulatory changes, which can be done via online platforms, workshops or written submissions. Many governments have established so-called sandbox programs that enable businesses to test innovative products and services with

limited regulatory constraints, such as the case study offered by the UAE’s Regulations Lab, which grants licenses to try out innovations using future technologies.

Meanwhile, introducing legal aid clinics can help individuals with limited financial resources to understand their legal rights and responsibilities on personal pressing matters, such as pension plans, disability support, wrongful dismissal, social housing, divorce or domestic violence. In the UAE, such legal clinics are offered by the Ministry of Justice, the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department, the Shoor legal advice program by Dubai Courts and the Legal Clinic program offered by the Community Development Authority in Dubai.

Governments should also make all laws available on online public portals with explanatory pages that explain legal terminology in a straight-forward manner. Public awareness campaigns leveraging various forms of media should educate the public about their rights and responsibilities across various regulatory spheres and inform them about significant legal changes. Moreover, integrating legal literacy programs within schools, universities and community centers could be another avenue for creating awareness among the public.

Regulatory reform is becoming an increasingly important pathway for governments to navigate evolving landscapes.

Khaled Abou Zahr

Lebanese must reject any involvement in war with Israel

As the horrors of war unfold in Gaza following Hamas’ terror attack on Israeli civilians, the north of Israel and its border with Lebanon should not be forgotten. The main question here remains: will Iran’s proxy Hezbollah join the attack? No one has the answer on how this conflict will evolve. But there is a single certainty: Hezbollah will never play as second in command under Hamas. It will not get fully into this war unless it has leadership for operations on the ground and is the sole “negotiator.” This is the only symbolic status Hezbollah will accept, while it actually represents the mullahs’ interests.

In short — and while we all ignore the probability

and the real determining factors that could lead to this line of events — this means that Hezbollah would need to be the voice of the so-called resistance. This would also mean a broader engagement, if not a direct one, for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. It would be more than a two-front war this time. This would certainly wreak havoc to Lebanon once again.

When looking at the world today, whether the war in Ukraine, the situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan or the north of Syria, we notice shifting geopolitical sand and volatile situations. And so, any action by Hezbollah to enter the conflict would make the 2006 war look like a dress rehearsal. Until

now, the rocket launches from Hezbollah have been a sign of support to Hamas without any real intention of getting into the conflict. Most analysts expect this to continue until Israel goes into Gaza, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sided to US President Joe Biden. Then, there will be greater opportunities for Hezbollah to open a second front.

If this changes, then we have the 2006 war as a case study for how the situation would unfold. At that time, Hassan Nasrallah clearly positioned himself and Hezbollah as the unified commander of the two fronts in Gaza and Lebanon — the one who speaks and the one to contact for the negotiations regarding hostages. This positioning

prompted the Israeli response that destroyed Lebanon. Indeed, Israel refused to let one party take over these two files, especially not Iran. And so, until this day, Lebanon is paying the price for these actions.

For now, the war in Gaza is only having a direct impact on Lebanese domestic politics. Indeed, a few days ago, Hezbollah’s motorcycles went roaming into well-known Christian neighborhoods and everyone understood the message. These motorcycle convoys come as a warning to the many voices that are clearly stating that Hezbollah should not drag Lebanon into this conflict, just as they dragged

Lebanon into the Syrian conflict. These voices are echoed throughout Lebanon and this is a big difference from 2006. Hezbollah has lost a lot of its local support.

The Lebanese do not want to be dragged into regional conflict, they want to live. More precisely, they just want to survive. Most Lebanese believe that the Arab Peace Initiative should have been the way forward and that this could have brought stability to the region. This is why they do not want to act as a proxy in this war. If Hezbollah opened a second front, it would definitely give the negotiating cards to Tehran, meaning Hezbollah would act in the

interests of Iran, not Lebanon. But the price of the devastation of war would be paid by all the Lebanese. Today, it is the people of the Levant that pay the highest price for these proxy wars.

Will Lebanon be dragged into this war? Will the Lebanese suffer once again? This time, the Lebanese are not accepting it and are making their voices heard loud and clear. But this does not mean they do not feel compassion for the situation. In all transparency, Lebanese citizens should firmly reject serving as proxies in any foreign conflict, particularly on behalf of Iran, considering the profound historical context and current delicate geopolitical landscape. For too long,

Lebanon has paid a heavy price.

Lebanon’s history has been marked by foreign interference and this has led to devastating wars in the interests of others. Without going back too far, the Lebanese Civil War had disastrous consequences. It is high time we stopped allowing any force to undermine the nation’s sovereignty and independence. Destruction is the only result achieved when we allow the country to be used as a proxy for foreign powers. There is no freedom fighting. There is no honor. There is only death and destruction. Iran knows it and Hezbollah does too.

Hence, the Lebanese must absolutely stand against such involvement,

as we have suffered enough for others and paid the price in sectarian massacres, the crippling economic situation and horrifying humanitarian costs. We have barely healed our wounds. In fact, the wounds are still wide open. We need to clearly say “no” to Hezbollah engaging an entire nation in war.

It is time to put an end to the proxy game in this small country, as it is a clear and pressing danger to the future of Lebanon. Beyond dragging the country into conflict, Hezbollah has deepened sectarian divisions and hindered national unity. This is why the Lebanese should unite and reject any proxy group to safeguard the country’s security, sovereignty and economic stability.



SNGPL disconnected 199 connections, fine imposed

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 199 connections while imposing fine of Rs.5.5 million and 190 under billing cases processed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 17 connections on illegal use of gas, another 06 connections on the use of compressor.

In Bahawalpur, the regional team disconnected 06 connections on the use of compressor and Rs.0.14 Million Booked against under billing cases.

The company disconnected 05 connections on illegal use of gas, another 04 connections on the use of compressor and 15 under billing cases have been processed in Multan and amount of Rs.0.07 Million have been booked against gas theft and under billing cases.

In Sheikhpura, 10 connections were disconnected by the region and 42 under billing cases processed, the team also booked Rs.3 million against gas theft and under billing cases.

In Peshawar, the company disconnected 50 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal connections and also booked Rs. 1.65 million against gas

theft.

The team also lodged 01 FIRs against gas thieves. SNGPL's team in Mardan imposing fine of Rs 0.05 million against gas theft.

In Sialkot, the company fine imposed of Rs 0.27 million against gas theft and under billing cases.

In Sargodha, the regional team disconnected 01 connection on the use of compressor.

The regional team in Gujranwala, 02 meters were disconnected on the use of compressor while another 08 on illegal use of gas and 35 under billing cases processed. The region also imposed fine of Rs.0.19 Million Rupees on

gas theft and under billing cases.

The company disconnected 23 connections on illegal use of gas and 11 under billing cases processed in Islamabad.

In Sahiwal, 3 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas and 13 under billing cases processed.

The regional team in Faisalabad disconnected 06 connections on illegal use of gas and 12 under billing cases have been processed. The team also lodged 01 FIR against gas thieves.

In Rawalpindi, the company disconnected 58 connections on illegal use of gas and 62 under billing cases processed



SWAT: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali addressing business community during his visit to Chamber of Commerce & Business.

Gold prices increased

ISLAMABAD (INP): the price of 24-karat gold in Pakistan has surged to Rs208,000 per tola, while those interested in 22-karat gold can now acquire it at Rs190,667 per tola on Sunday.

For individuals seeking to purchase smaller quantities, the rates are equally appealing. Presently, 10 grams of 24-karat gold are priced at Rs178,326, with 10 grams of 22-karat gold available for Rs163,466.

It's important to note that gold rates in Pakistan can change multiple times during the day in response to global market dynamics.

These rates are gathered from reputable sources, mainly located in Karachi and Multan. For the most precise gold rates according to your city's market, we recommend consulting your local gold dealers and jewelers.

For those closely monitoring the gold market, it is advisable to stay vigilant as rates continue to react to global developments in the world of gold.

Rest assured, we are committed to keeping our readers well-informed and will provide regular updates on the gold market in Pakistan. Stay tuned for the latest developments in gold prices.

Exports to China surged by 100%

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's exports to China in September 2023 have surged by an impressive 100.5% compared to the corresponding month during the previous financial year, according to the Trade Development Authority Pakistan's latest report.

The total value of Pakistan's exports to China in September 2023 amounted to \$350.2 million, marking a robust 100.5% increase compared to the exports valued at \$174.7 million during the corresponding month in the previous financial year.

According to a Gwadar Pro's report, in September, Pakistan's total exports to all partner countries of the world were recorded at \$2.465 billion, with China's share amounting to \$14.20 million.

During the first quarter of FY 23- 24, Pakistan's exports to all partner countries of the world reached \$6.899 billion.

Of this total, exports to China amounted to \$729.7 million, accounting for approximately 10.57% of Pakistan's overall exports.

Pakistan's exports to China remained steady at \$168.5 million, \$211 million, and \$350.2 million for July, August, and September, respectively, as per the official statistics.

In September 2023, Pakistan's exports to various countries, showing an increase, were \$111.0 million to the United Arab Emirates, \$56.6 million to Saudi Arabia, \$34.4 million to Malaysia, \$33.6 million to Turkey, \$33.2 million to Sri Lanka, \$29.9 million to Viet Nam, \$28.6 million to

Poland, \$27.3 million to South Korea, and \$18.4 million to Yemen.

In September 2023, Pakistan's imports from various countries totaled \$3.954 billion, marking a decrease of 25.30% compared to the \$5.293 billion recorded during the corresponding month in the previous fiscal year.

Pakistan's imports from China in September 2023 amounted to \$933 million, which is 1% less than the \$926.17 million imports during the corresponding month last year.

Likewise, during the first quarter of FY23- 24, Pakistan's total imports were recorded at \$12.188 billion, reflecting a 25.36% decrease from the \$16.329 billion recorded during the corresponding period in the previous fiscal year.

Show-2024 set to attract investors

LAHORE (APP): Experts believe that the Gems and Jewelry Show 2024 would be a lead to the showcase of precious stones and gems in the international market.

Talking to APP here on Sunday, they said the aim of the event is to promote mineral and mining part of Pakistan, which is enriched with 80 per cent of Pakistan's mineral base and this exhibition is expected to play a major role in exploring the mineral potential of the country.

LCCE President Kashif Anwar said the role of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) is commendable in bringing all related trade bodies on one platform and supporting Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) to organise a suitable show to attract foreign investors and buyers.

The Trade Corporation of Pakistan sources told APP that the event is expected to invite investment and help facilitate trade in precious stones and minerals in the country, adding it would also provide a golden opportunity for local businesses to explore and expand their business potential across Pakistan and beyond.

They said that Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) have immense potential in the mine and minerals industry as both regions have a wide range of most exquisite gemstones, including topaz, aquamarine, emerald, tourmaline, sapphire, ruby, quartz, quartz group, and garnet.

Establishment of authority demanded

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA) has called for the establishment of an authority consisting of focal persons of relevant departments including foreign embassies, State Bank, to promote exports.

The Association's Senior Vice Chairman Usman Ashraf in his statement on Sunday said that it is very difficult for a country with a population of 250 million to run with the current volume of exports and a long-term policy to promote exports is inevitable.

He added that government patronage is inevitable for the promotion of exports.

Ashraf said that just as the government is trying to remove the red tape in the way of foreign investment through the Facilitation Council, Pakistan's export sectors also require the same attitude and behavior.

He said that until the problems are resolved,

export promotion is not possible. Regarding what policy is being made for the promotion of exports in the future.

He said that the relevant stakeholders should be taken into confidence so that such a policy draft can be prepared which can yield positive results.

He said that due to the recently held international exhibition, there is a possibility of large-scale export deals, but due to the continued decline in the value of the dollar, exporters are reluctant to sign contracts.

He said that at present there is a very tough competition in the world in terms of quality and prices. In terms of quality, Pakistan's hand-made carpets have a unique identity, but due to the cost of production and freight costs, Pakistani exporters are out of competition.

He requested the government to keep the dollar at a level so that the reputation of Pakistani exporters in terms of contracts is not affected.

Production of cotton increased

MULTAN (APP): Cotton production in Punjab province was increased by 79.1 percent as compared to previous year, said Agriculture Department spokesperson on Sunday.

He said that according to the Crop Reporting Service statistics, over five million bales of cotton had been recorded in Punjab

province so far as compared to about 2.8 million bales last year.

Production has recorded a 79.1 percent increase over last year.

The average weight of cotton bolls (tinda) has also recorded an increase of 13.1 percent so far to 2.85 grams from last year's 2.52 grams.

‘Aggressive marketing to exploit potential of GSP Plus to Pakistan’

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Stressing the need for an aggressive marketing plan to exploit the huge opportunity of enhancing exports to the EU countries, the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has welcomed the European Union's decision to retain the GSP plus status for Pakistan for another four years till 2027.

PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that GSP Plus status holds paramount importance for Pakistan's economy as it has played an important role in expansion of multi-lateral trade. He said that the GSP Plus status, which Pakistan has enjoyed in the past, has significantly contributed to enhancing our export potential and economic prosperity.

He said that the GSP Plus status offers developing countries duty-free or reduced-tariff access to the EU market for over 6,000 products. It is a significant opportunity for Pakistan to boost its exports and create

jobs, he added.

He appreciated the unwavering efforts of the government in advocating for this extension, further strengthening trade relations and fostering economic growth for our nation.

According to the trade statistics from ITC World Trademap, Pakistan's exports to EU, which were around 6.3 billion dollars in 2013, have increased over the time to 11.3 billion dollars in 2022, primarily due to the deeper market access provided by European Union under GSP Plus.

Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that this essentially meant that due to GSP Plus, the European Union was by far the biggest destination for Pakistan's exports as more than 30 percent of our exports reach EU market.

He said that this privilege has played a pivotal role in boosting our export sector, particularly in textiles, apparel and other key industries. The GSP Plus status has not only bolstered our economic

prospects but has also supported job creation and sustainable development within the country.

As looking ahead, the extension of the GSP program until 2027 presents an exceptional opportunity for Pakistan to further elevate its trade relations with the European Union. Similarly the PIAF believed that by leveraging this extended GSP status, Pakistan can diversify its export base and explore new markets, thus amplifying the growth trajectory of our nation.

He warned that Pakistan is not making full use of the GSP Plus status due to a number of regulatory obstacles. These include complex customs procedures, lack of transparency, and inadequate infrastructure.

He called on the government to take urgent steps to remove these obstacles and make it easier for businesses to export to the EU. This would help Pakistan to capitalize on the GSP Plus status and boost its exports.

One key area where the government can take action

is to simplify customs procedures. The current system is complex and time-consuming, which can deter businesses from exporting. The government should introduce a single-window system to streamline the customs process and make it easier for businesses to comply with regulations.

He said that the textile sector had been the main driver of the economy for the last 50 years in terms of foreign currency earnings and jobs creation. There is no alternative industry or service sector other than textile that has the potential to benefit the economy with foreign currency earnings and new jobs creation.

We have not made any marketing plan before and after granting of the GSP facility. He further said a close consultation with the stakeholders needed to determine issues being confronted by the industry and then to suggest measures to ensure its viability and competitiveness in the international market.

Higher energy and food prices keep inflation elevated: BMP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) continued to increase in the wake of higher prices of food and energy despite a recent cut in the prices of petroleum products, as essential commodities have still not seen a decline in prices, leaving trade and industry frustrated.

FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar, quoting the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), observed that the index spiked 38.28% when compared with the corresponding week of last year, as out of the 51 essential commodities covered by SPI, prices of 17 (33.33%) items increased, rates of another 17 decreased and prices of the remaining 17 items remained unchanged compared to the previous week. On a weekly basis, the price of tomato rose 6.28%, egg 3.48%, powdered salt 2.75%, cooked beef 1.06%, garlic 1.04%, tea (prepared) 0.73%, beef 0.39% and potato 0.35%.

Among non-food commodities, the electricity charges for Q1 rose 8.59%, energy savers 0.55%, shirting 0.47% and liquefied

petroleum gas 0.31%, according to the PBS.

The year-on-year trend depicted price increases in the range of 58-137% among different items. Mian Anjum Nisar said that Pakistan has been facing a high inflation for the past couple of years partly due to massive depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar and partly due to a surge in global commodity prices like energy cost. The country largely meets its energy demand through expensive imports.

The monthly inflation reading, measured by the Consumer Price Index, hit a four-month high at 31.4% in September 2023 after reaching a six-decade high at 38% in May. Inflationary pressures are expected to slow down from January 2024 onwards. The latest rupee appreciation of 10.62% in the past 27 working days to over three-month high at Rs277.62/\$ is expected to encourage the government to make a deep cut in petroleum product prices in the upcoming fortnightly review for the second half of October.

However, the likely surge in gas prices under a condition of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan program

may keep inflation elevated and not allow it to fall significantly in the near future.

He, stressing the need for putting the economy on a sustainable growth trajectory by providing incentives to the industry, lamented that the economy is facing multiple challenges of falling exports, high inflation, low growth and declining foreign reserves, with fiscal accounts under immense pressure on account of heavy interest payments.

Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman said that the drop shows the government would find it difficult to achieve the industrial growth and export target, leading to more pressure on foreign exchange reserves of the country.

He asked the government to address the underlying structural vulnerabilities through smooth energy supply at competitive rates, as country's overall export proceeds continued to shrink for the fifth consecutive month in a row.

Quoting the data, he pointed out 1.7 billion dollars decline in remittances during the first half of the current year compared to the same period the year before (a decline of 11.1 percent), exports declined

by 6.6 billion dollars (6.8 percent decline), foreign direct investment dipped by 654 million dollars (58 percent decline), portfolio investment plummeted from negative 45.5 to negative 1032 million dollars, Public Sector Development Program decreased by 122 billion rupees (48.4 percent) and credit to private sector from 1043.1 to 703.6 million rupees which contributed to a decline in Nov 2021 Large Scale Manufacturing Sector growth of 6 percent to negative 5.50 percent in the comparable period this year.

Consumer Price Index rose from 12.3 in 2021-22 to 24.5 2022-23, while PSX index declined by 2.8 percent, market capitalization in rupees by 8.8 percent and in dollars by a whopping 28.8 percent.

Rising prices of wheat are the key factors responsible for affecting the general price level. International commodity prices are showing a downward trend on a YoY basis and its impact will ultimately be transmitted into domestic prices with some lags after adjusting the currency devaluation. While the government kept the administered prices at their current level to stabilize the overall

prices but post floods persistent shortfall of essential crops is preventing inflation to settle down.

He observed that the drop in textile and clothing exports is gaining momentum over the past five months owing to multiple factors including high energy costs, stuck-up refunds and a slump in global demands despite the massive depreciation of the rupee. He believes that one of the main reasons behind falling exports was the exchange rate instability. The discontinuation of duty drawbacks on local taxes and levies by the government has also created liquidity issues for the export sector.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the government has increased the gas and electricity tariffs and, at the same time, also the subsidy has been phased out, which will further increase the cost of production.

Month on month increases in consumer prices may be countered by a further mean reverting international commodity prices and some exchange rate stability due to decreased pace of depreciation. The overall money supply growth remains compatible with a return to low and stable inflation.

Khwaja Wajih u Din

The attack on Israel has jolted the world.

There are many perceptions of the event in the electronic, print and social media. Hence many pertinent questions irk ones mind emanating from the said coverage. We saw the most advanced Iron Dome air defense system of Israel having failed to intercept and blast out the Hamas rockets in the air. Consequently, 1000s of rockets landed deep inside the state of Israel.

The media pointed out that massive Hamas force managed to break the steel solid border barriers of Israel and intruded quite

deep into the state of Israel absolutely un-opposed. Various experts discussed the reasons for the failure of, formidable and time tested, Israel defense system, to evict Hamas fighters from the intruded spots through a quick reactive response and how Hamas managed to import or manufacture and stock such a huge volume of rockets right under the nose of Israel?

Some think that the Israeli PM announced war in haste without cabinet's approval, as his government was caught unaware.

Others believe that the ranks & files of Hamas have been ingressed by Mossad to twist her arm

from within. People also think that Hamas been befuddled by big powers with big ends in sight e.g pushing the Ukrainian War onto the relegated burner or making ground for final and devastating blow against Palestinians & Hamas in specific and taking the war to Iran.

Without prejudice to the above, but in addition thereto the predominant view is that the Hamas attack emanates from the strategy of the Arabs and Israel to strike a deal without taking into account the Palestine cause. Israel Premier Benjamin Netanyahu has explicitly stated while addressing the session of the General

Assembly at the United Nations in New York “.... because they are based on one false idea that unless we first conclude a peace agreement with Palestinians no other Arab state would normalize its relations with Israel. I have long sought to make peace with the Palestinians, but I also believe that we must not give Palestinians a veto over peace treaties with Arab states”

Muhammad Bin Suleman while giving an interview with Fox News, mentioned the Palestine issue, but did not rebut the statement of Israel's PM in strong words. Rather he said that both countries are coming closer to each other

with every passing day.

The Palestine people who have been facing relentless atrocities of Israeli forces since long sensed the planned pulse to isolate them. The Prime Minister of Israel and his address to the United Nations also said that “See, the Palestinians are only 2% of the Arab world. As long as they believe that the other 98% will remain in a war-like state with Israel, that larger mass, that larger Arab world could eventually choke, dissolve, destroy the Jewish state. So when the Palestinians see that most of the Arab world has reconciled itself to the Jewish state, they too will be more likely to abandon

the fantasy of destroying Israel and finally embrace a path of genuine peace with it.”

The planning to put the issue of Palestinian peace on the back burner was reacted to. If the strategic objective of this attack was to thwart this Arab-Israel agreement and by this attack, Hamas has achieved the objective to a larger extent.

The second perspective of this attack can be that Israel has trapped Hamas by the attack. It has paved the way for Israel to declare a state of war on Hamas and legitimize its attack on the Gaza Strip. It is evident from the statement of Israel PM after the attack. He

warned the inhabitants of Gaza to leave the city as he intended to rubble the city for destroying the hideouts of Hamas. If that was the planning relentless bombing is continuing in Gaza to achieve that objective and hundreds have been reported dead and injured.

The third view regarding the war is that external and/or internal conspiracy is involved in the attack to teach a lesson to the government of Israel for crossing the limits. It would be too early to comment on this view.

Be as it may the Abraham Accords were signed by the UAE, Morocco, Sudan, and Bahrain as a result of

President Trump's effort. Now it is the essential element of Biden's foreign policy to persuade the crown prince of Saudi Arabia to sign the accord as it will be a great achievement for his government.

While sitting in the space, the developed world can count the feathers of a bird during flight in the dark but they failed to detect and pre-empt Hamas offensive. Isn't it strange? There are no simple answers. But things are not as simple as they seem to be. There is definitely is a bigger picture which we fail to see at the moment.

(The writer is former Registrar of Peshawar High Court)



In brief

TT Singh wins hockey championship

FAISALABAD (APP): Toba Tek Singh won the Inter-District Boys Championship, played under the aegis of the District Sports Department at Gojra Hockey Stadium in connection with Talent Hunt Under-16 Programme. A spokesman for the department said on Sunday that hockey teams of district Faisalabad, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh and Chiniot participated in the championship. In the final contest, Toba Tek Singh team defeated Chiniot team with 5-2 goals. Divisional Sports Officer Rana Hammad Iqbal witnessed the final event and distributed prizes and trophies among the position holders. District Sports Officer Sajida Lateef and others were also present, spokesman added.

FIFA WC qualifier

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Cambodian team was training here at the Jinnah Stadium of the Pakistan Sports Complex in preparation for the home league of the FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifier on October 17. The Cambodian football team reached Pakistan on Sunday for the FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifier Home League against Pakistan. The Cambodian team was training at Jinnah Stadium under tight security after they were brought from the hotel to the stadium. The home league between Pakistan and Cambodia was scheduled on October 17 at the Jinnah Stadium.

Chevening united beat BDHC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chevening United outplayed British Deputy High Commission (BDHC) united by 7-6 in a mixed-gender football match at BDHC's football field, organized to mark the 40th anniversary of the Chevening Scholarship Programme. BDHC and Chevening Alumni Association took the field to mark the 40th anniversary of the Chevening Scholarship Programme. Celebrating the rich and expanding football culture of Karachi and strong sports ties between UK and Pakistan, the two teams competed in a mixed-gender football match at BDHC's football field, said a press release. Suha Hirani was announced player of the match for her stunning performance. Aliya Sadiq, Suha Hirani, Sanobar Sattar, Aliza Sabir, Emman Ahmed, and Sophiya Qureshi, players from Pakistan's national women's football team, also participated in the event. Emerging female footballers from Karachi's largest Football Club, Karachi United also took part to support the event and showcase their technical skills. The British Deputy High Commissioner, Sarah Mooney said, "It is a privilege to bring together the diverse and a c c o m p l i s h e d Chevening alumni for today's commemorative football match, celebrating our 40-year journey of academic excellence and international collaboration. With two new exciting scholarships offered in football coaching and heritage and climate change, Chevening will continue its legacy of empowering leaders and inspiring change." The match celebrated the power of sports in promoting inclusivity and the transformative effect the Chevening scholarship programme has had in the past four decades. Since 1983, more than 2000 talented Pakistanis have been awarded this prestigious scholarship, and have gone on to become leaders in various fields, making substantial contributions to Pakistan's development.

Aussies 'need to start winning quick' to rescue WC bid

LUCKNOW (AFP): Australia captain Pat Cummins admitted Sunday the five-time champions have "got to start winning and start winning quick" to rescue their faltering World Cup campaign. Australia have lost both their opening matches, by six wickets to hosts India and 134 runs to South Africa, their heaviest defeat at a World Cup. Despite boasting the batting firepower of David Warner and Steve Smith, they have yet to post a total of 200.

"We're obviously 0-2, so we've got to start winning and start winning quick," said Cummins ahead of Monday's clash against Sri Lanka in Lucknow. "Every game now becomes almost like a final. You've got to win just about all of them." The figures so far make for grim reading for Australia.

None of their batsmen have made a half-century with Smith top-scoring with 46 against India and Marnus Labuschagne

matching that modest mark in the rout by South Africa.

They have also been hamstrung by their fielding performances. Against India, Virat Kohli was dropped on 12 before he went on to make a match-winning 85. Had the catch been taken, India, chasing just 200 to win, would have been teetering at 20-4.

It got worse against South Africa where five chances went down. Needing 312 to win, Australia slumped to 70-6 and were reduced to a damage limitation exercise in an effort to shore up their run rate.

"No doubt we haven't been up to the standard that we like to hold," said Cummins. "We've been off the mark and been outplayed both games. It's not ideal at all. I think everyone was a little bit flat after the last game."

Australia are second from bottom of the 10-team table, behind even the Netherlands and propped up only by Afghanistan.

On Monday, they tackle

fellow winless side Sri Lanka who have had no problems scoring runs -- 326 against South Africa and 344 in the game with Pakistan. Unfortunately for the 1996 champions, they conceded a World Cup record 428 to the Proteas while Pakistan's pursuit to win by six wickets was the highest successful chase in tournament history.

Sri Lanka came out on top 3-2 in a five-match series with Australia on home soil in June last year.

However, Australia eased to a comfortable 87-run win when they sides met at the 2019 World Cup at The Oval. "Looking back at 2019, India and South Africa were the two teams that we lost to in the round games there," added Cummins.

"I think in the last year, they're kind of the two teams that we've had the most trouble against. "So the opportunity now is we've got some teams we haven't played for a while that we've had a lot of success against and we can be really confident when we go out there."

IOC Session backs double award of 2030 and 2034 Winter Games

MUMBAI (AFP): International Olympic Committee members voted Sunday to allow a double allocation of two successive Winter Games in 2030 and 2034.

IOC chiefs had hoped to award the 2030 Winter Olympics during a Mumbai session starting on Sunday.

But problems regarding potential hosts have delayed the IOC's plans, with longstanding 2030 favourite Sapporo officially withdrawing after a collapse in public support in Japan following the Tokyo 2020 corruption scandals.

IOC president Thomas Bach, speaking at this week's executive board meeting in Mumbai, said a preliminary study by the IOC's future host commission had found that by 2040 only 10 nations would be

able to host the snow events of an Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games under existing criteria due to climate change.

Natural snow is in increasingly short supply in some regions due to rising temperatures, with a lack of available water for snow-making threatening the existence of the global snow-sport industry.

There were several abstentions in the vote by the raising of hand. But the plan for a double award -- similar to the 2017 vote that gave the 2024 and 2029 Games to Paris and Los Angeles respectively -- was passed. Supporters of the proposal argued such a move would give the commission stability in assessing the prospects for winter sport.

Before Sunday's vote, commission head Karl

Stoss of Austria said three countries were interested in staging the 2030 Winter Olympics, with Sweden, Switzerland and France leading the way.

Salt Lake City in the United States would prefer 2034, to create more of a gap between that event and the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles. Co-shared Games between nations or regions, or World Championships doubling up with the Olympic Games were two of the ideas put forward by Stoss.

However, he said preserving the "uniqueness" of the Olympic Games was a top priority. In his speech, Stoss used the phrase "nice to have, or need to have" as a way of emphasising the need to keep on top of budgets, with a "decentralised" approach required to cut costs.

Hurkacz beats Rublev to win Shanghai Masters in thriller



Jessica Pegula claims 2nd title of year in Seoul

SEOUL (Agencies): World number four Jessica Pegula claimed her second title of the season with victory over China's Yue Yuan in the Korea Open final in Seoul. The 29-year-old won 6-2 6-3 in Sunday's final for her fourth career victory. Pegula, who was seeded first after accepting a wildcard in Korea, became the first American since Venus Williams in 2007 to win the title. "My mom is Korean and she was adopted from here so it's really special to be able to win here," she said. Pegula, who won the Canadian Open in Montreal in August, also reached the finals in Doha in February and Tokyo, where she lost to Veronika Kudermetova this month.

This was the first WTA final for 128th-ranked Yue, who had not reached a quarter-final before this week. Elsewhere, Canada's Leylah Fernandez defeated the Czech Republic's world number five Katerina Siniakova to win the Hong Kong Open. Former US Open runner-up Fernandez claimed her first WTA title this season and first since March 2022, coming from a set down to win 3-6 6-4 6-4. The 21-year-old, who entered the tournament ranked number 60, will return to the top 50 after the win.

SHANGHAI (AFP): Hubert Hurkacz saved a match point before defeating fifth seed Andrey Rublev 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (10/8) to win a thrilling Shanghai Masters final on Sunday.

It was the big-serving Pole's second Masters triumph, to go with the one he won in Miami in 2021, and a seventh ATP title in all.

"It was such a battle, especially emotionally," the 16th seed said after surviving a nail-biting third-set tie break in front of the watching Roger Federer.

"I had a match point and Andrey hit an amazing serve and then he had a match point and then I had some match points.

"It was back and forth and such a tricky match."

Hurkacz had Rublev under pressure early and broke the Russian with a vicious whipped forehand that Rublev had no chance of returning to lead 4-2 in the first set. The 25-year-old Rublev let out an angry roar in response and then Hurkacz easily held his own booming serve to go up 5-2.

The Pole Hurkacz came into the final with a tournament-leading 77 aces and Rublev could not handle his blistering serve. Hurkacz sealed the first set in 31 minutes -- and it was inevitably with another ace. He sent down 21 over the course of a topsy-turvy final. It was the first set that Rublev had dropped in Shanghai. But Rublev, who won the Monte Carlo Masters in April, struck back to break his opponent's torpedo of a serve for a 2-0 lead at the start of the second set.

A rejuvenated Rublev kept the 26-year-old Hurkacz at bay to send them into a

deciding third set. Rublev on Saturday described his angry outbursts in his semi-final win over Grigor Dimitrov as "ugly" and he was struggling again with his emotions at times. In contrast, Hurkacz went about his business with quiet determination.

Serving at 4-5 in a gripping third set, Rublev saved a match point -- having been booed by the crowd moments earlier for aggressively approaching and shouting at court-side photographers. The battling duo went into the tie break, where Hurkacz finally prevailed.

"Super happy"

Hurkacz said that self-belief carried him through, even when he was down in the tie break and staring defeat in the face.

"It was one of those matches and I kept believing and I am super happy with how I managed at the end," said the Pole.

Rublev will now focus on trying to qualify for the season-ending ATP Finals in Turin. He said he knew to expect Hurkacz's big serve, but stopping it was another matter. "The way he was serving was unreal," said Rublev, who was nevertheless pleased with his week as a whole.

"Last month I felt I was doing everything right and thought it was only a matter of time that I could show this at a tournament." Despite the confrontation with the photographers, which earned him a ticking-off from the umpire, the seventh-ranked Russian felt he mostly kept his temper in check compared to a day earlier. "In general I was able to handle my emotions much better," he said.



LUCKNOW: Mahela Jayawardene has a chat with Kusal Mendis Australia vs Sri Lanka, Men's ODI World Cup 2023.

Lack of quality bowling reasons behind India loss

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistani cricket experts and analysts on Sunday identified psychological pressure and Pakistan's poor bowling as primary reasons for the green shirts' defeat against arch-rivals India in their World Cup clash in Ahmedabad.

India cruised to a seven-wicket victory over Pakistan in what seemed to be a one-sided affair as the two sides locked horns in a World Cup clash in front of over 120,000 fans on Saturday.

Inspired by an aggressive half-century by skipper Rohit Sharma and potent bowling by pacer Jasprit Bumrah, India managed to extend their unbeaten streak against the neighboring arch-rivals to eight in the 50-over World Cup.

"I think that when it comes to 50-over cricket, our players suffer from a lot of pressure regarding India,"

Mirza Iqbal Baig, a senior sports journalist and cricket analyst, told Arab News.

"There were nearly 125,000 fans in the stadium. So, there was the crowd's pressure and then the players also suffered from a lot of pressure which caused Pakistan's defeat," Marina Iqbal, a former professional cricketer and member of the Pakistan women's selection committee, agreed the green shirts suffered from a "psychological" disadvantage against India.

"Yes, of course, the psychological aspect will always be there," she told Arab News. "But there were other reasons also due to which we faltered against India. Probably, the biggest difference on the field is the robustness of the Indian batting against our bowling." Iqbal said India has the luxury of players who can fit in at any number in their batting order and per-

form well without any apparent vulnerability.

"So that actually nullifies our bowling strength and also the mental toughness that they [Indians] have as players," she added.

The expert said Pakistan needed a "stable yet daunting" middle-order that could keep up with an aggressive run rate, adding that scoring 300-350 runs for teams was turning out to be a "norm" in this World Cup. Baig criticized Pakistan's all-rounders for neither batting impressively, nor bowling well. He said the pace battery comprising Shaheen Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah, which was considered the most fearsome pace trio in the world a short while ago, could not live up to the expectations.

"Now, Pakistan's bowling seems all over the place," he said. Baig said Pakistan had also not tested

its bench strength properly and played with the same players against strong and weak teams, when they could have experimented with different cricketers. He described Pakistan's spin bowling attack as "extremely weak" compared to other teams, lamenting that other Pakistani spinners were not given a chance to perform.

"We have been persisting with Shadab Khan and Muhammad Nawaz for so long. We didn't even include our mystery spinner Abrar in the team, we kept him as a traveling reserve," he said. But despite the setback, Iqbal said, Pakistan could bounce back in the tournament after the drubbing they got on Saturday.

"Practically speaking, we played three games and lost just one," she said, adding the green shirts should not let the India loss lower their spirits.

2nd BoK Junior KP Badminton C'ship to start from Monday

PESHAWAR (APP): The second edition of the Bank of Khyber Junior Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Badminton Championship will start at Tariq Wadood Badminton Hall, Peshawar Sports Complex on Monday tomorrow.

This was stated by Managing Director of the Bank of Khyber, CEO Muhammad Ali Gul Faraz while addressing a press conference here on Sunday. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Badminton Association Secretary Amjad Khan and Tournament Organizing Secretary Mian Sadaqat Shah, he said.

He thanked the Bank of Khyber for holding the Championship for the second consecutive year in which leading top ranking players would take part. He said that the Provincial Badminton Association, in which players from different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and

that a total of 150 boys and girls players from all over the province including the merged tribal districts were participating in the Championship in the U17, U15 and U19 categories.

The official inauguration will be done by the Managing Director of Bank of Khyber, CEO Muhammad Ali Gul Faraz. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Badminton Association Secretary Amjad Khan and Tournament Organizing Secretary Mian Sadaqat Shah, he said.

He thanked the Bank of Khyber for holding the Championship for the second consecutive year in which leading top ranking players would take part. He said that the Provincial Badminton Association, in which players from different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and

merged districts, would participate in Boys and Girls Singles, Boys and Girls Doubles, would continue till October 19 for which all the arrangements had been completed and all the players had reached Peshawar to participate in the Championship.

In the first phase, all the players were scrutinized. Female coach Bushra, other members included Badminton senior coach Hayatullah, Nadeem Khan, Malik Faraz, would scrutinize the players in their respective age groups, he said and added, in the Championship, players will also be selected for the National Junior Championship. The opening ceremony of the Championship will be organized on Monday (Oct 16) at 4:00 PM at the Tariq Wadood Badminton Hall, Peshawar Sports Complex, he expressed.

Babar criticised for taking a signed shirt of Kohli



LAHORE (Web Desk): Babar Azam -- Pakistan's captain -- faced severe criticism for accepting the shirt of Indian star batsman Virat Kohli after the World Cup clash between two sides on Saturday.

A video viral on social media website X, formerly known as Twitter, shows that Babar is having an autograph from Kohli in the stadium after a humiliating defeat at the hands of India.

Pakistani cricket legend Wasim Akram -- also former captain of the national side -- joined the list of critics, saying that Babar shouldn't have met Kohli after the World Cup clash between two sides on Saturday.

The controversy comes after India defeated Pakistan by seven wickets in a one-sided encounter for the eighth consecutive in the ICC World Cup -- a series of wins that started in the 1992 edition held in Australia.

Ruthless Man City put five past Bristol City

MANCHESTER (Agencies): Jill Roord and Khadija Shaw each scored twice as Manchester City thrashed Bristol City with five first-half goals at the Joie Stadium.

Dutch midfielder Roord opened the scoring on nine minutes, nodding home from close range after Shaw's effort ricocheted off the cross bar.

Shaw had the ball in the back of the net herself just a few minutes later but the off-side flag prevented last season's second top goalscorer getting her first Women's Super League goal of this campaign.

Laia Aleixandri's glancing header added City's second after 33 minutes before prolific Jamaican forward Shaw got her goal tally for the season started, nodding into the bottom corner from Mary Fowler's floated cross to put the home side in control.

Fowler turned provider again as Roord headed in her second of the afternoon before Shaw headed in from Chloe Kelly's sharp cross on the stroke of half-time.

All five of City's goals came from headers as the Blues showcased their crossing prowess and aerial threat.

The victory moves City to the top of the WSL table on goal difference before unbeaten Liverpool take on Everton later on Sunday. Bristol City remain win-less in their first season back in the top flight with another tough match against Arsenal on the horizon.

Shaw off the mark

Having sat out the opening match and come on for just 10 minutes in City's 1-1 draw against Chelsea last week, striker Shaw looked back to her influential and dangerous self on Sunday.

City boss Gareth Taylor said before the match that the forward had missed the start of the season because she had returned from international duty with an injury but that it is "fantastic" to have her "quality



and personality" back.

She scored one and assisted another in City's mid-week Continental Cup victory over Everton -- her first start of the season in any competition -- before netting twice on Sunday to get off the mark in the WSL.

Shaw was pipped to the Golden Boot by Aston Villa's Rachel Daly last season -- who scored 22 goals to Shaw's 20 -- but looks on track to replicate those impressive numbers again this campaign.

Against a struggling Bristol City, the Blues were dominant throughout, averaging around 80% possession and playing much of the game in the opposition's half.

Taylor took summer signing Roord off after 83 minutes, denying her a hat-trick opportunity, but stuck with Shaw for the full 90 minutes in the hope she could cap off a stellar day with a third goal. She went close with another header late on before taking one touch too many as she attempted to dance round Bristol City keeper Kaylan Marckese in the final minute.

Yui Hasegawa and England forward Kelly also had chances for a sixth but a resolute Bristol City defence were organised in the second half and managed to prevent a similar goal barrage to the one they faced in the opening period.



In brief

Police net over 770 drug dealers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police have arrested over 770 big drug dealers in a grand operation launched on the special directives of Chief Minister Punjab, said City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi, Syed Khalid Hamdani. In the crackdown, more than 18 mounds hashish, over five kg heroin and Ice drug and more than 1500 liters of alcohol were recovered during 45 days, he said and appreciated the efforts of SDPO city and his team for clearing the drug pockets from their respective area. He informed that about 300 drug addicts held from the drug pockets of Nulla Lai and its surroundings were shifted to the hospital for medical treatment. Along with the arrest of drug dealers, the treatment of drug addicts is also important, he added. "Efforts are also being made to make the drug addicts a useful part of the society and we thank the district administration for their support," the CPO said. The drug supply network was broken, he informed. The CPO also urged the citizens to come forward and play a role in the elimination of the drugs.

CDA retrieves 750 kanals land

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has retrieved as many as 750 kanals of its precious land from the land grabbers in Sector I-12/1.2 and 3 of the federal capital during the last week. "The authority has launched a comprehensive operation to curb encroachments in the federal capital on the directives of CDA Chairman Capt@ Anwar ul Haq," an official told APP on Sunday. He said that the Enforcement Directorate of CDA had launched the operation in collaboration with various departments near NUST University, Sector I-12 against an illegal Afghan settlement established over an extensive area. The official said that heavy machinery was used during the operation, resulting in the demolition of numerous rooms and livestock enclosures. During the operation, 750 kanals of land were retrieved and handed over for rapid developmental projects. Similarly, taking stringent action against encroachments on Simly Dam Road, Karnal Sher Khan Avenue, Maandi Mor Margalla Town Phase-2 and Murree Road, the authorities removed additional sheds and fruit stalls on both the sides of the road while clearing public passages. During the operation, around 14 trucks loaded with confiscated goods were seized by the Authority.

Action against smoke emitting vehicles

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Taimur Khan has directed all circle In-charges to take strict action against smoke emitting vehicles. The CTO said smoke emitting vehicles were not only polluting environment and creating respiratory problems but could also cause of road accidents. He directed the officers concerned to play their due role to control environmental pollution. He informed that special campaigns were also run by the City Traffic Police (CTP) while under a campaign the citizens were educated regarding traffic rules and road safety. Education Wing of Traffic Police was making efforts to spread awareness so that the road journey could be made safe and sound, he added. The CTO urged the people to cooperate with traffic wardens as they were on the roads to facilitate them.

Message from Dr Arif Alvi on the occasion of World Food Day

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: World Food Day is an important annual event celebrated globally every October. This occasion focuses on a theme related to sustainable agriculture, aiming to gather support for policies and actions from governments and other stakeholders.

In line with the perspective of conserving natural resources for ensuring food security, this year, the FAO has introduced a comprehensive theme: "Water is life, Water is Food: Leave no one behind." This theme is highly relevant, given the current situation in Pakistan.

Globally, the demand for water has been growing significantly due to rapid population growth, and within about a

hundred years, we will require roughly six times more water. Meanwhile, water availability is gradually diminishing due to increasing demand and water mismanagement, especially in developing countries. Pakistan is fortunate to have a unique blend of water resources, including glaciated mountains, the Indus River Water System, and a network of canals and distributaries. The Indus River System is one of the world's leading irrigation systems, covering approximately 150,000 square kilometers, which is 83% of Pakistan's total cultivated land. However, diminishing snowfall over the Himalayas and Karakorum Mountain ranges, along with rapid population growth, are exerting pressure on our surface water

resources.

In Pakistan, groundwater accounts for about 90% of domestic water usage in rural areas and approximately 50% in the agriculture sector. The seepage of the Indus Basin Irrigation System and rainwater are the primary sources for recharging groundwater. Due to the unpredictability of canal water supplies, farmers across Pakistan have turned to groundwater pumping. In the Indus Basin Irrigation System, there are approximately 500,000 tube wells, estimated to pump around 50 billion cubic meters of water. Even in the domestic sector, there is a rising misuse of groundwater, sharply depleting this precious natural resource. Furthermore, cli-

mate change is also taking its toll, as evidenced during the recent floods in 2022, affecting around 30 million people and causing financial losses of US\$ 30 billion.

To conserve natural resources, boost productivity, and eradicate malnutrition, it is imperative to engage all stakeholders and make explicit commitments. These commitments should be grounded in sound evidence and a shared understanding of the underlying causes. Enhancing nutritious food production requires action on multiple fronts, such as improving water and food systems governance, funding water management and rural development projects, and adopting high-efficiency irrigation systems.

Dr. Qibla condemns Israel's expansionist policies

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) Dr. Qibla Ayaz and its members strongly condemned Israel's expansionist policies, as they were using the recent conflict to further their reprehensible colonial objectives. He, in a statement, said last week's attacks on Gaza by Israel had blatantly violated international laws, targeting civilian populations, including children, elderly and women. Dr. Qibla emphasized that the Pakistani people stood in solidarity with the Palestinian resistance movement, and the founding father of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's policy regarding Palestine was still considered relevant by the Pakistani people.

merged districts of FATA, the birth registration rate is far low. According to UNICEF it was 1% in 2017 in former agencies. Being a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Government of Pakistan is committed to provide children their basic rights to survival, development, protection and participation.

The speakers included Leher Mirza, Sudi Kohli from Sindh, Sofia Javed from Khyber pakhtunkhaw, women boxer Sughra Rahman from Sahiwal, Dr. Yasmin Gul from Swat, Shahida Wafa Alvi from Muzafargarh, writer and journalist and Sadaf Raza from Justuju Foundation Sindh and Fareeha Ammar from UN Women. Darakhshan Saleh from Sindh Commission on Status of Women, MPA of PML-NMs. Kanwal Liaqat from Lahore and Ms. Sabeen Rizvi, PML-N MNA and General Secretary Parliamentarian's Forum, PML-N also spoke on the occasion. Ms. Raina who represented transgender community said that government institutions should come forward to ensure hundred percent birth registration. It should not be left to the will of the families and others, she explained.

International Rural Women Day celebrated

ISLAMABAD (APP): The speakers and the participants at the 16th Annual Rural Women Conference on the International Rural Women Day here Sunday urged the government to devise effective mechanisms involving communities, while taking into account innovative solutions utilizing digital technologies.

15 October is celebrated as International Rural Women Day every year according to the UN General Assembly's resolution A/RES/62/136 of 18 December 2007. Through the resolution, the member states recognized the significance of the role that is played by the rural women admitting their contributions in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and end poverty. Culminating on Tuesday, 17th October, the Conference will hold award distribution ceremony by celebrating the successes of the rural women who are participating actively in the three-day conference representing 150 plus districts of the country.

PODA's 3-day conference is a regular feature in Islamabad since 2008. The theme of the ongoing conference is "Stop Child

Marriages for Sustainable Development, Climate and Democracy".

"Due to lack of official identity (ID), girls are deprived of their fundamental human rights including right to legal identity, citizenship, education, marriage, reproductive health, inheritance, government assistance, services and lead a dignified life as these are the rights enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan," said Sameena Nazir who is a Founder and President of PODA.

Birth registration helps to decreasing the risks of child marriage, child labor and children being treated as adults in the criminal justice system, she said.

"This very basic human right will provide a strong foundation for achieving gender equality and empower women and girls, Gender equality is goal 5 of SDGs which is translated into all SDGs," she explained. After the inaugural plenary, the day's proceedings were focused on the rights of girl-child and registration issues linked with an alarming neglect to register birth of girl children.

The PDHS survey of Pakistan identifies that here 42% children under the age of five are not registered. However, in newly

Country's economic uplift direct linked with Science & IT development: Dr Umar Saif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Science, Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif Sunday said that his government was making all-out efforts for the development of the technology sector and to equip the youth with skills of latest technology to uplift the economy.

"The government was striving for the promotion of science and technology and therefore the government was committed to utilize all the resources to

introduce industry and smart technology in agriculture and other sectors", he said while talking to a private news channel. Pakistan is an agricultural country and it is essential for the development of the country that the agro-based industry be established on a technology basis, he added.

Latest technologies would not only be helpful to save time and improve work quality but also uplift the economy of the country, he mentioned.

Replying to a question,

he said it is a very excellent step by the government to provide an enabling environment to the IT sector in order to increase its exports, adding, it is an era of information technology and it has footprints in all the sectors. It is a need of hour to introduce IT education at the school level so that children become experts in it when they progress in their studies. He further stressed that the youth must come forward to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country.

Railways earn over Rs 6 million from saloons

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has generated revenue worth Rs 6,340,156 million through utilizing its 23 saloons and inspection coaches for commercial purposes, during the last three and half years.

"At present, Pakistan Railways has only 23 saloons and inspection coaches with different dignitaries of the country who are entitled to use these saloons when needed," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

Giving the details, he said, "Two highly luxurious coaches have been allocated for the Prime Minister's Secretariat while four coaches have been allocated for the Minister for Railways, Secretary/Chairman of Railways, and another senior official in the ministry."

The official said, "Only one saloon has been allocated to the federal government while one each has been allocated to the Governors of Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, and the provincial governments."

In addition, eight saloons had been allocated for the Railway Headquarters Lahore, in which one each would be marked to Chief Executive Officer/General Manager (BS-22),

Additional General Manager BS-21, Inspector General Railway Police, Federal Government Inspector, and four saloons were allocated for Principal Officers, he added.

The official said six saloons had been allocated for Divisional Superintendents of Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Quetta, Sukkur, Lahore, and Karachi.

He said that the Principal Officers of Pakistan Railways were entitled to travel at these saloons or inspection coaches only when they were on duty.

Above all, they said luxury saloons were also available for private travel on a rental basis.

The official said the saloons were very luxurious and had two rooms, a bath, a dining area, and a kitchen like a tiny house on wheels with the availability of every facility.

He said some of these saloons were inspection coaches and their back wall was made of glass from where officers could view the track and surrounding area.

"Pakistan Railways officers are not entitled to use this facility other than duty and all these saloons are mostly 40-50 years old," he added.

Aneeq warns against undermining youth with religious misconceptions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed expressed concerns over certain elements attempting to sow doubts and misconceptions among the nation's youth.

Addressing students in a recent event at Rawalpindi Arts Council, organized by the Suffa Sweet Home, he emphasized the need for young individuals to be equipped with knowledge and wisdom to tackle contemporary challenges.

Minister Aneeq stressed the importance of fostering a strong connection with Almighty Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). He outlined the three phases of the life of the Prophet (PBUH) as the pursuit of truth, its proclamation, and its implementation, paralleling these phases to Allama Iqbal's poetry and the interpretation of Quranic verses. He noted that the Holy Quran holds the solution to all of humanity's issues.

The minister also pointed out that

Muslims should not only be social workers but also leaders. He highlighted the significance of a united Islamic community and noted that Muslims constitute 25 per cent of humanity, making their global impact undeniable. He said, "If we follow the right path, problems like Gaza, Burma, Kashmir would not arise." He urged scholars and leaders to guide the nation and instill hope rather than despair, emphasizing that "despair is a trait of Satan."

He concluded on a hopeful note, stating that "Pakistan's bright days are ahead."

The seminar featured speeches by former Minister for Religious Affairs Senator Talha Mahmood, Mufti Zubair, and other scholars and intellectuals. During the event, outstanding students in the speech competitions were rewarded with prizes.

Participants in the seminar strongly condemned the severe atrocities in Gaza by the occupier Israel, using harsh language to denounce the ongoing genocide of Muslims.

Massive voter registration drive underway for upcoming elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): Over 800,000 new voters are being enrolled by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), in voter lists using data obtained on October 1, 2023, enabling them to exercise their right to vote in the upcoming general elections.

According to an ECP spokesperson, the Commission has already obtained data from the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) on October 1, 2023, regarding individuals who received new computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs).

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has already removed restrictions on voter lists across the country. This allows eligible individuals to register, transfer, or correct their votes until October 25. The suspension of electoral rolls, enacted through clause 39 of the Election Act 2017, was in effect since July 20 this year. Following the unfreezing of electoral lists, eligible individuals now have the opportunity to update their voter information.

He urged all eligible citizens to ensure the cor-

rectness of their voter registration, modifications, and transfers, and align their particulars with their computerized national identity card details by October 25, 2023. Answering a question, he explained that the law mandates voter registration to align with an individual's permanent or current address, as indicated on their CNIC. Voting from a third address is prohibited. However, government employees posted in a different district or province can register their vote and their family's at the post office in their new location.

Rapid urbanization ruining Capital's habitat, ecosystem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Once enjoying a unique status for its serene evenings and amusing landscape, the capital is fast losing its beauty, tranquillity, biodiversity and habitat due to rapid urbanization in the suburbs of the main city.

Enjoying a unique identity as the only capital in the world with nature and human settlements coexisting simultaneously in an ecosystem, is now helplessly losing its wetlands, forest cover and water resources.

Even rare species like Asian Leopards are under threat of displacement or rather extinction at the hands of urbanization, exploding population, expanding road infrastructure and lack of attention by the city developers towards nature.

"Gone are the days when sitting anywhere in the Capital - any green belt or park - used to amuse residents arousing within them a feeling of love for nature," said an elderly Muhammad Bashir, who had come to the city for a job in mid-seventies.

"Couple of decades, it was calm and cool with lush green belts, flow-ers-filled parks, the Lotus Lake, Shakarparian, Damm-e-Koh and the Pir Sohawa - all presently a friendly and natural feeling," he stated.

"But, now the situation has changed entirely. The serenity has been replaced with blowing horns and unpleasant noise due to massive construction and traffic load and air is adulterated with emissions, making us feel foul like never before," Bashir said. The total area of the federal capital is 906 square kilometers with a specified additional area 3,626 square kilometers including the Margalla Hills National Parks in the north and northeast. The city is divided into five zones and Zone-IV is the largest in terms of area whereas Zone-I is the largest in terms of developed residential area. There is barely any sector of the metropolis that lacks trees or any open space like greenbelts or parks.

But, with the population influx, the roads are falling short of traffic and green belts are littered with waste and in some places drying up due to improper attention.

The city also receives a whopping 1143 millimeters of average rainfall per annum but still, it is grappling with the issue of water scarcity because it has to employ the resource initially established for 200,000 people, as to now for over two million people. The International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Pakistan Council of Research on Water Resources (PCRWR) and the Capital Development Authority (CDA) jointly executed a rainwater recharging wells project to replenish the aquifer of the capital that had dropped to an alarming level.

The initiative in its pilot phase injected almost 1.8 million gallons of rainwater into the aquifer that was drying up due to massive water drilling by households.

"The water courses passing through scientifically developed F-6 and F-7 sectors were once the ideal habitats for the most trafficked mammal Pangolins," said an official of Islamabad Wildlife Management Board. "We received several calls by residents reporting the presence of Pangolins in these areas that were rescued by the Board workers," the official said, mentioning that Margalla Hills is also home to leopards, jackals, barking deer and many other elusive animals, birds and insects." "Then there is a variety of plants that ensure healthy ambience and much-needed oxygen for the capital residents," he added. "All these plant and animal species contribute to a naturally rich ecosystem of Margalla Hills National Park."

With the rising population pressure, the civic authorities are compelled to widen roads and launch new residential sectors with massive con-

struction activity to facilitate the populace. Recently, Margalla Avenue has been developed as an alternate route to avoid traffic jams on the way to entering the capital, and enter the capital from residential areas like Taxila, Sangiani and Wah Cantt to avoid usual traffic jams.

The Avenue will be entering near Sangiani to travel all along from Shah Allah Ditta, D-12 sector and will culminate at Margalla Avenue denuding the forest cover and creating a fissure between the natural habitat as it will be barricaded from both sides. According to the Capital Development Authority officials, the road infrastructure was important and crucial as the population had increased exponentially with over a million vehicles registered in the capital. "Therefore, if only one-third of these vehicles travel on the roads, the existing infrastructure falls quite insufficient to bear the traffic load. That's why we need new roads," the officials argued.

However, they pleaded that environmental setbacks could be mitigated through the plantation and other interventions suggested by the experts. The expressway of Islamabad which had swathes of towering trees making this leading thoroughfare a majestic pathway, is also plagued with lowering tree cover and mounting traffic load resulting in average temperature rise and deteriorating air quality for residents of twin cities. The CDA environment wing reveals that thousands of decades-old trees are removed to construct a road or develop a specific area or settlement and saplings planted in response, could take decades to become a real substitute. Now, if the development is much needed, the ecosystem and habitat are needed the most. Therefore, the authorities must create a balance ensuring that the ecosystem and habitat are not ruined in the name of development and citizens are not barred from their right to breathe in cleaner air and live a healthy life.

VCs Forum urges effective inter-university collaborations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Vice Chancellors Forum concluded here yesterday with a wealth of transformative recommendations that promise to shape the landscape of higher education and effective inter-university collaborations in Pakistan.

The Forum, held under the auspices of the Inter University Consortium for Promotion of Social Sciences Pakistan (IUCPSS) and the National Skills University Islamabad, was chaired by Dr. Shahid Mehmood Baig Chairman, Pakistan Science Foundation.

The participants included Dr. Tanvir Kayani Secretary General, Pakistan National Commission for UNESCO (PNCU), Prof.

Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar Vice Chancellor, National University Islamabad, Prof. Dr. Safia Ahmed Vice Chancellor, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University (SBBWU) Peshawar, Dr. Syed Habib Ali Bokhari Vice Chancellor, Kohsar University, Murree, Prof. Dr. Mujahid Rector, PAF-IST Mang Haripur-Dr. Mohammad Abid, Vice Chancellor, City University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Khalil Ahmed Ibhupoto Vice Chancellor, Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur and Prof. Dr. Ijaz A. Qureshi Pro Vice Chancellor, Institute of Art and Culture and others.

Muhammad Murtaza Noor, National Coordinator, IUCPSS conducted the proceedings of the forum.

The senior leadership of academia after detailed deliberations recommended bridging the gap between academia and industry, equipping the youth with necessary soft skills, bringing innovation in teaching, research and curriculum, increase in budgetary allocations for the education sector and building permanent inter university mechanism aimed at learning from another's best practices and expertise.

The forum reached a unanimous consensus on the implementation of faculty and student exchange programs within Pakistani uni-

versities, fostering cross-institutional collaboration and enriching academic experiences. The participants also urged for a culture of art and design to be cultivated through research and funded projects, celebrating and nurturing Pakistan's artistic and creative talents.

Recognising the need for continuous improvement, the forum recommended a focus on faculty capacity building through training and workshops to stay at the forefront of educational advancements. To sustain the momentum of innovation, it was suggested to host VC Forum-like events on a monthly basis, promoting ongoing dialogue, knowledge sharing, and networking.

UAE to build hospital

HERAT (Agencies): A well-equipped hospital will be built by the UAE in Herat. The hospital will be constructed in just eight hours to provide medical care for the injured people. A UAE delegation visited Herat and announced the plan for this vital health facility. The governor of Herat, Sheikh Mawlana Noor Ahmad Islamjar, appreciated the benevolent action of the UAE and assured the local administration's cooperation in the establishment of the health center.

The Frontier Post

Rabi-ul-Awwal 29, 1445 — Monday, October 16, 2023

ARCS seeks aid for victims

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) held an online meeting with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and other aid agencies to seek assistance for those affected by the recent earthquake in Herat province. The acting president of ARCS, Mawlavi Matul Haq Khalis, shared information about the earthquake and the difficult living conditions in the affected areas.

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

Afghanistan struck by another earthquake

HERAT (INP): A 6.3-magnitude earthquake struck western Afghanistan on Sunday, according to the US Geological Survey, adding to the series of tremors that have devastated the region this month.

The epicentre of the quake was reported to be 33 kilometres (20 miles) from Herat city, the capital of the western province, and its depth 6.3km. This follows a magnitude 6.3 quake on October 7, accompanied by eight powerful aftershocks,

which resulted in over 1,000 deaths and hundreds of injuries in the same area.

With entire villages flattened and thousands left without shelter, the region experienced another tremor of similar intensity, causing one fatality and injuring 130 others.

The aftermath of these earthquakes has left more than 12,000 people affected, and UNICEF revealed that over 90% of the casualties were women and children.

The challenging situation is exacerbated by Afghanistan's existing humanitarian crisis, marked by the withdrawal of foreign aid following the Taliban's return to power in August 2021.

Providing shelter on a large scale poses a significant challenge for the Taliban authorities, who have strained relations with international aid organizations.

Homes in rural Afghanistan are typically

constructed with mud and wooden support poles, lacking steel or concrete reinforcement. The multi-generational extended family structures prevalent in the region mean that earthquakes can have a devastating impact on entire communities.

The earthquakes further compound the difficulties faced by Afghanistan, underscoring the urgent need for humanitarian assistance and support for the affected population.

EU provides 30m aid to Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The European Union has announced that it has allocated 30 million Euros to support healthcare in Afghanistan.

Jutta Urpilainen, the EU Commissioner for International Partnerships, announced on her social media platform X, formerly Twitter, that these aids would be utilized in providing essential healthcare services to the vulnerable citizens of Afghanistan.

It is worth noting that the decision to allocate 30 million euros for Afghanistan was adopted at the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

"In Marrakech, I announced that we are unlocking 30 million for the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund's health pillar. This contribution will help provide essential services to the most vulnerable Afghans," Urpilainen said.

Meanwhile, the European Union and the World Bank jointly head the Afghanistan Coordination Group. Before this, the European Union had also announced 3.5 million euros in aid for urgently relieving earthquake victims in Herat province.

Last Saturday, a 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck Herat province, resulting in thousands of casualties and significant financial losses.

Reports indicate that most of the casualties from this natural disaster are women and children needing immediate assistance, including healthcare and hygiene support. This is happening at a time when many remote areas in the country still lack access to basic healthcare facilities.

IEA to join China's belt, road forum

KABUL (Reuters): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan will attend China's Belt and Road Forum next week, Reuters reported.

IEA officials and ministers have at times travelled to regional meetings, mostly those focussed on Afghanistan, but the Belt and Road Forum is among the highest-profile multilateral summits it has been invited to attend, according to Reuters.

The forum in Beijing on Tuesday and Wednesday marks the 10th anniversary of President Xi Jinping's ambitious global infrastructure and energy initiative, billed as recreating the ancient Silk Road to boost global trade.

The IEA's acting minister for commerce and industry, Nooruddin Azizi, will travel to Beijing in the coming days, ministry spokesman Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad told Reuters. "He will attend and will invite large investors" to Afghanistan, he said.

China has been in talks with the Taliban over plans, begun under the previous foreign-backed government, over a possible huge copper mine in eastern Afghanistan.

Azizi will continue discussions in Beijing on plans to build a road through the Wakhan corridor, a thin, mountainous strip in northern Afghanistan, to provide direct access to China, Akhundzada said.

Japan appoints new envoy to Afghanistan



KABUL (Agencies): Takuyoshi Kurumaya has been officially appointed as the new ambassador of Japan to Afghanistan.

He was introduced by his predecessor, Takashi Okada, who has completed his tenure as Japan's ambassador to Afghanistan, to Amir Khan Muttaqi, the

Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate.

During a farewell meeting, Okada highlighted the positive developments and achievements in Afghanistan and expressed hope for a productive relationship with the world to help resolve current issues

in the country.

Mawlavi Amir Khan Muttaqi praised Okada for successfully completing his mission and extended his best wishes to Kurumaya for his new role in Kabul. Kurumaya, in turn, pledged to work towards strengthening the relations between Tokyo and Kabul.

Japan's aid to victims delivered to ARCS



KABUL (Agencies): The ambassador of Japan in Kabul handed over the country's aid to the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) at Kabul International Airport, intended for the victims of the recent earthquake in Herat

province.

According to a statement from the ARCS, the aid includes 2,940 blankets, 1,480 mattresses, 250 water bottles, 210 tents, 21 plastic carpets, and 5 water purifiers. These materials are allocated to assist the earth-

quake victims in Herat province.

Mawlavi Abdul Latif Sabit, an ARCS official, stated upon receiving these materials that they will be distributed to the affected individuals as soon as possible.

UAE sends 53 tons aid for Herat earthquake victims



HERAT (Agencies): The United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Saturday sent two aircraft carrying 53 tons of relief aid to support the people affected by the earthquake in Herat.

The shipment includes food parcels and 500 tents, UAE's foreign ministry said in a statement.

"For the fifth consecutive day, the UAE humani-

tarian air bridge continues to provide supplies to meet the basic needs of the people of Afghanistan," Sultan Al Shamsi, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Development and International Organizations Affairs, said, noting that five aircraft have been sent to date carrying a total of 140 tons.

He added that the UAE's

efforts are ongoing to alleviate the suffering caused by the earthquake, which resulted in thousands of deaths and injuries and serious damage to infrastructure.

Al Shamsi stressed that the UAE is making tireless efforts to stand by the people of Afghanistan and provide humanitarian support.



HERAT: An injured Afghan man was brought to a hospital following an earthquake.

Herat earthquake leaves victims with sleep and diet disturbances

HERAT (Khaama Press): The devastating earthquake that struck the western provinces of Afghanistan just one week ago resulted in tragic human casualties and extensive financial losses. Another dimension of this is the region suffering in silence.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) report, approximately 90 per cent of earthquake casualties in Herat are comprised of women and children. According to this organization's findings, more than 12,000 individuals are also experiencing severe psychological and emotional distress and physical and financial damages.

One of the aid workers deployed to Herat by humanitarian organizations revealed that "Survivors of the Herat earthquake, primarily women and children, are in shock from losing their homes and loved ones. This shock has led earthquake survivors to experience disruptions in their sleep and eating habits."

The source, who requested not to be named, informed Khaama Press News Agency, "Currently, more than ten teams providing initial psychological support are stationed in earthquake-affected areas, offering essential psychological care to the victims."

However, according to them, the scale of the Herat tragedy is beyond what can be addressed by a limited number of psychological support teams, and this disaster, given its magnitude, requires a severe and managed mechanism.

Having personally been in contact with the earthquake victims in Herat over the past week, the source pointed out the positive impact of initial psychological support, saying, "The individuals who have benefited from psychological services are in better conditions. These services will remain available to them as needed until their lives return to normal."

Mental health experts believe that the psychological dimension of the Herat tragedy must be taken seriously, as the survivors of

this event currently require as much psychological care as they do food and shelter.

Zarukhsa Diana, a mental health counsellor, told Khaama Press, "Alongside the devastating financial and human losses in Herat, another dimension of the earthquake is the severe psychological damage that needs to be addressed seriously."

Ms Diana outlined the mechanism of initial psychological support provided by the teams on the ground in seven key points: The safe transfer of affected individuals to a secure area ensures their safety.

Assistance in reducing the stress experienced by the survivors and promoting a sense of calm.

Coordination of psychological first aid teams as a bridge between the affected individuals and rescue teams on the ground to reduce casualties and ensure proper access to services.

Guiding affected individuals to receive necessary first aid such as food, clothing, and medical assistance. Providing accurate infor-

mation to prevent confusion and rumours among the public.

Teaching affected individuals how to cope with the current situation and, if necessary, referring them to long-term mental health facilities.

Offering practical assistance to vulnerable individuals while considering the culture and traditions of the affected community.

She emphasized that "Psychological first aid teams must undergo specialized training and be approved by relevant organizations in this area" and added, "The affected individuals may suffer long-term damage, meaning that even after a considerable period has passed since the incident, its effects on their lives may still be evident. In such cases, the affected individuals should seek psychological therapy sessions at mental health clinics."

The earthquake that struck western Afghanistan (Herat) with a magnitude of 6.4 on Saturday, 7th of October, resulted in over 2,400 deaths and thousands of injuries.

IEA, Iranian officials discussed migrant and students issues

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said in a statement that the 4th meeting of the Consular Affairs Commission between the Islamic Emirate and Iran was held on the 17th and 18th of this solar month at the headquarters of Tehran's foreign ministry.

According to the statement, participants at the meeting discussed challenges of Afghan migrants and students, the process of transferring prisoners, preventing the kidnapping and smuggling of Afghan citizens, and increasing the number of Afghan diplomats in order to provide better consular services.



The ministry added that the parties in this meeting emphasized the need for better coordination and solving challenges.

King Amanullah Khan's daughter dies at 94 in Rome

KABUL (Agencies): Princess India, daughter of King Amanullah Khan and Queen Soraya, has passed away in Rome, as confirmed by her daughter Soraya Malek via social media.

"It is with deep sadness that I must announce the demise of my mother, Princess India d'Afghanistan, daughter of King Amanullah Khan and Queen Soraya. She passed peacefully in Rome on Friday evening, October 13, 2023, at around 19:00," Soraya Malek said.

"Her burial ceremony will be held in a brief manner with the presence of her family," Malek said.

She also said that Princess India devoted most of her last four decades to aiding her fellow Afghans. In the 1980s, she cared for injured and ill Afghans in Rome.

Throughout the two decades of the Republic, she embarked on numerous trips to Afghanistan, delivering funds she had raised and aid she had collected from generous donors, Malek added.

Princess India d'Afghanistan, born

on June 7, 1929, was the youngest daughter of Amanullah Khan and Soraya Tarzi, who served as King and Queen of Afghanistan in the 1920s.

She held the distinguished title of princess within the royal house of Mohammadzai-Tarzi.

Princess India, born five months after her father's abdication in Bombay, British India, in 1929, was

named in honor of their home country.

Following an invitation from Queen Elena of Italy, the family settled in Rome, where she spent her formative years and remained a resident. She studied at Pension Marie-José in Gstaad, Switzerland, and the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy.



Blinken raises Hamas with Saudi crown prince on Mideast crisis tour

RIYADH (AFP/APP): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called for pressure on Hamas during a meeting Sunday with the de facto leader of Saudi Arabia, which has warming ties with Israel but has put normalisation on hold.

The top US diplomat met for nearly an hour in the early morning with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the royal's farm residence in the Riyadh area, a US official said.

"Very productive," Blinken said when asked about the meeting after returning to his hotel.

Blinken "highlighted the United States' unwavering focus on halting terrorist attacks by Hamas, securing the release of all hostages and preventing the conflict from spreading," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

"The two affirmed their shared commitment to protecting civilians and to advancing stability across the Middle East and beyond," Miller said. Prince Mohammed highlighted Riyadh's diplomatic outreach "to calm the situation", the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported, an effort that has involved calls to regional leaders including Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

He also reiterated the Gulf kingdom's condemnation of attacks on

civilians and "vital interests that affect their daily lives", while stressing the need for Palestinians to "obtain their legitimate rights and achieve just and lasting peace", SPA said. Blinken has been touring the region after Hamas fighters infiltrated Israel from the blockaded Gaza Strip on October 7 and killed 1,300 people, mostly civilians, and took about 150 hostages. The attack sparked a massive retaliatory campaign targeting the Islamist group in Gaza that has killed more than 2,300 people. Before the violence, the Saudi crown prince had spoken of progress in US-led diplomacy to normalise relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Saudi Arabia has put the process on hold after the violence, and Blinken has said that disrupting Saudi-Israel normalisation efforts may have partly motivated the Hamas attack. The kingdom is the guardian of Islam's two holiest sites, making recognition a historic coup for Israel, which in 2020 normalised relations with three other Arab states including the United Arab Emirates.

As part of a package, Saudi Arabia -- which like Israel has tense relations with Iran's Shiite clerical state -- has been seeking security guarantees from the United States, its longtime partner and consumer of its oil.

But Prince Mohammed is deeply controversial in the United States, where intelligence linked him to the 2018 killing and dismemberment of Jamal Khashoggi, a US-based Saudi journalist. Riyadh denies this, blaming rogue operatives.

President Joe Biden -- who once vowed to make the kingdom a pariah -- drew protests at home after a visit to Saudi Arabia last year when he shared a friendly fist-bump with Prince Mohammed.

The State Department said Blinken and the crown prince also discussed Yemen, where an uneasy peace has been holding between the Saudi-backed government and Iranian-backed Huthi rebels.

They also addressed Sudan, on which the Saudis have been working with the United States to mediate between warring generals, with limited success.

Blinken will travel later Sunday to Egypt, the sixth Arab country he will visit as he seeks to pressure Hamas and prevent the war from spreading.

Egypt is a key intermediary between Israel and Hamas, and US officials say Cairo worked on an arrangement to let US citizens leave the Gaza Strip but that Hamas impeded their movement on Saturday to the sole border crossing at Rafah.



MARRAKECH: Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue, and Economic Affairs, participated in a high-profile meeting of Finance Ministers with the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Marrakesh.

Caretaker govt to ensure elections in peaceful manner: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi on Sunday said concerted efforts were underway to ensure the upcoming election in a peaceful and amicable environment. The minister said the caretaker government had been performing its duties and responsibilities in accordance with the constitution and law.

He said the political activities should be observed in a way that did not affect the day-to-day affairs of the general public. "If anyone is facing harassment, they can approach the Election Commission," he said, adding the ECP was a constitutional body. Solangi said the caretaker government wanted good terms with all the political parties. "We want to create a pleasant environment for elections and we want elections that are acceptable to everyone," he added.

The minister said the electoral history of Pakistan suggested that the polls were held in the country during extreme weathers.

The first election was held in December 1970, he added. The Election Commission of Pakistan had announced the date for elections in the last week of January, he said while ruling out any problem in holding the election vis-à-vis weather conditions.

"After the completion of delimitation, political parties will be given 54 days for the electoral campaign," he responded to a query.

Solangi said the caretaker government was taking effective measures to address economic issues. The administrative measures taken by the

caretaker government had stabilized the rupee, he added.

Actions were being taken against smuggling, the minister noted.

To another query, he ruled out any official protocol to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Supremo Nawaz Sharif in London.

"Nawaz Sharif has not received any official protocol in London," said the information minister, adding the matter related to return of Nawaz Sharif was not taken up by the caretaker cabinet at all.

"I do not believe in assumptions and speculations since things are very clear in front of us," the minister remarked. He said there was no restriction on mentioning any individual in the media since the caretaker government firmly believed in freedom of expression. Maulana Fazlur Rehman was a seasoned politician, he said while responding to another query.

A large number of illegal immigrants had started returning to their countries, he stressed.

Interaction between top leadership of China, Pakistan to propel bilateral ties to new heights:

Solangi: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi has said that interaction in China between the top leadership of Pakistan and China would further enhance the bilateral relationship to the new heights as the caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar would leave for China tomorrow to participate in Belt and Road Forum being hosted by the Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing.

Speaking at a seminar "CPEC and My Life" the other day, the minister said he was happy to know that people from the gross-root level were invited to speak about the positive impact of the CPEC on their lives.

The people had immensely benefited from various CPEC projects such as Orange Train in Lahore, Thar Coal in Sindh and Gawadar in Balochistan, he added.

Talking about the establishment of Special Investment Facilitation Council by Pakistan to provide one-window facilities to the investors, the minister said that as the CPEC was entering into the new phase, adding Pakistan was keenly looking forward for more and more bilateral cooperation in mining, agriculture, IT and other sectors.

He said enhancement of geographical linkages through improved road, rail and air transportation system would boost frequent people-to-people contacts and enhance understanding through academic linkages.

The higher volume of trade and businesses would result into integrated development which would eventually promote, harmony and sustainable development, he added.

"CPEC is the journey towards economic growth in the globalized world", he maintained.

Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong expressed his country's readiness to further promote CPEC in partnership with Pakistan, adding "We are ready to work with our Pakistani colleagues from all walks of life to further promote the projects in the next ten years of CPEC."

President urges UN, OIC to meet urgently for cessation of Israel's brutal actions against Palestinians

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Sunday strongly condemning the brutalities and massacre of Palestinians in Gaza, urging the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to meet urgently for cessation of the ruthless actions.

He said the UN and the OIC should ensure that necessary medical aid, food and other supplies are urgently sent in to prevent further devastation and the human catastrophe in Palestine. "Human history has never witnessed such cruelty and barbarism being committed by Israel at a massive level; even water, electricity, food supply and medicine have been cut off,"

the president said in a statement issued by the President House. He said Israel had crossed all limits by killing children, women and innocent people. He regretted that the international community had failed to prevent Israel from the genocide of the Palestinian people. "Pakistan supports the establishment of an independent state for the Palestinian people that is the only solution to bring lasting peace and stability in the region," the president added.

President pay rich tribute to Liaquat Ali Khan: We pay rich tribute to Quaid-e-Millat Liaquat Ali Khan on the solemn occasion of his death anniversary for his immense services to the

nation. On this day, we are reminded of his unwavering commitment to the cause of Pakistan's independence and the well-being of its people.

Liaquat Ali Khan stood alongside our founding father, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, during the freedom struggle and played a pivotal role in shaping the destiny of our nation. He served as Pakistan's first Prime Minister and was a steadfast champion of the nation's sovereignty and a staunch advocate for the welfare of its citizens. He played a crucial role in the formative years of Pakistan, the adoption of the Objectives Resolution, and guiding the young nation to overcome challenges.

Repatriation of Afghan refugees via Chaman border continues

CHAMAN (PPI): Repatriation of Afghan refugees via Chaman-Spin Boldak border to their country Afghanistan continued on Sunday.

Till now more than 5000 Afghan refugees have repatriated to their country. By the closure of deadline, repatriation of Afghan refugees was increasing. According to reports, voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan to their country Afghanistan is continuing after Government of Pakistan ordered all illegal immigrants, including Afghan refugees to leave Pakistan. According to government authorities at Chaman, more than 5000 Afghan have already voluntarily repatriated to their country through Chaman-Spin Boldak border.

Poliovirus in 3 environmental samples detected

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Health on Sunday said that the poliovirus has been confirmed in the environmental samples taken from three districts of Pakistan.

According to the spokesperson of the Ministry of Health, the virus was found in samples taken from Hub and Peshawar.

He said that the genetic testing of the virus found in the sample from Lahore is still ongoing.

He said that the virus is genetically related to the virus in Afghanistan. The spokesperson said that the continuous confirmation of the virus in environmental samples is a matter of concern to the Minister for Health. Commenting on the situation, Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan said that the ministry is planning more campaigns to keep children safe from the virus.

The Great Upset Afghanistan bring World Cup to life with England conquest

DELHI (Monitoring Desk): Afghanistan claimed the most famous scalp of their international history, and in the process provided the first big shock of the 2023 World Cup, by routing England's world champions by 69 runs in a spin-and-seam masterclass under the Delhi floodlights.

Their dominance was set in motion by a fearless display of power-hitting from the 21-year-old Rahmanullah Gurbaz, whose 80 from 57 had promised so much more until a run-out saved him off in his prime. But Ikrar Alikhil marshalled Afghanistan's lower-order with a precious half-century on his World Cup debut, whereupon they set about making a target of 285 seem as dim and distant as England's hopes of defending their title must now feel. If, after winning the toss and choosing to chase, England had assumed the second half of the match would be a



cakewalk to match the 283 target that New Zealand had waited past in their tournament opener, those notions were scotched during a startlingly attacking powerplay from their opponents.

Jos Buttler's decision to bat second had seemingly been influenced by the likelihood that the ball would skid on to the bat under the floodlights. But instead, the evening conditions merely exacerbated the natural attributes of each of Afghanistan's bowlers, not

least Fazalhaq Farooqi and Mujeeb Ur Rahman, right from the outset of their innings. Farooqi's loosener was more than enough to cause a few sideways glances in the England dressing-room, a wicked full-length inswinger from his zippy left-arm line pinned Jonny Bairstow on the crease and extracted a perfectly justifiable on-field verdict from Rod Tucker, irrespective of Bairstow's stinkeye as he stalked from the crease after a seam's-width DRS verdict.

Pakistan hosting Afghans without any monetary benefit in return: UNHCR

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has said that Pakistan has been hosting Afghan refugees for the last over 40 years without receiving any funds in return.

On the other hand, the European Union Agency of Asylum and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) have termed the presence of millions of illegal immigrants on Pakistani soil a threat to the country. The report says that 1.7 million Afghans are living in the country illegally without any proof and registration. "Pakistan is not the only country which has decided to evict illegal Afghan nationals," it says, adding, "Iran, too, in 2021 had ordered over one million Afghans to leave the country."

Since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, over 1,600,000 Afghans have sought refuge in the neighbouring nations of Pakistan, Iran, and Tajikistan, with over 70 per cent being women and children. The latest figures from the UNHCR estimate that over 3,700,000 Afghans currently reside in Pakistan, with only 1,330,000 registered as

refugees. Pakistan is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention and lacks a national asylum system. The UN's contractee for refugee registration, the Society for Human Rights and Prisoners' Aid (SHARP) has been criticised for its protracted administrative processes, leaving many in Pakistan without a way to attain protection or the required documentation. The visas of many refugees who initially held regular entry permits have now expired.

In response to the new order, the Federation of Afghanistan Journalists in Exile (FAJE), a newly formed organisation advocating for journalists in Afghanistan and the diaspora, called on the United Nations, Pakistani authorities, and international organisations to increase support measures for Afghan journalists in exile, cease the arrests and abuse in custody by law enforcement, and raised concerns over the wellbeing of journalists and trade unionists deported to Afghanistan.

Afghan nationals living in Pakistan have been facing the ire of the authorities after the apex committee a few weeks ago asked them to

leave the country by October 31 or else face the music.

The decision was taken in view of their participation in incidents of violence of May 9 as well as involvement in incidents of terrorism.

Meanwhile, the process of repatriation of Afghan nationals is underway and about fifteen hundred and thirty (1530) more Afghans have been repatriated to Afghanistan via Torkham border.

According to details, one hundred fifty two Afghan families were sent back in forty nine vehicles. These include three hundred ninety two men, two hundred fifty seven women and eight hundred eighty one children. Over one point seven million Afghans are residing in Pakistan illegally. According to the European Union Agency of Asylum and IFJ, foreign nationals residing illegally in Pakistan are involved in the terror activities and financial crimes. Pakistan is not only a country in the world which decided to repatriate the Afghan nationals for safeguarding its own interests, but Iran also expelled over one million Afghans in 2021.

GAZA (Monitoring Desk): Hundreds of thousands fled here from the north on whatever could carry them - cars if there was fuel, horse and cart if one could be found, their own feet if there was no other option. And what they found was a city on its knees, ill-prepared for its population to literally double overnight. Every room, every alley, every street is packed with men, women and the young. And there is nowhere else to go.

Hamas say 400,000 of the 1.1 million people who call northern Gaza home headed south down the Salah al-Din Road in the last 48 hours, following Israel's order to leave. I was among them, along with my wife and three children, and two days worth of food.

For many, the threat of Israel's bombs and impending invasion - which comes after gunmen from Gaza killed 1,300 in Israel - cancels out Hamas's order to stay put. But in this narrow strip of land, blockaded on all sides and cut off from the rest of the world, options for where one ends up are limited. Safety is never guaranteed.

And so a teeming mass of Gazans, many already bombed out of their homes, all lost, all afraid, all knowing nothing of what comes next, converged here. This city, normally home to 400,000 people, has ballooned to

more than a million overnight. As well as the north, they have come from the east, which suffered terribly in the 2014 war.

Everyone single one of them needs shelter and food, and no one knows for how long. Scarce resources are running out, fast. This is a city that was already exhausted. And the tide was too strong, and things are starting to fall apart. The main hospital here, already low on essentials, has not only taken in sick and injured from the north - it has now become a refuge. Refugees line the corridors as doctors work on new arrivals injured by Israeli bombs. The din of competing voices fills the air.

You cannot blame people for coming here. Hospitals are among the safest places to be in a time of war, protected by international law.

By some measures these people are perhaps the lucky ones, at least for now. Elsewhere, residents take in new arrivals. Many in Khan Younis lived in cramped conditions to begin with. Now they are cheek by jowl.

I have seen small apartments, which already housed more than they could comfortably hold, becoming "homes" for 50 or 60 people - no one can live like this for long.

My family now shares a home with four others in a flat with two small bedrooms. There are metres of personal space for us. I consider us

among the lucky ones.

Schools across the city, also "safe" from war, are filled with a multitude of families - tens of thousands perhaps, but who knows? You'd never stop counting if you began.

At one school, run by UN relief agency UNRWA, every classroom is filled, every balcony space crisscrossed with clothes lines. Mothers and grandmothers cook on park benches in the courtyard as their hungry children wait impatiently.

But when there is no more room - and there is no more room - humanity inevitably spills out onto the streets, fills the alleyways and the underpasses, and lives and sleeps in the dirt, the dust, the rubble, waiting for something better that might never arrive. There's little food, little fuel. There is no water in the shops. Water stations are the best hope. It is a catastrophic situation.

And it is not as if this city is safe from harm. It is regularly bombed - it is still in a warzone. Collapsed buildings and piles of rubble litter the streets. I heard rocket launches from near the hospital, as Hamas continues to strike inside Israel. That is an open invitation for retaliation.

The hum of Israeli drones looking for their next target is ever present.

And bombs drop, and buildings fall, and the morgues and hospitals fill with more people.