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Rupee stop Dollar

ISLAMABAD (INP): A day after attempting to regain the huge ground lost to the Pakistani rupee over the past few weeks, the US dollar once again shed value. At the opening of Thursday's trading session, the mighty American currency lost another Rs1.29 against the local rupee in the interbank market. On Thursday morning, the US dollar opened with Rs279 in the inter-bank market.

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Pakistan blindly trusts China: PM

BEIJING (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday, calling the bilateral partnership made in "heaven", said that Pakistan blindly trusted China and that the country would not allow anything to undermine the bilateral strategic partnership.

The prime minister, in his opening remarks while meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, said Pakistan firmly supported One China policy and would show it through its actions, not mere words. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the Third Belt and Road Forum, attended by leadership and representatives of around 140 nations.

"Pakistan will not take an inch back when it comes to our relations with China," he remarked as the two leaders met to discuss the bilateral and regional matters. President Xi warmly received the prime minister as he arrived to hold the meeting accompanied by his delegation members, including Shamshad Akhtar, Sarfaraz Bugti, Gohar Ejaz and others.

The prime minister thanked the Chinese leader for inviting him to attend the "historic" Belt and Road Forum and also congratulated him for the "resounding" success of the event. He said President Xi's address at the Forum was "profound, deep and visionary", which offered a lot of opportunities for the countries like Pakistan.

"I used to hear the phrases of (Pakistan friendship) 'sweeter than honey' and 'iron clad brotherhood', but I realise that this moment is for Pakistan when you say 'when China does well, the rest of the world does well.' "This is the moment for Pakistan to come and seize the opportunity," he remarked.

He said eight proposals President Xi had put forth at the Forum were actually a roadmap for not just physical connectivity but also an important stabilising factor in international order. Prime Minister Kakar said the Belt and Road Initiative was a "pragmatic" and "practical" answer to the global political, economic and civilisation-

al challenges faced by many nations.

He said China's unprecedented progress was a role model which transformed the lives of the millions of its people, also having no parallel in the world history. He told the Chinese president that across the whole political structures in Pakistan, there was no dissenting view about China.

Prime Minister Kakar said that President Xi's vision of the community of shared future was very relevant in the current disturbing time. In his remarks, President Xi said that China stood ready to work with Pakistan to carry forward the traditional friendship and deepen the bilateral partnership.

He also reiterated the resolve to accelerate building China-Pakistan partnership in the new era of community for shared future for benefit of the two peoples. He also assured that China was committed for the high quality development of CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) development and working for peace development in the region.

The visit of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar to China to attend the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing and his meetings with the top Chinese leadership have received extensive coverage in electronic and print media.

The prime minister has been in headlines of Global Television Network (CGTN), a prominent English language news channel; CCTV, Chinese language television channel; and newspapers, particularly Global Times, People's Daily, China Daily, China Economic Net, and a number of other Chinese language newspapers and news websites. China's state-run Xinhua news agency interviewed Prime Minister Kakar ahead of his visit.

The Global Times published an article written by the prime minister while the China Daily published his interview on its front page. The prime minister's attendance in the opening ceremony of the Belt

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PHC CJ warns against corruption in lower courts

F.P. Report

BANNU: Justice Ibrahim Khan, the Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court, delivered a stern message during the oath-taking ceremony of the Peshawar High Court Bar Association Bannu Bench in Bannu.

He expressed concern about corruption complaints within the lower courts and urged these courts to take proactive measures to eliminate corruption. Justice Khan emphasized that the lower courts must demonstrate their commitment to fairness and justice through concrete actions to regain the public's trust in the judiciary. He warned that if corruption isn't addressed within a month and a half, dismissal notices may be initiated.

During his visit to Bannu, the Chief Justice announced the approval of a digital library and IT facilities, similar to those in Mingora Darul Qaza, for Bannu High Court. He also disclosed plans for a service tribunal camp in Bannu, where judges from the service tribunal will hear cases and make decisions based on merit, alleviating the need for people and lawyers to travel to Peshawar.

Justice Ibrahim Khan assured that the renovation and repair work on the judicial complex in district Karak would be completed promptly. He commended the President and General Secretary of the Peshawar High Court Bar Association, along with other cabinet members, for their participation in the oath ceremony.

During his visit, the Chief Justice inspected Central Jail Bannu, receiving a guard of honor. He toured various barracks and assessed the facilities within the jail. Justice Ibrahim Khan also visited the district courts in Bannu, stressing a zero-tolerance policy for corruption within the district courts to enhance transparency and cleanliness within the judicial system.

Court moved to provide cycle to Imran

ISLAMABAD (INP): A special court hearing cipher case on Thursday moved to provide a cycle to the PTI chairman for exercise in the jail. Former prime minister Imran Khan is currently incarcerated in Adiala Jail in cipher case. Advocate Sheeraz Ahmed Ranjha filed the plea in the special court for the provision of the cycle to the PTI chairman.

The plea stated that as per the jail manual, the former prime minister is entitled to have a cycle in the jail for exercise to keep himself fit. Judge Abul Alhasnat will take up the plea on October 23. Notices have been served to the respondents in the case. In a separate development on October 17, it emerged that the cell of PTI chairman Imran Khan was extended in Adiala Jail. The PTI chairman requested the special court judge about the extension in his jail cell in Adiala Jail during the last hearing of the case. The jail cell of the PTI chairman has been 'extended' to almost 60 feet from 35 feet on the orders of the special court judge Abu Alhasnat, who is hearing cipher case against the former prime minister in the prison.

Senior jurist SM Zafar passes away

LAHORE (INP): Senior Pakistani jurist and former Senator Syed Muhammad Zafar, popularly known as SM Zafar, passed away at the age of 93, his family members in Lahore confirmed on Thursday. The family revealed that the legal expert had been ailing for a long time.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar expressed grief over the death of renowned lawyer and former Senator Syed Muhammad Zafar. The prime minister prayed for the departed soul to rest in peace and for the grant of patience to the bereaved family.



BEIJING: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Sunak tells Netanyahu 'we want you to win'

WHO urges Israel to allow fuel into Gaza Strip

TEL AVIV (Reuters): Israeli forces continued their air assault on Gaza, while both British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and US President Joe Biden made visits to demonstrate support for Israel and discuss the ongoing conflict with Hamas. Speaking after a meeting with Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu, the PM said the Palestinian people were "victims of Hamas too".

Sunak was speaking alongside his counterpart ahead of their closed-door meeting on Thursday, as the UK prime minister joined a procession of foreign leaders visiting Israel in a bid to prevent the conflict from widening. Sunak said he welcomes Israel "taking every precaution" to avoid harming civilians in Gaza and that the UK is boosting aid. "We absolutely support Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law, to go after Hamas, to take back hostages," Sunak said.

He repeated the UK supported Israel's right to self-defence, in line with international law. Borrowing a phrase from Britain's leader during World War Two, Sir Winston Churchill, Netanyahu said the Hamas attack was "our darkest hour" and "the world's darkest hour". Mr Sunak said: "I'm proud to stand here with you in Israel's darkest hour as your friend. "We will stand with you in solidarity, we will stand with your people. And we also want you to win."

Mr Netanyahu said Israel needed "continual support" for a "long war". The meeting between the two leaders is part of a two-day visit by Mr Sunak to the wider region. No 10 has confirmed he will visit Saudi Arabia later on Thursday, among trips to regional capitals. Calling the Palestinian mili-

US State Dept wants 'sustained' aid for Gaza

WASHINGTON (AP): State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller has said US special envoy David Satterfield has been meeting with Egyptian and Israeli officials to determine the details of aid access to Gaza.

Miller told reporters that the mechanisms of delivery, and whether more than 20 trucks will be granted access, will be apparent in the coming days. "We have said publicly and what we have said to the Israeli government is quite clear. We expect humanitarian assistance to be able to get in," he said. He said the US wants to see "sustained humanitarian assistance" beyond the 20 trucks previously announced by Biden, but discussions were continuing.

Meanwhile, a UN flag will be raised at the Rafah border crossing to protect against Israeli air raids under a UN-brokered deal between Israel and Egypt to allow aid into the Gaza Strip. The Associated Press and the New York Times are reporting. An Egyptian official and a European diplomat also told The AP that UN observers will inspect aid trucks before crossing into the Palestinian territory. As we reported earlier, UN officials are hoping the aid trucks will be able to enter Gaza on Friday.

tant group the "new Nazis," the Israeli PM called the conflict with Hamas a "battle of the entire civilised world". World Health Organisation chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged Israel to allow fuel to be taken into the Gaza Strip, alongside the first deliveries of water, food and medicine.

"We welcome Israel's announcement that it will not block the entry of water, food and medicines into Gaza from Egypt. Fuel is also needed for hospital generators, ambulances and desalination plants - and we urge Israel to add fuel to the life-saving supplies allowed to enter Gaza," Tedros told a press conference. President Biden pledged to assist Israel's defence and consoled the survivors of the recent Hamas attack that killed 1,400 people in southern Israel. However, his efforts to persuade Israel to ease the situation in Gaza, where 2.3 million people are under

total siege, had limited success. Biden announced an offer from Egypt to allow 20 aid trucks into Gaza in the coming days, though this falls far short of the 100 trucks per day that the United Nations deemed necessary.

Equipment to repair roads on the Gaza side for aid transport was sent through the Egyptian crossing, but over 100 trucks were still waiting on the Egyptian side, expected to cross on Friday. While Israel agreed to allow limited aid from Egypt into Gaza, it maintained that aid from its own territory would only be permitted once the more than 200 hostages taken by the Hamas gunmen were released. Israel also stated there would be no halt in its bombing campaign, pledging to strike and destroy every location where Hamas had a presence.

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Four soldiers embrace martyrdom in firefights

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Two fierce encounters took place between own troops and the terrorists in North and South Waziristan districts. The first engagement occurred in general area Gharayoum, North Waziristan District; where own troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location as a result of which 6 x terrorists were sent to hell including a High Value Target, terrorist ringleader Hazrat Zaman alias Khawarey Mullah, who was actively involved in multiple terrorist activities in the area and was highly wanted by the law enforcement agencies.

However, during the operation, three brave sons of soil, Lance Naik

Tabbasum UI Haq (age 36 years, resident of District Rawalpindi), Sepoy Naem Akhtar (age 30 years, resident of District Attock) and Sepoy Abdul Hameed (age 23 years, resident of District Multan), having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat.

In another intense fire exchange between own troops and terrorists in general area Asman Manza, South Waziristan District, Sepoy Farman Ali (age 25 years, resident of District Kashmir) paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced shahadat.

Sanitization is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area. Security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country

and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve.

Funeral prayer of martyred Sepoy offered: Namaz-e-Janaza of Sepoy Sajid Azam Shaheed (age 31 years, resident of District Kotli Azad Kashmir) who embraced shahadat on 16 October 2023 in general area Asman Manza, south waziristan district was offered at native town Nakyal, District Kotli, Azad Kashmir

Shaheed was laid to rest with full military honour. Senior serving military officers, relatives and locals of the area attended the funeral. Armed Forces of Pakistan stand resolute and committed to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the motherland at all costs.

Pakistan has no intention to send Army to Gaza

ISLAMABAD (INP): Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to supporting the Palestinian cause and clarified Pakistan has no intention to send troops to Palestine. She said Pakistan has no intention to send troops to Palestine amid the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel.

FO spokesperson expressed grave concerns about the ongoing humanitarian crisis infringed by Israel in Gaza. "Pakistan will continue to support Palestinians' right to self-determination," adding that, in Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meeting, Pakistan asserted a resolute stance on the Gaza crisis, firmly advocating for the rights and dignity of the Palestinian people.

She highlighted caretaker foreign minister held crucial discussions with their Saudi counterpart during a diplomatic visit to Saudi Arabia. The talks revolved around the pressing matter of Gaza, as Pakistan seeks to build regional consensus for a

peaceful resolution. "Pakistan desires peace in the Middle East," the spokesperson stressed, reaffirming Pakistan's dedication to promoting stability and harmony in the region. To demonstrate Pakistan's solidarity with Palestine, the government has dispatched a special plane carrying vital humanitarian aid to Gaza. The aid package includes medical supplies, blankets, tents, and daily necessities to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

The FO spokesperson called for an immediate halt to the Israeli bombardment in Gaza and the lifting of restrictions that have strangled the region. "Pakistan wholeheartedly welcomes all measures aimed at establishing a ceasefire in Gaza," the spokesperson declared. To ensure the efficient delivery of aid, Pakistan's assistance to Palestine will be routed through Egypt. This substantial 100-ton aid package encompasses medicines, food, tents, and interpreters to address the immediate needs of the affected population.

"All these relief goods from Egypt will be promptly delivered to the specified places in Palestine," the spokesperson confirmed, emphasizing Pakistan's commitment to standing with the Palestinian people in their time of need.

Pak signs oil purchase deal with Russia

ISLAMABAD (INP): Significant progress has been reported in the purchase of cheap oil from Russia, as Pakistan has signed a long-term oil purchase agreement with Moscow. Under the agreement signed on a commercial basis, local refineries will buy oil directly from Russia and the country will deliver the oil to Pakistan at the port.

Under the agreement, the price of the oil will be \$60 per barrel, and the first cargo carrying 100,000 metric tonnes of crude oil will reach Pakistan in December. Ministry of Petroleum, there will be an agreement at the government level after normal supply.

IHC grants Nawaz protective bail till 24th

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Thursday accepted PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif's plea, granting him bail in the Avenfield and Al-Azizia cases until October 24.

It comes before the former premier's impending arrival on Oct 21. His planned return to Pakistan would be after more than four years of self-imposed exile. In July 2018, ousted Nawaz was handed 10 years in jail in the Avenfield properties corruption reference for owning assets beyond known income and one year for not cooperating with the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), which was to be served concurrently.

The Al-Azizia Steel Mills corruption reference pertains to the case in which he was sentenced to seven years in jail and then taken to Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail. He was also fined Rs1.5 billion and US\$25 million in the case. A day ago, PML-N lawyers had moved the IHC seeking protective bail for Nawaz in these two cases, with NAB Special Prosecutor Afzal Qureshi saying that the accountability watchdog did not object to pleas moved by the elder Sharif.

Nawaz's counsels, including former law minister Azam Nazir Tarar and

Amjad Pervaiz, appeared before the court while NAB prosecutors Rana Maqsood, Qureshi and Naeem Sanghera were also present. Separately, an Islamabad accountability court suspended perpetual arrest warrants issued against Nawaz in 2020 in the Toshakhana reference. The case accused him, former president Asif Ali Zardari and ex-prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani of receiving luxury vehicles and gifts from the Toshakhana — a department that stores gifts given to rulers, parliamentarians, bureaucrats and officials by heads of other governments, states, and foreign dignitaries. In June 2020, an accountability court issued non-bailable arrest warrants against the former premier in the case. Months later, Nawaz challenged the warrants in the IHC but withdrew the petition days later.

On Sept 10, 2020, he was declared a proclaimed offender in the case, with an accountability court initiating the process to confiscate his properties and directing NAB to make his arrest through Interpol. The next month, an accountability court ordered authorities to seize the premier's assets, including national and international bank accounts, agricultural land and vehicles. Following the Supreme Court's order that struck down amend-

ments to the NAB laws and reopened graft cases against public office holders, an accountability court had also summoned Zardari and Gillani in the same case last month. Today, Judge Muhammad Bashir took up a petition seeking the suspension of the warrants, where Qazi Misbah appeared as Nawaz's counsel while the NAB prosecutor was also present.

During the hearing, Misbah urged the court to suspend the non-bailable arrest warrants issued against his client. He informed the court that the PML-N supreme wanted to appear before the court on October 24 as there was already a case fixed for that day. The judge then sought the record of the case. The lawyer argued that warrants against former finance minister Ishaq Dar were also suspended in a "case of similar scale". Assuring the judge that Nawaz would appear before the accountability court, Misbah argued that the NAB had not issued any arrest warrant against the PML-N supreme.

Meanwhile, the prosecutor informed the court that the former prime minister "was saying he wants to surrender before the court". He offered that the court may suspend the warrants till October 24 if the suspect wanted to appear before the court.

Court sentences child rapist to death

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Child Protection Court, presided over by Judge Hina Mehwish on Thursday has pronounced a death penalty three times over and imposed a one-million-rupee fine on the perpetrator responsible for the horrifying sexual assault, murder, and subsequent burning of an 8-year-old girl.

The accused, known as Asif Acca, alias Maling, was found guilty of the heinous crime, which sent shockwaves through the community. He had brutally assaulted the young girl before taking her life, and then callously incinerated her remains. The incident, which transpired on November 18, 2020, prompted widespread outrage, leading to the closure of Kohat Road by local residents for several days.

The accused was charged under various sections, including 302, 364, and 376, at the Badh Bir police station. Following a thorough investigation, the case was presented before the court, which has now delivered a stern judgment. As a result, the convicted individual has been sentenced to death three times, signifying the gravity of the crimes committed, and has also been ordered to pay a substantial fine of one million rupees.

APPLICANT
MR. AMEER FAISAL



Minister visits bus terminals to check fares

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In an effort to assess the effective implementation of reduced transport fares in light of declining oil prices across the country, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Caretaker Minister for Information and Public Relations, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel visited two transportation hubs: Peshawar Bus Terminal and Haji Camp Bus Stand.

During this visit, Minister Kakakhel engaged with passengers, preparing for their journeys to different districts and cities at various terminals, keenly inquiring about the realized reductions in transport fares. Furthermore, he inquired from drivers and conductors regarding government-regulated fares.

The Commissioner of Peshawar Division, Muhammad Zubair, and Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar, Afaq Wazir



joined the minister along with officials from the Regional Transport Authority during the visit.

Minister Kakakhel expressed his gratification upon receiving general positive feedback from the public concerning the fare reductions. He was made aware of this by some passengers that the fare reductions were enforced at terminal points, but similar reductions were not yet reflected at other stops. In response, the caretaker minister issued directives to

transport authorities to rigorously monitor fare compliance across all locations.

Addressing the media during this occasion, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel, the Caretaker Minister of Information and Public Relations emphasized the ongoing monitoring of the situation following the drop in oil prices. He stressed that his visit is part of a continuous effort to ensure that the benefits of this price reductions are extended to the people. In addition

to this, the prices of essential commodities are under strict observation, he said.

"Furthermore, permits of six transporters have been revoked for their failure to implement fare reductions. Transport Authority officials have been deployed for vigilant fare checks, with administrative officers conducting more than 500 inspection visits in a single day. This led to the imposition of over forty thousand fines and the registration of six FIRs", he said.

Minister Kakakhel said that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is personally monitoring the situation. Caretaker Minister of Information reiterated the importance of ensuring that the benefits of reduced oil prices reach the public. Stringent measures are being enforced across the province, with specific instructions issued to district administrations to guarantee full compliance, he said, during media talk.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan talking to participants of 25th National Security Workshop of National Defence University.

People caravan to start from KP on today to welcome Nawaz Sharif

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President, Engr Amir Muqam said here Thursday that peoples' caravan from KP to start their journey towards Lahore on October 20 to welcome former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif scheduled to return on October 21.

Addressing the meet the press program here at press club, Engr Amir Muqam said the spirit of PMLN workers and people of KP were overwhelming and were all set to give a historic welcome to their beloved leader.

"Nawaz Sharif's agenda

is taking the country out of existing challenges and his deal is only with the people of Pakistan."

He counted a long list of Nawaz Sharif's services for Pakistan including construction of motorways, highways, eradication of load shedding and wiping out of terrorism besides making Pakistan an atomic power.

Nawaz Sharif Govt has added 12,000MW electricity to the national grid and completed the IMF program in 2016 successfully, he said.

Engr Amir Muqam claimed the country was plunged into different crisis after the disqualification of

Nawaz Sharif on the charges of not taking salary from his son, adding his leader had faced all challenges with steadfastness and appeared in courts.

He said there was no obstacle in return of Nawaz Sharif after Islamabad High Court granted him a protective bill till October 24.

To a question, he said the PTI Chairman's real face has been seen by the masses after May 9 vandalism and expressed the hope that he would face court cases with steadfastness like that of Nawaz Sharif.

He claimed that not a single megawatt of electricity was added during the

tenure of PTI Govt. He said veteran politicians Shahge Gul Afridi of Khyber, Wajid Ali Khan and Muzaffar Mulk alais Kaki Khan of Swat and Sher Rehman of Peshawar besides others had recently joined PMLN.

Except PMLN, he said that all political parties have disappointed people of KP and now they have pinned high expectations from PMLN being the old party that could address their problems at their doorsteps.

On this occasion, Engr Amir Muqam has announced Rs five lakh grant for Peshawar Press Club.

US CG visits PEDO House, expresses satisfaction over plans

PESHAWAR (APP): Shante Moore, the US Consul General posted in Peshawar, visited the head office of Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO), an organization working for the production of electricity at government level in the province, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

Minister attends online katchery

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Department here Thursday holds an online open katchery that was attended by Provincial Caretaker Minister for Livestock, Asif Rafiq.

The open katchery was also attended by Secretary Food, Zareef-ul-Maani and Director General Food Authority, Shah Rukh.

The caretaker minister listened to the problems of people and issued on the spot directives to address them.

Speaking on the occasion, caretaker minister said that no one be allowed to sell substandard edibles and action would be taken against those who are jeopardizing lives of people.

He also urged business community to follow business standard and cooperation with government and authorities.

He also assured that wheat supply would be continued to Chitral in winter season and added that people should avoid paying heed to rumors. He also directed to expedite efforts against hoarders and units manufacturing substandard products.

Moore expressed satisfaction with the energy plans in KP and described the improvement of the security situation in the province and provision of skilled manpower as indispensable.

During the visit to PEDO House, he was accompanied by Political and Economic Chief Dustin DeGrande and Economic Specialist Shahid Islam.

On this occasion, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engr. Naeem Khan gave a comprehensive briefing to the officials of the American Consulate regarding ongoing power projects in the province.

The CEO PEDO told

them that the organization is working on several projects with 2,000 MW generation capacity of electricity in the province, including 771 MW at the government level, 800 MW with the support of the private sector and 467 MW through public private partnership. In these projects, several measures are being taken for uplifting the social lives of the people, including hydropower and solar energy.

He further said that in order to overcome the prevailing energy crisis in the province and produce cheap electricity to the people, PEDO has set up a business and financial plan for the next 10 years, for

which domestic and foreign investment is indispensable.

During his briefing Naeem Khan put forward some proposals for US financial support in energy projects of Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO), which included construction of new transmission lines, establishment of resource center and mobile workshops, need of financing for timely completion of ongoing energy projects and solarization of PEDO etc.

At the end, the US Consul General was also given an honorary shield by PEDO's Chief on behalf of the organization.

AIC committee inspected various physical facilities



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The evaluation committee of NAEAC-HEC made an accreditation visit of BS Forestry degree program at Pakistan Forest Institute (PFI) Peshawar here on Wednesday.

Led by Dr. Abdul Ghaf-

far, Secretary NAEAC, the committee was welcomed by the PFI administration and briefed about the quality of PFI's faculty and its academic and research facilities.

The AIC committee inspected various physical facilities and interacted

with the faculty and students.

The committee appreciated the quality of PFI's BS Forestry program. Khalid Ilyas, DG Pakistan Forest Institute (PFI), presented shields to the committee members at the end of the visit.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali presiding over a meeting with officials of Sui Gas at Governor's House.

PHC acquits 3 alleged heroin manufacturers

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Ishaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah acquitted three culprits allegedly operating a Heroin manufacturing factory as well as smuggling 18 kilograms of contraband, on Thursday.

PHC had suspended the trial court judgement of lifetime imprisonment against alleged culprits and acquitted three petitioners from the charges.

According to prosecution, Abdul Aziz, Alamzeb and Wajid were arrested from heroin manufacturing factory along with 18 kilos of contraband in the premises of Pandu police station on informant report.

Barrister Emir Ullah Khan Chamkani argued that the accused are laborers while the house was rented home while prosecution had claimed that they are operating heroin's factory and didn't produce evidences in this regard.

The counsel argued that police had registered First Information Report (FIR) with delay of 70 minutes after the raid on alleged heroin manufacturing factory and nominated petitioners in the case.

However, state's counsel opposed acquittal of accused and argued that the trial had decided the case on merit.

PHC had acquitted three alleged culprits from lifetime imprisonment after conclusion of arguments.

Minister visits training institutions

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Dr. Aamir Abdullah, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Caretaker Minister for Technical Education, Industries, Commerce and newly merged districts affairs, visited technical education and training institutions in Hayatabad, Peshawar.

During his visit, he emphasized the need for new, locally relevant courses and encouraged income generation through consultancy services.

The minister also explored the potential of cost-effective vehicle solarization at the Advanced Technical Training Centre.

Additionally, he directed the establishment of a day-care centre at the Women's Government Technical Training Centre and assessed the efficiency of textile machines there, with a focus on putting unused machines to work.

In a meeting with technical training institution heads, Dr. Abdullah stressed the importance of enhancing institutional performance, emphasizing that the responsibility of developing skilled manpower in the province rests on their shoulders.

The minister highlighted the significance of improving student skills and enhancing teachers' efficiency while underscoring the importance of ethical institutional practices, community relevance, local training needs, and cooperation with other sectors for institutional growth.

Dr. Abdullah expressed hope that these principles would guide technical education institutions toward progress in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The visit included a briefing on the courses and institution-related matters.

Hawala and smuggling networks: FIA launches significant operation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a decisive move to curb illegal financial activities, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Peshawar conducted a targeted operation on October 19, 2023, based on credible intelligence information. The operation focused on apprehending individuals involved in illegal currency exchange and hawala transactions, aiming to disrupt networks engaged in illicit financial practices.

During the operation, FIA officers successfully apprehended the prime suspect, Wahdat Khan, who was actively operating an unauthorized money changer and hawala business. Khan was taken into custody at Chauk Yadgar, a bustling area in Peshawar, renowned for its historical significance.

The meticulous operation resulted in the confiscation of a substantial

amount of currency, with 200,000 Pakistani Rupees recovered from the suspect.

Additionally, crucial hawala documents, indicative of large-scale financial transactions, were seized, shedding light on the intricate web of illegal financial activities orchestrated by the apprehended individual.

The recovered currency and documents are currently under scrutiny by the authorities, who are diligently working to trace the origins and destinations of the funds.

This investigation aims to unravel the complexity of the financial network, ensuring a thorough understanding of the illicit practices employed by these individuals.

Wahdat Khan, the arrested suspect, faces serious legal consequences as multiple charges have been filed against him. The comprehensive case includes charges related to unautho-

rized currency exchange, engaging in hawala transactions without legal authorization, and potential links to smuggling networks.

The FIA Peshawar emphasizes its commitment to upholding the rule of law and ensuring the financial integrity of the region. This operation signifies a significant milestone in the agency's ongoing efforts to combat financial crimes and dismantle networks involved in illicit financial practices.

Further investigations are currently underway, as law enforcement agencies continue their relentless pursuit of individuals involved in these illegal activities.

The FIA remains dedicated to maintaining the security and economic stability of the region, urging citizens to remain vigilant and report any suspicious financial activities to the relevant authorities.

EIB's operations advance drug eradication efforts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Department of Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control has initiated a province-wide campaign to eradicate drugs on Thursday. The Excise Intelligence Bureau (EIB) has successfully carried out

two operations in this endeavour.

In the first operation, EIB-1&6, conducting an operation on Pir Zakuri Pul Ring Road, apprehended Nisar Khan, a resident of Mohalla Samanabad Pir Vidhai Rawalpindi, recovering 150 narcotic pills.

In a separate operation, EIB-1&2, operating at Haji Camp Ada stop, arrested Muhammad Tamjeed and Basharat, residents of Lahore, seizing 1020 grams of heroin.

Both cases have been filed at the Excise Police Station in the Peshawar Region.



PESHAWAR: PPP's Senator Robina Khalid with other women lighting candles to observe anniversary of Kar Saz. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

'Govt taking steps for promotion of education'

PESHAWAR (APP): KP Caretaker Minister for Elementary, Secondary and Higher Education, Professor Dr Mohammad Qasim Jan has said that the provincial government is taking special steps for promotion of education in the newly merged districts of the erstwhile Federal Administered Tribal Area.

He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting of the Merged Areas Education Foundation here on Thursday. Besides, Secretary, Elementary & Secondary Education, Muatasim Billah Shah, Managing Director Merged Areas Education Foundation, Abdul Karam and Deputy Managing Director, Dr Shaukat Hayat, other higher authorities of the department also attended the meeting.

The caretaker minister said that the provincial government has allocated a hefty share from its budget

to increase literacy rate in the tribal districts and pass on the benefits of merger to them and redress the deprivation of their residents.

In this connection, he appreciated the role of the Foundation, which is equipping the boys and girls of these districts with its limited resources.

The provincial minister directed the authorities of the Elementary and Secondary Education Department to prepare new proposals for imparting education to the girls of the merged districts along focusing on the ongoing projects of the foundation.

Professor Dr Mohammad Qasim Jan stressed need for special focus on girls education in tribal districts, saying beside the resources of the provincial government, he will also approach federal government in this regard.

He said that for the imparting of higher educa-

tion, a second shift is being upgraded in the adjacent localities of the tribal cities. He directed the construction of new schools on a need basis.

Laboratory inaugurated

PESHAWAR (APP): Director General Livestock and Dairy Development, Dr. Alamzaib here Thursday inaugurated District Diagnostic Laboratory at Civil Veterinary Hospital Peshawar.

Executive Director Association for Bio Risk Management Pakistan (ABRMP), Dr. Asghar Ali, Program Coordinator, Dr. Zakir Hussain also attended the inauguration ceremony.

The laboratory was established with the cooperation of ABRMP and other health security partners.



In brief

Man dies, 16 students injured
F.P. Report

MINGORA: A man was killed and sixteen school children injured when a school van collided with a car on Matta Bypass Road here on Thursday. Official of Rescue 1122 said the incident took place when a private school van, carrying children back to homes, collided head on with a car. As a result, a man sitting in the car was badly injured and taken to Matta Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead. Sixteen children who sustained injuries in the mishap, were provided treatment at the hospital and most of them were relieved for homes.

DHQ Hospital inspected
F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Sundas Irshad visited District Headquarters Hospital soon after assuming the charge as DC. She inspected emergency, minor operation theater, blood bank, children, nursery, labor room, medicines store, computerized ticket counters and different wards and reviewed provision of medicines and other treatment facilities being provided to patients in the hospital. CEO health Dr. Umar Sharif Rathor, MS DHQ Hospital Dr. Shakeel Ahmad Shahid, and other doctors and health officers were also accompanied her. On this occasion, she said that provision of better healthcare to people was top priority of the government and warned that delay, negligence and lethargic attitude on the part of medical staff would not be tolerated. She also checked biometric attendance of staff and temperature of vaccine and medicines and directed the MS and pharmacist concerned to maintain temperature of vaccine and medicines according to SOPs. MS of the hospital gave details briefing regarding availability of free of cost medicines and other facilities and provision of health card programme to the DC.

Minister on out of school children
F.P. Report

QUETTA: Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Education Madad Ali Sindh on Thursday said that Balochistan has the highest number of out of school children and asked the provincial government to take measures for reducing the huge number of out-of-school children in the province. He asked the provincial government to take maximum efforts to promote quality education and increase the literacy rate in the province. Addressing the ceremony of distributing laptops to students in Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, he said that it was a great pleasure for him to visit the only women's university in Balochistan and realized the problems of the students of Balochistan. Vice-Chancellor of Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University Professor Dr. Sajida Noor, Director General NAVTTC Ali Bakhsh Magshi, Director General Higher Education Professor Dr. Zahoor Ahmad Bazai were also present on the occasion. The minister said that the education was not a priority of the previous governments which was why it did not allocate sufficient funds for the purpose. Madad Ali said that more efforts had been taken to resolve the problems of public sector universities in Balochistan. The federal government will fulfill its responsibility to ensure the provision of quality education in Balochistan, he said and added that the federal government resolved to bring massive reforms in education sector in all provinces to educate maximum numbers of out-of-school children and ensure quality education for every child in the country.

Siraj flays killing of innocent patients in hospital at Gaza

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Israeli Jews are bombing Muslims in Gaza and Palestine even at hospital. Thousands of tons bombs were fired at the Muslims of Palestine, in which those children were also martyred who did not born in this world and they were killed before their birth.

These views were expressed by Amir Jamaat-e-Islami Sirajul Haq while addressing the Workers Convention at Lower Chitral. Twenty-five thousand Muslims are burning in front of our eyes he added in his speech. More than six thousand bombs were dropped in five days. 4000 tonnes explosive were thrown on helpless Muslims at Gaza strip. "We are watching that the buildings that were touching the sky are being destroyed by the bombing," he said. It is a matter of time that small children are facing great hardships of nonavailability of water and milk in laps of their mothers.

But Now they do not have the shroud to bury them. Israel have sieged Muslims for the last 16 years Currently, more than

three million troops are deployed with the wall of Gaza. He said that US foreign Minister went there, he said that I came here for solidarity as a Jew, not as a foreign minister of USA.

He said that the so-called UN and other institutions that are claiming for fulfilling of justice and peace are also silent on brutality killing of women and children at Gaza because they are Muslims. Siraj-ul-Haq said that at this time the Muslim Ummah needs a leader like Hazrat Umar Farooq. He said that even such children were killed due to the bombing. They were not even born in this oppressive world. Amir Jamaat-e-Islami said that Israel is only its grievances with Pakistan the only Nuclear power of Muslim Umma. He urged all Muslims to cooperate with each other as Jews and anti Islamist elements gathered against the Muslims.

Sirajul Haq said that there is everything bestowed by Allah in Pakistan but unfortunately due to lack of honest leadership, we are standing at the door of the IMF and the United Stateshe said that

Pakistan came in being on the name of Islam and Unless and until the Islamic Sharia is not implemented in Pakistan, and interest system is not banned we never developed. He said that the Jamaat-e-Islami is the only party that offers themselves for accountability, from worker to leader.

The District Amir Jamaat-e-Islami Maulvi Jamshed, former Member of National Assembly of Mulvi Abdul Kabir Chitrali former District Nazim Maghfir Shah and Mulvi Hidayatullah also expressed their views on this occasion. Some people joined Jamat Islami along with their families leaving other political parties during workers convention. Durdana Siddiq of women Wing also attended a session of women workers convention at Lower Chitral.

Earlier, that Sirajul Haq inaugurated the religious seminar of the female students in Goldur. He also addressed workers convention at Drosh. A large number of people participated in the convention, which later took place with prayers words.

PPP observes 16th Karsaz martyrs anniversary



F.P. Report

PABBI: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) observed 16th anniversary of Karsaz tragedy and paid tribute to political martyrs at Khattak Bagh area of Pabbi, on Thursday.

According to details, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressed the gathering via video link and added that PPP workers had sacrificed their lives for restoration of democracy as well as for rule of law. He claimed that PPP had upheld supremacy of constitution at every forum especially passage of 18th amendment had

empowered parliament.

The participants arranged Quran Khwani and collective prayers for Karsaz martyrs while show homage to their struggle for supremacy of constitution and law in the country. The participants are committed to play their role for development and democracy in Pakistan in larger public interests.

The participants paid tribute to PPP Peshawar division president Late Liaqat Shabab and appreciated his commitment for party in the province. Former Chairman District Council Haji Muhammad Ishaq Khattak, Engineer

Muhammad Tariq, Muhammad Ilyas, Abdullah, Idress Khan, Syed Ullah Khan, Yousaf Shabab, Falak Naz Khan, Safdar Shabab, Aftab Khan, Saleem Khan, Fida Muhammad Khan, Mansoor Najeeb, Faiq Zaman, Safdar Hussain, Anees Shahzad, Engineer Fahad Ali Shah and Imtiaz Ali Shah addressed the participants. The speakers committed for victory in upcoming general election while claimed that Karsaz martyrs are role model for party workers to play their role democracy and supremacy of constitution.



JAMSHORO: Visitors taking keen interest in a poster during exhibition.

Students trained on animation, IT, game development

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: United States Aid (USAID) Economic Development and Rehabilitation program organized a one-day workshop for youth from the Malakand region in Swat. The workshop was attended by more than a hundred game developers, teachers, game development and animation trainers, on Thursday.

The objective of workshop was to promote and encourage information technology, games development and animation among the youth of the Malakand region and to encourage them to take up information technology and animation as a business. An awareness and networking session was organized for the students on this occasion to link the students and game developers with the large market



of Pakistan. Students from Malakand University and Swat University appreciated the efforts of USAID in organizing the program. On this occasion, USAID Program for Economic Development and Rehabilitation Chief of

Party Shahid Muhammad Khan assured the academy, experts and students that we will continue to support them in small businesses, IT sector, gaming and animation so that the country's development and you can play your role in prosperity.



GUJAR KHAN: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf inaugurating solar energy system.

ECP kicks off awareness campaign
F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: In order to increase the turnout rate in the general elections in Dir Lower, the Election Commission Dir Lower has started an awareness campaign. Under the chairmanship of Election commissioner lower dir Muhammad Iqbal Tanoli, in which Additional Deputy Commissioner Dir lower Abdul Wali Khan, Adnan Khan, Assistant Director Local Government Amir Nizam Durrani, ADO Education Department Kulsoom Jinnah Rashmi, AD Nadra Murad Khan, Akbar Khan, Ashfaq Ahmed, Muhammad Ayaz, Muhammad Zeib, Maulana Nabi Shah, Shad Muhammad, Abrash Pasha, Inamullah.

The other members participated in the meeting to maximize the turnout during the general elections and to ensure the full participation of women as much as men, and the participants of the meeting presented various suggestions on this occasion. Dir Lower Mohammad Iqbal Tanoli said that holding a transparent election is our primary responsibility and cameras will also be installed in the polling stations in the general elections.

As many as 613 polling stations have been built to conduct more polls, including 164 separate polling stations for women and 174 for men, while there will be a total of 275 polling stations. He said that vote is a power on which citizens choose their elected representatives. Ensuring equal participation of men is the need of the hour.

Donation campaign for Palestine
F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Al-Khidmat Foundation Landi Kotal chapter launched a donation collection campaign for the people of Palestine here at Bacha Chowk, on Thursday. It is to be stated here that on 13th day of the Gaza invasion by Israel over 3478 Palestinians have been killed and 13000 have got wounded.

The volunteers of the Foundation beside workers of Jamat-e-Islam had set up camp in the main bazaar of Landi Kotal for the purpose. Numbers of political workers of various parties and general masses visited the camp and contributed their financial support for the affected people of Palestine.

Speaking on the occasion, vice-President Al-Khidmat district Khyber Murad Hussain Afridi said that on the call of high leadership of Jamat-e-Islami, they initiated the donation drive aimed to gather financial help for those needy and innocent Palestinians who have lost everything from the air strikes. He added that Israel continuously overlooked the international estimations and besieged Gaza and endlessly targeted the residential blocks, hospitals etc. that caused huge human and property loss.

"We stand shoulder by shoulder with our Palestine brothers in the critical hours and will continue our support to them till they get their liberation and self-determination," he remarked.

Rehabilitation of returning tribes continue

F.P. Report

KHYBER: The Govt of Pakistan, Pak Army and Frontier Corps North continue their dedicated efforts to rehabilitate returning of tribes to Rajgal Valley. In the second phase of this initiative, 1356 families from three villages, Barai, Bagh and Pata Kallay are expected to return between September 25, 2023 and November 10, 2023.

According to details, till to date, 681 families have returned to their homes. Under the Community Engagement Program of Frontier Corps North, returning families are receiving essential support, including dry rations, tents, warm blankets and other necessities. Additionally, a primary medical center has been established to provide special check-ups and free medicines to returning families.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and Inspector General Frontier Corps North, Major General Noor Wali Khan, recently visited Rajgal to welcome the returning families. Chief Secretary issued



directives to the district administration to ensure the care and welfare of these families.

IGFC North assured the returnees for their complete rehabilitation, emphasizing the prevailing peace in Rajgal Valley. During their visit, the Chief Secretary announced various development projects including the construction of a market, a road connecting the villages of Saporai, Patai, and Bagh, the establishment of a CPLC, the appointment of an Assistant Commissioner for Bagh, the appointment of a Union Council member and machinery to clear roads blocked due to snowfall in the winter season. In an effort to enhance healthcare access, Chief Secretary and

IGFC North inaugurated the newly constructed Basic Health Unit at Rajgal, which will provide vital health services to the local community.

The families returning to Rajgal are also benefiting from the Benazir Income Support Program, receiving financial assistance from the Govt of Pak. Notably, in the first phase in 2021 and 2022, 15,690 families were successfully resettled in Tirah.

The families expressing their gratitude extended their thanks to the Govt of Pak, the Pakistan Army and the Frontier Corps North for their unwavering support noting their happiness at returning to their homeland and the provision of essential facilities.

ADB delegation visits WSSCM, CIU Mardan

Fazal Haq

MARDAN: A delegation of Asian Development Bank (ADB) Mission, led by Engineer Nasir Ghafoor Khan visited water and sanitation services company Mardan (WSSCM) and Cities Implementation Unit (CIU) Mardan, on Thursday.

During the visit they reviewed the ongoing development projects under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project (KPCIP). General Manager and Chief Engineer Cities Implementation Unit (CIU) Mardan Engineer Muhammad Khalil Akbar briefed members of the delegation and claimed that under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project (KPCIP) a modern sewerage treatment plant (STP) will be constructed in Mardan.

The sewerage treatment plant has been framed for the efficient management of waste water and will cater the issues related to waste water management and sewerage. He told through the sewerage treatment plant (STP) project the domestic sewerage connections of six urban union councils will be connected with STP for treatment and

reuse for irrigation purpose.

He disclosed that construction work on eighty-two kilometers sewerage network was in progress and would be completed in the specified time, adding that four thousand and three hundred manholes and thirteen thousand sewerage connections would also be constructed.

Engineer Nasir Ghafoor from ADB Mission shown satisfaction over the ongoing development projects, and urged that the projects should be completed in specified time. He said that the provincial government is trying to improve the living standards of the citizens. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project has been launched in five cities of the province with the aim to provide improved sanitation services to the citizens.

ADB Project Coordinator Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Salman Ishfaq, Muhammad Rehan, Muhammad Arsalan from ADB along with other specialists, Director Compliance Project Management Unit (KPCIP) Ameer Alam Khan, and representatives of Project Management and Construction Supervision Consultant staff, CEC staff,

Consultants and other also attended the meeting.

Mayor stresses on freedom of speech: Hamayatullah Mayar, the Mayor of Mardan, has underscored the essential role of democracy and a free media, emphasizing the power of journalists to highlight public issues and their potential to offer solutions. He addressed a gathering of the Mardan Press Club's office-bearers during an oath-taking ceremony, joined by key figures like former Chairman of the Public Safety Commission, Abdul Aziz Khan, and Information Deputy Director Shams ul Haq.

The event was attended by senior journalists, including Musarat Khan Assi, Latifullah Latif, Riyaz Khan Mayar, Ashraf Khan, M Bashir Adil, Deputy President Hidayat Rahman Hooti, General Secretary Shahab Akbar, Vice President Fakir Hussain Hooti, Joint Secretary Khurshid Wahaab, and Finance Secretary.

In his address, Mayor Hamayatullah Mayar acknowledged the dedication of the Mardan Press Club's members in representing the people of Mardan and bringing their issues to the forefront.



BANNU: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court administering oath newly elected cabinet of Bannu Bar Association.



What is Israel's narrative on the Gaza hospital explosion?

GAZA (Agencies): At least 500 people were killed in an explosion at al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City at around 7.30pm, the deadliest strike since war broke out between Hamas and Israel on October 7. In the fog of war, reactions have been confused, with denials of responsibility from both Israeli and Palestinian camps against a backdrop of competing online narratives and widespread disinformation.

But many are disinclined to believe Israel's claim that the explosion was caused by a rocket launched by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) group. This scepticism has been fuelled by contradictions between Israel's immediate and later responses. So how has the narrative shifted since the explosion? Initial posts on X sent by Hananya Naftali, a digital aide to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, aroused suspicion. "Israeli Air Force struck a Hamas terrorist base inside a hospital in Gaza," he wrote, but the post was almost immediately deleted. By 10.58pm, Naftali apologised on X for sharing "a Reuters report" that "falsely stated Israel struck the hospital". He said he had since deleted the tweet. "As the [Israeli army] does not bomb hospitals, I assumed Israel was targeting one of the Hamas bases in Gaza," he added. A bit earlier, at 9:04pm, the Israeli army had published a post blaming the strike on a misfired missile launched by PIJ: "From the analysis of the operational systems of the [Israeli army], an enemy rocket barrage was carried out towards Israel, which passed through the vicinity of the hospital when it was hit," it said.

However, it transpired the post had been edited. An earlier version had included alleged video evidence. But Aric Toler, a journalist on the visual investigations team at The New York Times, disputed the accuracy of the footage, noting that the time stamp indicated it had been recorded 40 minutes after the time of the explosion. As a jumbled narrative emerged, sceptics seized on comments by Tal Heinrich, a spokesperson for Netanyahu, who told CNN that the "[Israeli army] does not target hospitals", adding, "We only target Hamas strongholds, arms depots and terror targets". But in a statement issued on the night of the explosion, the World Health Organization (WHO) pointed out that there had actually been over 51 attacks on healthcare facilities in Gaza since the start of the conflict on October 7. Fifteen healthcare workers had been killed and 27 injured.

The Israeli military itself had issued evacuation orders last week from 22 hospitals treating more than 2,000 patients in the Gaza Strip as it intensified its bombing campaign.

A senior health official in Gaza told Al Jazeera that Israel had fired two artillery shells as a "warning" at al-Ahli Arab Hospital days before the explosion. "Now, even a hospital is not a safe place anymore ..." said Dr Richard Peepkerom, WHO representative for the West Bank and Gaza.

The Netanyahu government has denied that the blast could have been the result of an Israeli air strike. On October 18, Netanyahu reposted evidence collated in a video from the army, showing examples of craters caused by army bombs, including holes of seven and nine metres, and aerial images of the hospital site. There were "no visible signs of craters or evidence of craters or significant damage to buildings," said the video. "The entire world should know: It was barbaric terrorists in Gaza that attacked the hospital in Gaza, and not the [Israeli army]," Netanyahu said in another post.

A widely circulated video of the blast, obtained from an Israeli Telegram account called Intellinews, doubled down on the Israeli army's misfired rocket theory. Israeli analyst David Lisovtsev said: "This is a surface explosion, almost no soil is thrown up, so it's not an air bomb. Looks like a failed Hamas rocket that landed there, what a tragedy has Hamas brought to the people of Gaza!" On October 18, Justin Bronk, a senior research fellow for Airpower and Military Technology at the Royal United Services Institute think-tank in London, posted an image of the hospital's burned-out parking lot circulated by an analyst at the US Center for Naval Analyses, with no crater visible. "Still not conclusive, but IF this is the extent of the damage then I'd say an airstrike looks less likely than a rocket failure causing an explosion and fuel fire," he said. The Israeli army also released a video showing spokesperson Daniel Hagari translating a recording of a conversation between purported Hamas officials, where they appear to talk about the misfired rocket that had caused the hospital blast.

To some, it seemed too neat. As one journalist later asked Hagari: "I'd like you to address the question of credibility, because ... the [Israeli army] has a less than perfect track record with the issue of credibility". In his response, Hagari admitted that the military had lied before, but that now was different. Many are inclined to disbelieve the Israeli government and army since the death of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. The Israeli government first denied any role in her death. Then, after multiple independent investigations confirmed that only an Israeli soldier could have killed her, the country's government conceded that she likely did die from an Israeli shot.

Italy unveils weapons wish list

ROME (Agencies): Italy this year allocated millions of euros to buy new tanks, fighting vehicles and rocket launchers as the war in Ukraine revives the demand for land warfare systems, a government document has shown. The budgeting document, officially due in the spring but only released, breaks down Italy's defense spending for 2023 and offers forecasts for 2024 and 2025. Officials reportedly held up the document's release amid a scramble to update military shopping lists in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Now on the list are 21 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems - US-made rocket launchers that have seen success on the battlefield against Russian targets. An initial 137 million (US \$145 million) is expected to go toward the launchers over the next seven years, the document said, with the total outlay to reach 960 million (US \$1 billion). The document also confirmed Italy's intention, announced in July, to buy new Leopard 2 A8 tanks to beef up its depleted fleet. For the tanks, 100 million is penciled in for 2024, and Italy expects to have spent 4 billion by 2037, with spending eventually running to 8.25 billion. Defense sources said over the summer that Italy's target is 133 new tanks to meet NATO requirements.

At the time, the government said the purchase of Leopards would not rule out Italy's entry into the envisaged Main Ground Combat System program, a Franco-German initiative to develop and produce a replacement for their tank fleets. Another new scheme outlined in the document is a 15 billion program to buy new armored fighting vehicles to replace Italy's aging Dardo vehicles. With 48 million forecast for 2024 to get the program going, the document said 5.23 billion was budgeted so far and spread over 14 years. Italy has yet to decide on what vehicle to buy or develop, but the document stated the program must "maximise" Italian industrial input, jobs and know-how, while being part of a "multi-national context, based on alliances with solid European firms that already work with Italian companies, creating advantageous opportunities for the expansion of the partnership on the development of the future European Main Battle Tank." Among other new programs is a 76 million outlay to develop drone swarm technology.

And Italy's investment in the trilateral Global Combat Air Program to develop a fighter aircraft

with Japan and the U.K. is to receive 271 million this year, with spending by 2037 is forecast to reach a total of 7.77 billion. The 2023 budget includes a total of 19.56 billion in spending by the Defence Ministry, up from the 18 billion spent in 2022, which was in turn an increase on previous years. The part of the budget devoted to procurement stands at 6.1 billion, a 12.5% jump from the 5.42 billion spent in 2022, which in turn was a jump by about 35% on the 4 billion spent in 2021. For a true picture of Italian defense procurement spending, the annual extra cash for domestic procurement provided by the country's industry-focused ministry must be added, which amounts to 1.87 billion, down from last year's 2.43 billion.

Nevertheless, the overall procurement total this year, combining spending by the Defence Ministry and the industry-focused ministry, runs to 7.97 billion, up from 7.85 billion last year. Last year's total was in turn up from the 6.76 billion in 2021 and the 5.45 billion in 2020, showing a continuing positive spending trend. The budget document forecast that total procurement spending will rise again in 2024 to 8.16 billion and then again to 8.74 billion in 2025.

Liberia election results: George Weah and Joseph Boakai set for run-off

FREE TOWN (BBC): With almost all votes counted in Liberia's election, President George Weah and his main rival Joseph Boakai are still running neck and neck, meaning they are set for a run-off. Mr Weah currently has 43.8% of the vote with Mr Boakai on 43.5%, provisional results show.

A candidate needs more than 50% of the vote to be declared the winner. The 10 October election was Liberia's closest presidential race since a civil war ended two decades ago. The election commission released the latest results after votes had been counted in more than 98% of polling stations, giving Mr Weah a slim lead of 5,456 votes.

Voting is set to be repeated in some parts of Sinoe, Nimba and Montserrado counties on Friday after ballots were tampered with by unknown people, the commission said.

None of the 18 other presidential candidates received more than 3% in the first round, and the two main candidates are likely to seek their endorsement, as each vote will count in a run-off. Mr Weah, a former international football star, is seeking a second term as president. The president won a run-off in the 2017 poll with 61.5% to Mr Boakai's 38.5%. He got the most votes in the first round of that election - 38.4% to Mr Boakai's 28.8%, sug-

gesting that Mr Boakai fared better in last week's poll. Analyst Abdullah Kiatamba told AFP news agency that whoever comes out on top in the first round will have the advantage of greater momentum. A run-off will be held on 7 November after the announcement of official results.

Analysts say this might be the last attempt at the presidency for Mr Boakai, 78. He served as vice-president in the government of then-President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts to achieve peace and stability in Liberia following a brutal civil war that killed an estimated 250,000 people.

Almost 5,000 Ukrainian families in UK face homelessness

LONDON (Agencies): Around 8% (4,890) of Ukrainian refugee families taken in as part of the U.K.'s "Homes for Ukraine" refugee scheme have risked, or continue to be at risk of homelessness, according to a report by the U.K.'s National Audit Office released on Oct. 17. The report also noted that this figure is likely to rise as more sponsorship arrangements with the U.K. government end.

In total, 131,000 Ukrainians have come to the U.K. as refugees since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion. The "Homes for Ukraine" scheme was established to help those arriving in the U.K. by providing them with sponsorships. Close to 75,000 people in the U.K. volunteered to sponsor Ukrainians, the report said. In addition, the U.K. government has spent 2.1 billion pounds (\$2.5 billion) to fund the scheme, most of which went to tariffs for local authorities and "thank you" payments for those who sponsored refugees. The scheme does not provide indefinite support for Ukrainians in the U.K., however, and even the 3-year visas offered to the first Ukrainians to arrive using the scheme will expire in March 2025.

In May 2023, it was reported that hundreds of Ukrainian families in the U.K.'s East Midlands region were at risk of homelessness, largely because their initial hosts could no longer continue to accommodate them. While the scheme has largely been a success so far, particularly in accommodating Ukrainians who fled immediately after the beginning of the war, the report acknowledges that "the future of the scheme is not yet clear." To determine the next stage of the scheme, and also to consider the interest of the Ukrainian government's desire for those who have left to return when it is safe, the U.K. government will have to make critical decisions soon, the report concludes.

US announces seizure of 17 website domains

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The United States said it has seized 17 website domains used by North Korean information technology workers in a scheme to allegedly defraud businesses, evade sanctions and fund the development of North Korea's weapons program. The seizures took place pursuant to a court order in Missouri, the US Justice Department said in a statement.

The United States has alleged that North Korea overseas thousands of IT workers around the world, primarily located in China and Russia, with the aim of deceiving US and other businesses worldwide into hiring them as freelance IT workers, in order to generate revenue for its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles programs. North Korea has "flooded the global marketplace with ill-intentioned information technology workers to indirectly fund its ballistic missile program," the Justice Department said, urging employers to be cautious. The United States and South Korea in May announced new North Korea sanctions related to thousands of IT workers they accused of hiding their identities, locations and nationalities and using forged documentation to apply for jobs. They allegedly help fund Pyongyang's weapons programs, according to Washington.

In the past, the US State Department has warned that hiring North Korean IT workers could also lead to incidents of intellectual property theft. The seizures of the 17 website domains followed previously sealed court-authorized seizures in October 2022 and January 2023 of about \$1.5 million of revenue the same group of IT workers collected from unwitting victims as a result of their scheme, the Justice Department said. The agency said public-private information sharing partnerships had also been developed that denied the North Korean IT workers access to their preferred online freelance work and payment service providers.

Russian, North Korean FM's meet amid Western suspicions about weapons transfers

PYONGYANG (AP): The foreign ministers of Russia and North Korea met in Pyongyang for talks expected to focus on how to boost their military ties, days after the United States accused the North of sending fresh shipments of munitions to Russia to support its war efforts in Ukraine.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov flew to Pyongyang for a two-day trip. During a reception speech later in the day, Lavrov said he thanked North Korea for its strong support for Russia's war on Ukraine. The focus of outside attention to Lavrov's visit is whether the two countries would provide any hints of how they would solidify their security cooperation or announce the timing for Russian President Vladimir Putin's promised trip to Pyongyang to reciprocate North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's visit to Russia's Far East last month.

During his travel to Russia, Kim met Putin at the Vostochny Cosmodrome, Russia's most important domestic space launch center, and inspected other key Russian weapons-making sites. That triggered intense speculation that Kim seeks sophisticated Russian technologies to modernize his nuclear arsenal in return for supplying conventional arms to refill Russia's exhausted weapons inventory. "After the historic summit between President Putin and Chairman of State Affairs Kim Jong Un at the Vostochny Cosmodrome on September 13, we can confidently say that the relations have reached a qualitatively new strategic level," Lavrov said at the start of his meeting with North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Sun Hui on Thursday, according to Russia's state-run Interfax news agency.

Neither country immediately released details of the meeting. But



Lavrov said that his visit was meant to discuss implementing the unspecified agreements between Putin and Kim that were reached during their September summit. During a dinner banquet held for him, Lavrov said Russia deeply values North Korea's "unwavering and principled support" for its war on Ukraine as well as Pyongyang's decision to recognize the independence of Russian-backed separatist regions in eastern Ukraine, according to Russia's Foreign Ministry. "We are fully aware that many countries worldwide share similar viewpoints and assessments, but only a select few, such as (North Korea), explicitly declare their solidarity with Russia and can express it openly," Lavrov said.

According to North Korea's state media, Lavrov also praised North Korea for "remaining unfazed by any pressure of the US and the West," and said that Russia fully supports Kim's push to protect its security and economic interests. Choe said at the dinner banquet that Pyongyang and Moscow were building an "unbreakable comradely relationship" under the "strategic" decisions and leadership of Kim and Putin, the North's official Korean Central News Agency

said. The White House said Friday that North Korea has delivered more than 1,000 containers of military equipment and munitions to Russia.

The White House released images that it said show the containers were loaded onto a Russian-flagged ship before being moved via train to southwestern Russia. The containers were shipped between Sept. 7 and Oct. 1 between Najin, North Korea, and Dunay, Russia, according to the White House. Since last year, the US has accused North Korea of providing ammunition, artillery shells and rockets to Russia, likely much of them copies of Soviet-era munitions. North Korea has steadfastly denied it shipped arms to Russia, but South Korean officials said North Korean weapons provided to Russia had already been used in Ukraine. The recently flurry of diplomacy between Moscow and Pyongyang underscores how their interests are aligning in the face of their separate, intensifying confrontations with the United States. In July, when Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited North Korea, Kim took him to an arms exhibition and a military parade, where some of the North's newest and most powerful weapons were displayed.

Ghana floods: 'My entire farm is under the water and so is my house'

GHANA (BBC): Awusife Kagbitor paces anxiously on a dry patch of land overlooking her collapsed and completely submerged three-bedroom home in Mepe in Ghana's Volta Region. She says she saw water gushing into her house from a nearby stream, and within 10 minutes the water level had reached her neck. On hearing that his mother's home was flooding, her son Kenneth rushed to the scene and swam his way through the rising waters to save his mother and young siblings.

The 56-year-old farmer is one of thousands of victims of the floods in south-east Ghana. It's a disaster she is struggling to come to terms with. They were taken unawares and couldn't salvage anything, she tells me as beads of tears roll down her face. "My entire farm is under the water and so is my house. I was only able to take my clothes. It took me about 14 years to build this house - there is nowhere to go, there is no other land to build on." Ms Kagbitor said. Her fate is shared by nearly 26,000 others, displaced by floods caused by the controlled spillage of excess water from the Akosombo and Kpong hydro-electric dams near the southern tip of Lake Volta.

Ghana has been experiencing unpredictable rainfall patterns for months now, which many scientists say is the result of climate change. Heavy rains have significantly increased the volume of water in the two dams, and officials of the Volta River Authority, the electricity company that manages the dams, started the "controlled spillage" of the facilities a month ago. They say that the maximum safe operational level of the Akosombo dam is 277.5 feet. If the water behind the dam reaches any higher, it could burst.

The water level recently peaked just below this - around 277.26 feet, compelling them to "spill" excess water to prevent a catastrophe which could have dire consequences. The Akosombo and Kpong Dams generate about a third of Ghana's energy mix. Authorities say they will reduce the rate of spillage of the dams while monitoring the volume of water upstream. The Akosombo dam was built in the 1960s, a project championed by Ghana's first President Kwame Nkrumah to provide much-needed energy to industrialise the country. Its construction flooded parts of the Volta River Basin in the eastern region of southern Ghana and around 80,000 people had to be relocated.

It also led to the creation of the Volta Lake, the largest man-made lake in the world by surface area. The dam has subsequently been spilled when needed, with limited impact on communities. However, this year's flooding is one of the worst to hit the more than 100 communities living downstream since the dam's creation. The National Disaster Management Organisation estimates that eight districts have been affected since the flooding started. Many homes have been completely submerged and authorities are only beginning to assess the impact of the floods. About a quarter of the Mepe community in an area we visited has been seriously impacted by the water.

Toilet facilities, cemeteries and refuse dumps have all been flooded, raising serious concerns about the outbreak of disease. Essential services like water and electricity are no longer reaching the affected areas.

Disaster Management Organisation estimates that eight districts have been affected since the flooding started. Many homes have been completely submerged and authorities are only beginning to assess the impact of the floods. About a quarter of the Mepe community in an area we visited has been seriously impacted by the water.

Military attack leaves Myanmar's displaced civilians with 'no safe place'

YANGON (Agencies): On the night of October 9, Seng Mai was awoken by a deafening explosion that tore apart her shelter in Mung Lai Hkayet, a camp for conflict-displaced people in northern Myanmar's Kachin State. "The sound was so loud that I wondered whether I had even survived," the 21-year-old told Al Jazeera. As rounds of mortar fire thundered from the direction of a nearby military post, she crawled into a makeshift trench.

"A grandmother was crying and shouting for help. My mother was running barefoot," she said. "Children were also running in the dark, struggling to reach a safe place." By the time the bombardment was over, 28 civilians including 12 children had been killed and dozens of shelters as well as a kindergarten and church were destroyed. Rights groups have blamed the military, which seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021 and has so far denied responsibility for the attack. It has an extensive record of targeting civilians and civilian areas, however, and its actions have only become

"increasingly brazen" since the coup, according to a United Nations-appointed investigative mechanism. In August, the mechanism announced that it had found "compelling evidence" that the military had committed "more frequent and audacious war crimes and crimes against humanity". Bolstering this claim, a report published by the UN's human rights office last month found that the military had killed at least 3,800 civilians, destroyed nearly 75,000 civilian properties and conducted nearly 1,000 air strikes in the more than two and a half years since the coup. "Emboldened by confidence in impunity, military actions have grown in intensity and brutality," said the report. "A seemingly endless spiral of military violence has engulfed all aspects of life in Myanmar." The recent attack on Mung Lai Hkayet targeted civilians displaced by war since 2011. Several Kachin internally displaced youth, three of whom witnessed the Mung Lai Hkayet attack, told Al Jazeera the incident had left them traumatised and afraid. It also reinforced their sense that they had

nowhere safe to run. "I want to sleep at night but I can't because I keep recalling the attack. I feel fearful and anxious about what might happen, while also recalling the terrible and tragic experiences that I've been through," said Seng Mai, who has lived in Mung Lai Hkayet since 2011. "Since I became an IDP [internally displaced person], there have been many long and sleepless nights." Al Jazeera has given Seng Mai and others interviewed pseudonyms due to the risk of military retaliation. Like many ethnic minorities in Myanmar, Kachin people were targets of the military's human rights abuses long before the coup. The Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), one of more than a dozen ethnic armed groups along the country's borders, began its struggle for autonomy in 1961 and ever since, the military has attempted to cut its access to food, funds, intelligence and recruits in a strategy known as "four cuts." The approach, which specifically targets civilians, has only added fuel to the Kachin resistance, which entered a new phase with the collapse

of a 17-year-long ceasefire in 2011. The fighting that followed displaced some 100,000 people, most of whom fled to camps. With the military criminalising affiliation with or support to the KIO under its Unlawful Associations Act, more than a third took refuge in KIO territory along Myanmar's eastern border with China.

Htu Raw, who is using a pseudonym, recalled hearing the fighting break out from the state capital of Myitkyina, where she was boarding at the time to attend high school. Her family soon fled their village but she only found out two years later when she finished school and her mother came to pick her up. "I noticed that the journey back wasn't the same," Htu Raw said. "I asked her where we were going, and she replied, 'We have become IDPs now and we're going back to the camp.'" Known as Woi Chyai, it is next to Mung Lai Hkayet and about 5km (3.1 miles) north of the KIO's headquarters in Laiza. It was only a few years before fighting broke out again, prompting the camps' residents to dig trenches where they could hide.

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The menace of power theft

THE Power division has announced the launch of the Zero-theft Zero-Load Shedding initiative in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which aims at curbing unauthorized connections, meter tampering, and illegal diversions, which has been a persistent issue affecting both urban and rural areas. According to the authorities, these illegal activities not only lead to substantial revenue losses for power companies but also have a significant impact on the overall energy infrastructure, leading to frequent power outages and load-shedding. The power division in collaboration with the government agencies, district administrations, police and energy providers, has launched a comprehensive campaign to address power theft at its roots. This initiative includes public awareness programs, enhanced monitoring of electricity distribution networks, and stricter penalties for those found guilty of power theft.

Historically, Power theft is a grave social curse that exists in both the electricity as well as sui gas sectors and has shaped into a great challenge for the concerned departments and the government. This grave crime has always had the worst effects on the national economy and the quality of the common public. This illicit practice, which not only burdens the electrical grid but also poses a serious threat to energy reliability and economic stability in the country. Realistically, the people involved in these heinous crimes are neither unaware of the severity of the issue nor ignorant of the grave economic repercussions of power theft at the national level. Unfortunately, our government has always taken a lax approach toward curbing power theft, while the absence of effective legislation and a lack of penalties and prosecution exposed the government's inability in that regard. According to statistics, the authorities had filed 20,000 FIRs against 55,000 complaints of power theft while only 528 individuals were arrested in a country-wide operation in the past.

According to the reports, the issue of power theft is not limited to WAPDA and electricity but natural gas supplier giants such as Sui Southern Gas Pipeline (SSG) and Sui Northern Gas Pipeline (SNG) companies are also facing this problem and continuously enduring fiscal losses at the hands of this evil. Apparently, such a heinous crime is not possible for a Novis citizen until and unless the concerned department staff is not complicit with criminals and crooks.

The volume and magnitude of this problem are so gigantic that Pakistan's power division and its subsidiary units failed to tackle this issue despite implementing various strategies and plans in the past. The miscreants and their facilitators within the setup continue to exploit the system with impunity, reflecting a gross lack of oversight and enforcement within the government departments. Realistically, power theft and misuse of government resources is a common issue in nations across the globe but other nations have strict legal regimes and full implementation of rigorous punishments that developed a culture of no power theft and nationalism.

A lackadaisical approach of Pakistani leaders and concerned institutions has further contributed to power theft instead of curbing this menace. In fact, this menace can not be controlled without the public participation and cooperation. The parliamentarians must introduce strict legislation and law-abiding citizens must report suspicious activities or illegal connections in their neighbourhood to concerned authorities. So this evil can be controlled and a pro-nation culture booms in this country.

Putin-Orban alliance

THE Russian President Vladimir Putin and his close ally Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban met after a long pause on the sidelines of China's sponsored global Belt and Road Forum (BRF) in recent days. Long standing friends from two opposing blocs reiterated their continued support for their strong bilateral ties which their nations enjoyed over the past months despite continuing geopolitical tensions between European Union and NATO with their eternal competitor due to the war in Ukraine.

The Hungarian far-right nationalist leader has a unique personality like his dear friend and former US President Donald J. Trump. Both Statesmen often treat their foes like friends and react to their friends like enemies irrespective of the sensitivity or need of the situation. This personality might play as a great advantage to individuals but presumably is a big disadvantage for the nations they represent globally. Interestingly, Hungary, a permanent member of the European Union and NATO military alliance, played a unique role under Mr. Orban during the one and a half year long war in Ukraine. Budapest has not only blocked weapons from passing through its territory to reach Ukraine but deepened energy ties with Moscow despite EU's strict sanctions on Russian oil, gas and commodities. Similarly, Orban's Hungary is a stern opponent of Ukraine's addition into the European Union and playing on behalf of Moscow to foil Kiev's bid to join the western bloc amid intensifying rivalry with Russia.

Presently, the Hungarian leader is in Beijing to attend the Belt and Road Forum, the magnificent Chinese initiative aimed at sabotaging US and Western influence in most parts of the world. Smart Orban is focused on getting monetary and economic incentives from both competing blocs, however his stern opposition to West's war in Ukraine and advocacy for removal of western sanctions against Russia clearly exposes his fringe motives to the world. In fact, the Russian President has cultivated a mole in the heart of Europe, who is tactfully pursuing Moscow's agenda in the garb of nationalism. After all, Putin has employed the West's policy of divide and deal against Europe and outcomes of Putin-Orban alliance would be crystal clear in the future.

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Al-Ahli hospital bombing: Israel performing its usual post-atrocity routine

Mohamad Elmasry

ON the evening of Tuesday, October 17 a strike on Gaza's al-Ahli Arab Hospital, often called the Baptist Hospital, killed at least 500 people, mostly children and women. The scenes from the massacre, as described by witnesses and displayed in videos broadcast by news networks, were as grisly as can be imagined.

Images revealed body parts scattered across the hospital grounds and doctors performing emergency surgeries in corridors without anaesthesia. Video footage from inside the hospital showed Palestinian parents screaming and crying at the side of their dead children. Palestinian officials blamed the explosion on one of the many Israeli bombs dropped on Gaza since October 7. Israel, meanwhile, has predictably claimed that a misfired Palestinian rocket was responsible for the massacre at the hospital.

Israel's response to the hospital bombing - a war crime under international law - is consistent with its usual post-atrocity routine. The routine goes something like this: Israel commits a human rights atrocity, immediately denies having anything to do with it, says it has solid evidence that Palestinians committed the crime, and then just waits to see if someone manages to prove what really happened. If it eventually becomes clear that Israel did indeed carry out the atrocity, it silently accepts responsibility, but by then, the world's focus has already moved on to other matters. Israel performed this exact routine just last year, after it murdered Palestinian-American journalist and Al Jazeera veteran Shireen Abu Akleh.

Immediately after the May 2022 murder, then-Israeli Prime Minister Neftali Bennett blamed Palestinians for "throwing blame at Israel without basis." At the time, Bennett said, "according to the information we have gathered, it appears likely that armed Palestinians - who were firing indiscriminately at the time - were responsible for the unfortunate death of the journalist." Then-Defence Minister

Benny Gantz stated confidently that "no [Israeli] gunfire was directed at the journalist," and that the Israeli army had "seen footage of indiscriminate shooting by Palestinian terrorists". Later in 2022, though, and following multiple independent investigations proving without a shadow of doubt that Abu Akleh had been killed by Israeli fire, the Israeli government finally admitted that it was a "high possibil-

dozer as she tried to prevent the illegal demolitions of Palestinian homes. Immediately after killing Corrie, the Israeli army had said it was an unfortunate accident caused by Corrie herself. In September 2000, during the second Palestinian intifada, the Arab world was moved by images of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy, Mohammed Al-Durrah, crying and hiding behind his father, Jamal Al-Durrah,

[gunfire that killed Al-Durrah]." Over the years, the same scenario played out over and over again as Israel repeatedly committed atrocities, denied responsibility and walked back its baseless denials only when the evidence to the contrary became too compelling and the world's attention had moved elsewhere. This course of action proved beneficial for Israel as it bought it precious time in the court of public opinion. With Israeli voices dominating Western media reports, this post-atrocity routine helped Israel create a contested media narrative, and cast doubt over clear evidence of its crimes and excesses.

At the time, Bennett said, "according to the information we have gathered, it appears likely that armed Palestinians - who were firing indiscriminately at the time - were responsible for the unfortunate death of the journalist." Then-Defence Minister Benny Gantz stated confidently that "no [Israeli] gunfire was directed at the journalist," and that the Israeli army had "seen footage of indiscriminate shooting by Palestinian terrorists". Later in 2022, though, and following multiple independent investigations proving without a shadow of doubt that Abu Akleh had been killed by Israeli fire, the Israeli government finally admitted that it was a "high possibility" that it was an Israeli bullet that killed the journalist wearing a clearly marked press vest and helmet. Nevertheless, Israel's initial denials were picked up prominently by Western media outlets, casting significant doubt over Israel's culpability in the murder.

ity" that it was an Israeli bullet that killed the journalist wearing a clearly marked press vest and helmet. Nevertheless, Israel's initial denials were picked up prominently by Western media outlets, casting significant doubt over Israel's culpability in the murder.

The same routine was also followed in 2003, when Israel murdered 23-year-old American student Rachel Corrie. Corrie was crushed by an Israeli bull-

before ultimately being shot and killed by an Israeli sniper. Mohammed's murder at the hands of the Israeli army was clearly caught on video. But even this did not prevent Israel from following its usual routine and trying to deflect responsibility.

In the immediate aftermath of the child's murder, Israeli officials claimed that it was "significantly more likely that Palestinian gunmen were the source of the

denials. In this sense, the Western media coverage of and narrative on the al-Ahli Hospital bombing has been predictable. There is already a large body of academic research suggesting mainstream Western news media sympathise with Israel and largely ignore or downplay its human rights violations against Palestinians. Over the first 10-days of the current crisis, Western media behaved as anticipated. Outlets privileged Israeli point of views, suppressed Palestinian voices, and repeatedly talked of "Israeli self-defence" and "Palestinian aggression".

In the days before the hospital bombing, BBC News ran multiple reports about alleged Hamas tunnels under public buildings, including schools and hospitals. It doesn't need much explaining how this kind of uncritical repeating of Israeli propaganda by Western media organisations helps Israel perform its deceptive post-atrocity-routine effectively. When the dust settles, independent investigations will inevitably show that Israel, which had already been bombing across Gaza's residential buildings, mosques, banks, and universities, and had already killed thousands of Gaza Palestinians, including 750 children, is responsible for bombing al-Ahli Hospital. And when the dust settles, Western media likely won't give as much light to Israel's guilt as it did to its denials.

Aljazeera

Gaza war should change how Arab and Muslim Americans vote

Ray Hanania

THE Gaza War should be an eyeopener for every Arab and Muslim American and wake them up to the reality of US politics. Besides the fact that the violence in the Middle East is divided by a distorted sense of Western morality, in which Israeli lives matter but Arab and Muslim lives do not, the events of the last two weeks should also show Arab and Muslim Americans that neither the Republican Party nor the Democratic Party really care about them at all.

When he was on the campaign trail, President Joe Biden declared a "partnership" with the Arab and Muslim community, inspiring hope that things might change and that fairness, rather than politics, would define his administration's relations with the Arab world. But the Gaza war shows that the Biden administration truly does not care about the carnage taking place in the Gaza Strip, where thousands of Palestinians have been killed, tens of thousands wounded and thousands of civilian homes and apartment buildings decimated. Secretary of State Antony Blinken made it painfully clear how little he cares about Palestinians and Muslims when he announced in repetitious language that he had met with Arab, Muslim and European leaders, saying after every meeting: "I met today with (name of leader) to discuss the Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel and the need to prevent the conflict from spreading." The message is clear: Blinken was telling them to support Israel's massive assault on Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip and warning them not to intervene in any manner.

Blinken did not say that the Biden administration would restrain Israel from exacting wanton revenge against Palestinians who live in Gaza. Maybe Arabs and Muslims will now finally wake up from the hallucinations that made them believe that the Democratic Party would ensure fairness and denounce terrorism and violence by both sides. Clearly, when it comes to Israel and the Middle East, there is no "both sides."

For example, when reports surfaced on Tuesday that an Israeli missile had destroyed the Al-Ahli civilian hospital in Gaza - a strike Israeli activists bragged was deliberately carried out by the Israeli military because it was being used by Hamas militants - Biden embraced Israel's go-to excuse that the destruction was caused by an errant Palestinian missile.

Having been abandoned by Republicans many years ago, Arabs and Muslims have now been slapped in the face by the Democrats too. Biden is also sending massive military support to Israel and has created an environment in America today, through his administration's rhetoric, that bullies Arabs and Muslims who try to speak out against Israel's widespread and indiscriminate violence against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. When Palestinians and Muslims have spoken up to demand justice, universities and state agencies that receive federal funding have taken punitive action against them. That has spread to the private sector, where companies have fired or terminated the hiring of Arabs who have criticized Israel.

Instead of continuing to pretend that the Democrats are "better" than the Republicans, Arabs and

Muslims in America should realize that both political parties are as bad as each other. So, what should they do? They do have a choice. They should start to look at individual candidates regardless of their political affiliation. At least 55 representatives in the 435-member US Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, have spoken out forcefully and demanded fairness, opposing Hamas' terrorism while at the same time demanding that Israel adhere to its humanitarian responsibilities for civilians.

Arabs and Muslims should no longer vote for political parties. They should vote for individuals based on policies of fairness. Those in Wisconsin can vote for Rep. Mark Pocan, a Democrat, who denounced Hamas' terrorism but also did what Biden and Blinken refused to do: denounce the Israeli assault on civilians. They can vote for another Democrat, Rep. Betty McCollum, in Minnesota, as she has been a constant voice in favor of justice and fairness. They can vote for Rep. Jan Schakowsky, an Illinois Democrat who is Jewish and has expressed support for innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

There are even some Republicans who support fairness, such as presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, who has taken on the holy grail of untouchable issues by suggesting that the US should not continue to support Israel with billions of dollars in aid every year, when that money could help reduce homelessness in America. Ramaswamy has also criticized the Republican Party's subservience to foreign lobbyists and its members' "selective moral outrage." The Republicans have been openly critical of any Arab country that tries to defend Palestinian rights or that challenges Israel's actions, but there is one fact that should not be overlooked: While Republican Donald Trump was president, he did not send any massive shipments of military weapons to help Israel assault Palestinians. Biden, however, is preparing to send Israel not only additional funding, but also armaments to bolster its brutal attack on the Gaza Strip.

Additionally, while Biden has announced plans to help evacuate any American citizens fleeing Israel, he has made no such plans to help those who live in Gaza. The bottom line is that Arabs and Muslims do have choices besides being loyal to an ungrateful Democratic Party only to spite a more hard-line Republican Party. They can vote for individuals regardless of party. However, a friend recently told me that, if anyone really wanted to reshape the American political system, they should support former President Trump. Yes, he may have supported an immigration and travel ban on certain Muslim countries, but he now faces 91 indictments and, if he were to become president again and then be convicted, his presidency could tear down the fabric of America's two-party system and possibly force the creation of a new dynasty.

Arabs and Muslims in America need to be smart in how they vote. They need to stop pretending that either party can ever embrace their view of fairness. They should support candidates who support fairness and justice and who define terrorism not on the basis of who commits the violence, but on the basis that violence in any form is wrong.

Arab News

We know how harmful toxic chemicals can be to people

Geoffrey Lean

CAN there be a better example of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory? In a disclosure that threatens to go relatively unnoticed, it emerges that at the last minute, vital steps to protect Europeans from toxic chemicals have fallen foul of the growing political backlash against green measures. Continent-wide rules that would have banned the use of dangerous substances have been delayed and may now be abandoned altogether, with huge consequences for human health and the chemical industry.

As exclusively reported by the Guardian, the European Commission has dropped plans to regulate chemicals from its latest work programme after lobbying by industry and opposition from rightwing politicians. The measures - whose details had been virtually finalised ready for publication - would, among other things, have outlawed all

but essential use of thousands of hazardous substances believed to cause more than a quarter of a million cancers in Europe each year.

The setback is the latest in a chain of events in Europe and the UK that threaten to develop into the biggest reversal of environmental progress in at least half a century. It follows the revision of net-zero targets in Britain after the revolt against Ulez in the Uxbridge by-election, European government measures to water down rules on vehicle emissions, an almost successful attempt to overturn the EU nature protection programme in July, and a crack-down in many countries against disruptive protests that have often antagonised public opinion. It means that Europeans will continue to be exposed to toxins that have already been found to contaminate their bodies and be passed to babies both in the womb and through breast milk. And it will even

damage much of the chemical industry by maintaining uncertainty about its future regulation, penalising frontrunner companies that have already invested in developing safer substitutes, hampering innovation, and threatening to keep Europe behind the global market on sustainable substitutes.

More than 350,000 human-made chemicals have been registered on the global market and the industry is booming: production doubled between 2000 and 2017 and is expected to double again by 2030. They are ubiquitous, from the poles and the deepest ocean to our own homes: we are all exposed to hundreds, if not thousands, of them every day. They have brought great benefits, but no one knows how safe or harmful most of them are individually, let alone in the combinations we routinely encounter.

Many thousands, howev-

er, have already been linked to cancer, neurological effects, reproductive damage and harm to immune systems. And studies have shown that every one of us - including babies - carries toxic chemicals in our blood. The EU itself recognises that the chemicals are both "a threat to human health" and "one of the key drivers putting the Earth at risk". And the European Environment Agency identifies them as one reason why the continent, with 6% of the world's people, reports nearly 23% of its new cancer cases: its figures suggest that the toxins account for at least 270,000 cancers every year.

Unfortunately the chemicals are so widespread that there is virtually nothing that individual people can do to protect themselves. We have to rely on official regulations. Twenty years ago next week, the European Union published

the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (Reach) law, its first comprehensive attempt at regulation, which came into effect in 2007. Though a huge step forward, it was found to have many deficiencies - for instance in getting industries to provide safety information and in regulating quickly enough.

Everyone - from environmentalists to the industry - agreed that Reach needed reform, and this was announced in 2020. But parts of the industry quickly began lobbying against its tougher measures, including the ban. Its arguments are the same as those used to try to roll back other green measures: that the industry could not afford change in the economic climate after the invasion of Ukraine, and that the measures risked forfeiting public support.

However, the EU chemical industry's revenue soared by 232bn between 2011 and 2021, far above

expectations, and polls show that 84% of Europeans are worried about the impact of chemicals on their health and 90% about their effect on the environment. Nevertheless, the opponents pressed ahead, slowly overcoming resistance from the European parliament, environmentalists and some governments as the backlash took hold. Last year the parliament's centre-right EPP group called for a halt, and shortly afterwards the commission failed to include Reach reform in its work programme, delaying it for a year.

EU vice-president Mar's Šef'ovič promised that he would not hesitate to bring forward the reform when it was ready, and it was therefore expected in the new work programme. That hope now seems forlorn. Fine aims underpin the EU, including the health of its people. It is time to live up to them.

The Guardian

Rethinking Palestine-Israel: Hegemonic security vs true justice

Marwan Bishara

THE Israeli bombing of the Baptist hospital in Gaza killing hundreds of innocent Palestinians may have been a turning point in the war on Gaza. The October 17 attack led instantly to mass protests throughout Palestine and the Middle East and forced the Egyptian, Jordanian and Palestinian leaders to cancel a summit meeting the following day with US President Biden.

The deadly bombing of the hospital was preceded by bombardment of a UN-run school on the same day, in which at least six people were killed. These tragedies have highlighted the humanitarian consequences of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, waged under the pretext of "self-defence". Which mirrors its long history of pursuing maximum security at the expense of Palestinian lives, through disproportionate and indiscriminate use of military force. Israel has tried to muddy the waters as it did after the assassination of Shireen Abu Akleh, by blaming the Palestinians for the hospital bombing.

It is easy to get lost in the midst of mayhem, death and destruction and forget how and why we have arrived at such madness. Disenchanted old-timers, like the baffled newcomers, find it ever more challenging to make sense of the perpetual bloodshed and the endless recriminations, and wonder if there is ever a solution to this protracted and tragic conflict, after dozen wars, countless peace initiatives and innumerable "creative" solutions failed to resolve the conflict. That is why it is paramount during these chaotic times to zero in on the main contradiction driving and inflaming the conflict, namely the clash between what Israel claims is its "security" drive and what Palestinians demand as their rights under international law.

This primary contradiction has evolved over the years into a zero-sum conflict, as Israel has pursued maximum "security" at the expense of justice for the Palestinians. Since its inception, Israel has defined its security all too broadly, in both military and nonmilitary terms that undermine basic Palestinian rights and freedom. After its establishment through terror and violence, the tiny colonial entity developed a formidable security doctrine that matches its heightened perception of threats - real and imagined - from a cynical world, a hostile region, and a defiant indigenous population.

From the outset, Israel focused on the relentless preparation for and pursuit of war; even when its state of affairs did not require it, its state of mind justified it. First and foremost, Israel pursued military superiority, strategic preemption and nuclear deterrence, to compensate for its strategic depth and small population, and to ensure the country does not lose a single war,

believing any such loss would mean total annihilation. Armed with an aggressive military doctrine, Israel went on to win three wars in 1948, 1956 and 1967, resulting in its permanent control of all of historic Palestine, including a perpetual military occupation of millions of Palestinians, all under the pretext of preserving its security.

Israel has perpetuated injustices

Even after Israel reached "historic peace accords" with the Palestinians in 1993, it continued to settle Jewish immigrants onto occupied Palestinian land, with the population of illegal Jewish settlers reaching 700,000 today. It has had to massively expand its national security provision to include the security of these settlements. This, of course, was done at the direct expense of Palestinian life, land,

First and foremost, Israel pursued military superiority, strategic preemption and nuclear deterrence, to compensate for its strategic depth and small population, and to ensure the country does not lose a single war, believing any such loss would mean total annihilation. Armed with an aggressive military doctrine, Israel went on to win three wars in 1948, 1956 and 1967, resulting in its permanent control of all of historic Palestine, including a perpetual military occupation of millions of Palestinians, all under the pretext of preserving its security. Israel has perpetuated injustices against the Palestinians, incessantly breaking international law. After the Nakba of 1948, Israeli "security" has meant preventing millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants from returning to their homes and homeland in contravention to UN Resolution 194. It also led to the confiscation of their land in order to settle new Jewish immigrants and ensure Jewish demographic majority. Likewise, after the 1967 war and the subsequent occupation, Israel confiscated Palestinian lands to settle hundreds of thousands of Jewish settlers, whose illegal presence became a justification for a greater, more repressive Israeli military deployment, rendering Israeli withdrawal in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions ever more improbable.

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dignity and well-being.

To safeguard its illegal settlements, Israel has also carved up and fragmented the Palestinian territories into 202 separate cantons, erecting a system of apartheid, and diminishing the Palestinians' access to employment, health and education. Like other settler colonial powers, Israel's ideological approach to security has been no less dangerous than its strategic approach to its military doctrine. Security became the magic word that trumps all others; it explains all and justifies all. Its mention silences any criticism or dissent.

It is the answer to every question: why build here not there - security; why sustain the occupation - security; why expand the Jewish settlements - security; why

carry out the bloodshed - security; why maintain a state of no war or peace - security. Indeed, security emerged as the state ideology; it is Zionism's answer to its colonial reality. It is no coincidence that what Israel calls security, the Palestinians call hegemony. In that way, security went beyond police, military, intelligence and surveillance, to an all-encompassing hegemonic, even racist concept covering demography, immigration, settlement, land confiscation, as well as, theology, archaeology, indoctrination and propaganda.

These became the essential and complimentary ingredients to Israeli military power, deterrence, prevention and preemption. But Israel's disproportionality in response to the Palestinian struggle for freedom has always failed to deter Palestinian resistance. The suffering of the Palestinian people has produced greater frustration and anger, leading to cycles of retaliations, as we've seen this month in Gaza.

Since it withdrew its several thousand illegal settlers and redeployed its forces outside the Gaza in 2005, Israel has laid siege, an unjust and inhumane blockade to the densely populated strip, making life ever more unbearable for its over 2.3 million Palestinians, a most of whom are refugees from the southern part of what today is Israel. Eighteen years, five wars, and tens of thousands of casualties later, Israel is back to bombing the ill-fated Palestinian territory, in retaliation for Hamas's October 7 attack on its soldiers and civilians, and is preparing for a full land invasion of Gaza with incalculable cost to its residents. Israel's insistence on the exclusive right to defend its citizens, while denying the Palestinians the right to protect their own civilians under military occupation and siege, has long backfired. This month, it backfired spectacularly.

The myth of Israel's security and invincibility has been shattered once and for all. It is high time to pursue security through just peace, instead of pursuing peace through bloody security. This is the reality the new self-appointed sheriff in town, Joe Biden, must address during his visit to the region, instead of egging Israel on as in its genocidal war in Gaza.

As my brother, seasoned scholar Azmi Bishara, argued in his recent book, Palestine: Matters of Truth and Justice, at the heart of the conflict lies not a dilemma in need of creativity, but rather a tragedy in dire need of justice. Any decent mediator will have to find and maintain the balance between the two, starting with putting an end to Israel's occupation and the colonial mindset that governed the conflict.

It's not bothsidesism and it's not whataboutism, it's common sense and sober reading of the historical dynamic that governed the reality in the land.

BRI laying new path of cooperation

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani

TEN years have passed since the inception of the Belt and Road Initiative. This decade is more than a mere marker; it is a milestone on the BRI's journey and, simultaneously, a new beginning. It signifies not just the progress and achievements of the past but also the promise of the future.

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

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

Initiated by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, the BRI is an audacious undertaking designed to weave an intricate web of trade routes, linking the regions of Asia, Europe, and Africa. It comprises the "Belt," symbolizing a land-based network of infrastructure, and the "Road," representing sea-based routes connecting countries worldwide. Its overarching mission is to stimulate economic development and foster cooperation among participating nations. One of the most striking aspects of the BRI is its transcendent ability to soar above political and geographical divisions. With the involvement of over 150 countries and 30 international organizations as signatories, it has United Nations with diverse backgrounds and ambitions. This global consortium under the BRI stands as a testament to the vision of a shared destiny and mutual prosperity.

The BRI has shifted from being a mere aspiration to a tangible force for change, giving rise to over 3,000 cooperative projects that span diverse sectors, from transportation to energy,

trade, and technology. These endeavors have given birth to bustling ports, high-speed rail networks, and flourishing economic zones, among numerous other initiatives. The BRI has transformed into a catalyst for infrastructural development and economic progress. Supporting the BRI is a massive investment, approaching the trillion-dollar mark. This substantial financial commitment, underwritten by China and other participating nations, is the lifeblood of BRI's development, ensuring the successful implementation of its projects on a global scale.

Nevertheless, as we focus on the physical impact of the BRI, we should not overlook the social and economic underpinnings, often eclipsed by the limelight. For instance, within the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship BRI project, an essential emphasis has been placed on human development, even in the face of the clamor created by disinformation. In 2019, China extended a generous \$1 billion to Pakistan for 27 projects concentrated in the domains of education, agriculture, and poverty alleviation. The majority of these initiatives are centered in the less-developed regions of southern Punjab and Balochistan. Notably, the Gwadar Technical and Vocational Institute was established in Gwadar, offering skill-based training in port handling and other essential areas, benefitting almost 2,000 individuals annually.

According to a World Bank assessment, CPEC alone holds the potential to uplift 1.1 million low-income Pakistanis out of poverty, unveiling the socioeconomic impact of BRI's undertakings. Moreover, the economic harvest of these projects is far from insignificant. As shared by Yang Yundong, China's consul general in Pakistan, the 36 projects initiated under CPEC, some of which have reached fruition while others are steadily progressing, have generated a total income of \$17.55 billion, in addition to \$2.12 billion in tax contributions to Pakistan. Realizing the full potential of these developmental projects and investments can be furthered if Pakistan effectively confronts the challenges posed by disinformation and propaganda propagated by CPEC detractors. Achieving this objective is entirely feasible if all stakeholders rally under a common banner, underscoring the importance of mutual trust while safeguarding economic policies

and decision-making from the discord sown by political differences.

Furthermore, the legacy of the BRI stretches beyond bricks and mortar and economic growth. It extends into the domain of cooperation, encapsulating the spirit enunciated by Xi Jinping's words: "A just cause finds great support, and a journey with many companions gets far." The BRI transcends borders, not just connecting countries physically but also fostering mutual understanding and shared prosperity. As we reach this momentous 10-year mark, let us not become ensnared by the past. Instead, let us keep our eyes fixed on the limitless horizon. The journey of the BRI is not a finished tale but a story still in the making, a testament to the unrelenting spirit of progress and cooperation that characterizes our era.

This decade signifies far more than a mere commemoration of past accomplishments; it serves as an unwavering embrace of the future. It symbolizes a promise of uncharted potential that beckons from the horizon, a vision that transcends the confines of history. The Belt and Road Initiative isn't a relic of bygone times, an inert monument of past endeavors. Instead, it stands as a living, breathing entity, pulsating with vitality. It doesn't dwell in the shadow of its own history; rather, it propels itself forward, tirelessly crafting new narratives, exploring new frontiers, and sowing the seeds of fresh possibilities.

The BRI's journey isn't one of reminiscence and nostalgia; it's a forward trajectory, an ongoing narrative that continually unfolds, evolves, and reshapes itself in response to the changing tides of our world. It embodies the dynamic spirit of progress, ever-adapting and ever-advancing. Within this living entity, the seeds of innovation and cooperation germinate, fostering the promise of a future where nations collaborate, economies flourish, and prosperity is shared. The BRI is not bound by the constraints of history; it is unburdened by the weight of the past. Instead, it forges ahead, an ever-expanding tapestry of hope and opportunity, charting a course toward a brighter and more interconnected world. Stepping into the BRI's second decade, we are reminded that this initiative is not static; it's a dynamic force, an enduring testament to what can be achieved when nations unite with a common purpose, creating a legacy that resonates for generations to come.

The China Daily

A letter to Europe from a Palestinian

Majed Abusalama

Dear Europeans,

I, like millions of Palestinians, am living through the worst nightmare of yet another round of mass death and destruction unleashed on our people - something you would often simply call "an escalation" of the "Palestinian-Israeli conflict". As I write these lines, al-Ahli Hospital was bombed, killing hundreds of children, men and women, who had sought safety on the premises of the hospital. Hours earlier, the news of the death of my friend Mohammed Mokhiemar, his wife Safaa, and their three-month-old baby Elyana reached me.

They were killed after evacuating with other families to the southern part of Gaza, following Israeli orders. They and 70 other Palestinians were killed by Israeli air strikes. The only word I can think of that comes close to what I feel right now is "qahr" in Arabic; it is not just pain, anguish and anger. It is the feeling passed on through generations, accumulated more than 75 years of ethnic cleansing, mass killings, injustice, oppression, colonisation, occupation and apartheid. It is a feeling ingrained in every Palestinian, something we have to live with all our lives.

It is a feeling I was born with to a family of refugees in the Gaza Strip. My grandparents hailed from the village of Isdud (now Ashdod) and the village of Bayt Jirja, but were forced to settle in Jabalia refugee camp, just about 20km (12.4 miles) away from their homes. Qahr was probably the first emotion I read on my mother's face as a baby - a young mother worried about her infants surviving the Israeli onslaught on Gaza amid the first Intifada. Qahr was what I felt when the Israelis first raided our home, and when they first arrested my father, who was subjected to repeated arbitrary detention without trial or charge. Qahr was what overwhelmed me when I saw Israeli soldiers open fire at peaceful Palestinian demonstrators. Qahr was more powerful than the pain I felt when I, too, was shot.

Qahr defined every assault Israel launched on Gaza, killing, maiming and devastating my family, friends, neighbours, and fellow Palestinians in 2008, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2020, and 2021. Today, as I watch what is unfolding in my

homeland, I feel qahr, but also deep indignation and frustration. The reactions of your leaders, dear Europeans, to what is going on have yet again revealed selective solidarity, moral failure and a dark double standard.

On October 11, when more than 1,000 Palestinians had already been killed by indiscriminate Israeli bombardment of Gaza, Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, offered unconditional support to Israel. "Europe stands with Israel. And we fully support Israel's right to defend itself," she said, making no mention of the complete blockade Israel had imposed on Gaza, cutting off electricity, water, and the supply of food and medicine - what legal experts define as a war crime. Just a few days earlier, her colleague, Commissioner Olivier Várhelyi had said, "The scale of terror and brutality against Israel and its people is a turning point. There can be no business as usual". The announcing the suspension of all aid to the Palestinian people, in a clear act of collective punishment. The decision was reversed, but the damage had been done: all Palestinians had been painted as "brutal terrorists".

Of course, there was no official European reaction to Israeli officials calling Palestinians "animals" and "sub-human" and the genocidal implications that such language carries; hardly surprising, given that Israeli settlers' marches in which they shout "kill the Arabs" were never condemned either.

But there has been a concerted effort to censor and prevent diaspora Palestinians and their European allies from mourning and demonstrating solidarity with the people of Gaza, as various European states have imposed protest bans and police forces have harassed and beaten demonstrators. European politicians from across the political spectrum - including many liberals and greens - have joined the campaign of collective dehumanisation of Palestinians. Yet, these same individuals have been more than forthcoming in support of Ukraine in its struggle against Russian occupation.

According to them, Ukrainians have the right to resist, Palestinians do not; Ukrainians are "freedom fighters", Palestinians are "terrorists". Ukrainian lives lost to indiscriminate bombardment of civilian homes and infrastructure are worth

mourning, Palestinian lives lost in the same circumstances are better ignored - or worse justified as Israel exercising its "right to defend itself". This European double standard is truly deadly. That European leaders and politicians are taking the moral high ground right now and labelling us, Palestinians, "brutal terrorists" is quite rich, especially considering the pre-history of what is going on.

Let us remember that on your continent, dear Europeans, wild, brutal anti-Semitism raged for centuries, resulting in bloody pogroms, mass killings, expulsions, dispossession and harassment of European Jews. When a movement emerged within the Jewish community calling for a mass exodus to Palestine, European anti-Semites encouraged it. One of them, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour signed a pledge in 1917 that the British government would support the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, on the lands of the indigenous Palestinian population. The Holocaust, the peak of European murderous anti-Semitism, was followed by European countries unanimously backing the creation of Israel in a United Nations vote. More than half of the world - still under colonial rule - could not vote.

The indigenous Palestinian population, of course, was not asked whether it wanted to pay the price for European anti-Semitic brutality. The following year, Israeli militias ethnically cleansed more than 750,000 Palestinians from their homeland in what we call, the Nakba, the catastrophe. As American writer James Baldwin aptly put it in a 1979 article reflecting on this reality: "the state of Israel was not created for the salvation of the Jews; it was created for the salvation of the Western interclass ... The Palestinians have been paying for the British colonial policy of 'divide and rule' and for Europe's guilty Christian conscience for more than thirty years."

It has been 75 years of this "guilty Christian conscience" now, dear Europeans. One has to wonder if ever you would ever feel guilt for your complicity in what is happening to us, Palestinians. It should not be that difficult to look critically at the brutality Palestinians have been subjected to, and ask yourselves if it is right. It should not be that dif-

ficult to open a history book and read and learn about what has happened in Palestine and understand our struggle for self-determination and return. It should not be that difficult to read the myriad of United Nations resolutions reaffirming our rights - to resist, to be free of occupation, to return to our homeland.

It is a disgrace to talk about human rights, equality and democracy and then fail to question the brutal policies of a country that engages in settler colonisation and apartheid. In the first six days of the war, Israel dropped 6,000 bombs on the densely populated Gaza Strip. That, according to experts, is the equivalent of a quarter of an atomic bomb. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, more than 3,000 people were killed, including more than 1,000 children; but we really do not know the true death two as many people remain under the rubble with no one to pull them out.

Last week, Israel ordered more than 1.1 million Palestinians in Gaza to evacuate their homes under continuous bombing. The images of Palestinians leaving their homes and making their way through the rubble towards illusory safety have reminded us of the Nakba. Among them are my family, who left with heavy heart our partially damaged house, which they spent their lifetime building. As I write these lines, I fear at any moment receiving a message about the death of my family: Ismail my father, Halima my mother, Mohammed my brother, Asmaa my sister-in-law, and my most beautiful nieces Elya (6 years old) and Naya (2 months).

I want you to remember their names. I would not let them become mere numbers if they get killed. I would not be fearing for their lives today, dear Europeans, if it were not for your support, silence and complicity in Israeli crimes and the economic and political backing Israel receives from the European governments that you elected. A day will come when Palestine will be liberated. It will be a day of reckoning. You will be asked, while Israeli occupation and apartheid were crushing Palestinians, what were you doing? What will you have to say for your inaction then? There is still time for you to spare yourself the shame of being on the wrong side of history. As bell hooks said, "Solidarity is a verb". Are you acting now to stop the genocide in Gaza?

Hospital massacre in Gaza an unacceptable act of violence

Sami Moubayed

A meeting of Arab leaders scheduled today with US President Joe Biden was called off in light of the Gaza's Al Ahli Al Arabi Hospital massacre. Everyone in the region is enraged as the strike on Al Ahli Al Arabi Hospital, resulting in the tragic deaths of over 500 Palestinians, has elicited widespread condemnation. This marks the highest single-day death toll since the inception of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948.

Even before the strike, Operation Swords of Iron had already flattened Gaza City to the ground, cutting off its water, food, and power supply, in addition to killing 2329 Palestinians and wounding over 10,000. Both numbers are likely to increase manifold after what happened at the Gaza hospital on Tuesday night. Hamas military leadership has fled to the underground, leaving ordinary Palestinians - who have nothing to do with the group - to bear the brunt of Israel's assault. Making things worse is the Israeli decision to uproot over 1 million Palestinians to the southern part of the strip, a population transfer that brings back ghastly memories of what happened to their fathers and grandfathers in 1948.

With due right, the people of Gaza refuse to leave and Egypt, which is expected to house them in Sinai, refuses to take them. And that might explain the deadly strike on Tuesday. If they refuse to leave at will then perhaps a deadly strike of such magnitude will force them - or what remains of them - to pack up and leave.

They know, and so does

President Abdul Fattah Al Sisi, that if they leave, it probably means that they will never return to their homes. But when and if the deportation starts, Israel is expected to launch a ground invasion of Gaza. Nobody can predict what happens once the ground operation begins. Hamas after all is fighting on its home-ground and knows the terrain inside out. Will Israel get caught in another Vietnam? Will Hamas fighters put up a fierce resistance and whip up a big death toll of Israeli troops, after no less than 1,300 have already been killed since 7 October?

Many of those on standby to invade Gaza, whether formal recruits or reservists, are young Israelis in their early-to-mid-twenties and have not fought a war in their lives. Netanyahu is running the high risk of having them exterminated and if that happens, his war cabinet would fall. Or will Hamas fall with unprecedented speed, similar to how the mighty Iraqi army collapsed when the US entered Baghdad back in April 2003? We remember too well how Iraqi soldiers took off their uniforms, and disappeared into the wilderness, taking everybody by surprise. There are many what-ifs, however, which all should be taken into consideration.

What if the people of Gaza simply refuse to leave ahead of the ground invasion, despite what the hospital massacre? Many attribute that to the orders of Hamas' military leadership but the decision to stay is far more complex and deep-rooted than that, and has to do with Palestinian

resilience and refusal to repeat what happened to their families in 1948. Will Israel Israeli flatten them to the ground too, just like it did with most of Gaza's buildings and infrastructure? What if the ground invasion goes horribly wrong? What if Palestinians in the West Bank rise in revolt? What if Hezbollah joins the war, opening another front from Lebanon?

Or will wise men succeed in talking Netanyahu into a ceasefire, followed by a negotiated truce followed by prisoner exchange. Such a need is evident due to the perceived ineffectiveness of both US President Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin's intense focus on the Ukraine conflict. In past conflicts, Arab leaders refrained from direct communication with Israelis, leaving post-war negotiations solely in the hands of American and Russian officials. However, in today's world, many Arab leaders have the liberty to directly voice their opinions to Netanyahu, expressing their thoughts on his actions. Moreover, if diplomatic channels fail, they possess the determination and capability to bring the matter to the United Nations to push for a ceasefire.

In today's world, a massacre of last night's magnitude cannot go by unanswered, and will serve as a benchmark for any future diplomatic measures to stop the war. In due course, historians will add 7 October and 17 October as turning points in the Israel-Palestine Conflict - dates of blood and possibly, a sustainable post-conflict peace.

Gulf News



Bulls rule PSX as index crosses 50,000 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday gained 933.67 points, a positive change of 1.89 per cent, closing at 50,365.15 points against 49,431.48 points the previous day.

A total of 427,476,593 shares valuing Rs14.593 billion were traded during the day as compared to 332,606,956 shares valuing Rs 8.824 billion the previous day.

As many as 361 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 255 of them recorded gains and 94 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 12 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd with 83,163,817 shares at Rs 3.37 per share, Pak Refinery with 37,666,822

shares at Rs 17.47 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 25,884,545 shares at Rs 1.28 per share.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 750.00 per share price, closing at Rs 22,000.00, whereas the runner-up was Nestle Pakistan with a Rs 90.00 rise in its per share price to Rs 7,390.00. Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 390.00 per share closing at Rs 8,000.00, followed by Al-Abbas Sugar with a Rs 16.00 decline to close at Rs 500.00.

Rupee gains Rs1.47 against Dollar

Pakistani Rupee on Thursday gained Rs1.47 against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.81 against the previous day's closing of Rs 280.28.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279 and Rs 281 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 2.73 to close at Rs293.75 against the last day's closing of Rs 296.48, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen lost 01 paisa to close at Rs 1.86, whereas a decrease of Rs 4.08 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs337.85 as compared to the last closing of Rs 341.93.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 40 and 39 paisa to close at Rs 75.90 and Rs 74.33 respectively.

Gold rates dip by Rs200 to Rs206,300 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.200 and was sold at Rs. 206,300 on Thursday compared to its sale at Rs.206,500 the previous day of trading.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.171 to Rs.176,869 from Rs. 177,040 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.162,130 from Rs. 162,287, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs.2,550 and Rs.2,186.21 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$13 to \$1,972 from \$1,959, the Association reported.

Adamjee Life wins 17th Consumer Choice Award 2023



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Adamjee Life, one of Pakistan's largest life insurance companies, received the coveted 'Trusted Insurance Partner Award' for 'Excellence in Customer Service' at the Consumers Association of

Pakistan's 17th Consumers Choice Awards 2023 in Karachi.

Kamran Tessori, Minister of Sindh, presented the award to Ms. Nabeela Darugar, Head of Corporate Sales & Marketing at Adamjee Life. This Award represents

Adamjee Life's growth, customer-centric attitude, innovative products, and ability to meet consumers' changing needs.

Ms. Nabeela Darugar stated, "It is an honor and a privilege for Adamjee Life to receive this recognition from Pakistan's esteemed

network of consumer rights. Adamjee Life has always been a consumer-focused company, and we continue to strive to serve our customers more effectively through technology driven services & products."

Adamjee Life Assurance Ltd is a subsidiary of one of the largest general insurance companies in Pakistan; Adamjee Insurance Company Ltd is also backed by Nishat Group, which is one of the leading and most diversified business groups in South East Asia with fixed/current assets of over Rs. 825 billion (US\$ 5 billion) and it is ranked as the top business house of Pakistan.

The group has strong presence in three most important business sectors of the region, which includes Textiles, Cement, Banking and other Financial Services.

Shell Pakistan announces financial results for Q3 2023

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Board of Directors of Shell Pakistan Limited (SPL) announced nine months results for the company. The company successfully delivered a

profit after tax of PKR 6,450 million for the nine months ended September 30, 2023, compared to the profit after tax of PKR 2,864 million made in the same period last year.

An interim cash dividend for the quarter and nine months ended September 30, 2023, was announced.

The results also reflect the impact of one-off technical service fee relief received from Shell International Petroleum Company. As always, the company continues to focus on business performance, safety of people, and protection of the environment.

OGRA recognized industry efforts in promoting refuelling safety among two and three wheelers, an initiative trailblazed by SPL. During the period, Mobility business introduced 19 new retail sites.

The Company also intro-

duced Voice of Customer program through which customers can provide real time feedback through QR codes placed at sites. So far more than 30,000 responses have been received that gives SPL valuable insights to continuously progress.

Furthermore, the company initiated two eco-friendly and sustainable solutions on plastic reusability. By recycling discarded Shell lubricant bottles, SPL constructed a plastic infused road, 730 feet long and 60 feet wide, on which Shell House is located in Karachi. This is a purpose-built solution which benefits neighbouring residents, schools, church community and Shell.

The initiative was covered widely by media. The other initiative is a collaboration with a Shell Tameer alumni, Concept Loop, a tech-based startup converting plastic waste into build-

ing materials, that deployed pavers at a Shell retail site in Karachi. This successful initiative can be replicated at other retail sites planned for renovation and construction.

In addition, SPL worked with local farmers in collaboration with National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), to transform agricultural waste into valuable biochar - a product that can potentially improve soil health. Through this project, the soil characteristics substantially improved which led to an increase in land yield by a significant 50%, indicating biochar technology as an opportunity to reduce emissions associated with agricultural waste burning.

SPL remains committed to operational excellence, safety performance, to further strengthen its financial position, and play a responsible role in society.

Exports increase by 25.54% to over Rs2 trillion in Q1

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports from the country in the rupee term witnessed an increase of 25.54 percent during the first quarter (Q1) of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

Exports during July-September (2023-24) were recorded at Rs.2,013,533 million as against Rs.1,603,869 million during the corresponding period of last year, showing an increase of 25.54 percent, according to provisional data released by PBS.

On a year-on-year basis, the exports during September 2023 increased by 31.27 percent and were recorded at Rs. 737,295 million compared to the exports of Rs.561,643 million in September 2022.

On a month-on-month basis, the exports increased by 6.06 percent when compared to the exports of Rs.

695,136 million in August 2023. The main commodities of exports during August 2023 were commodities of exports during September, 2023 were knitwear (Rs. 103,029 million), readymade garments (Rs. 74,608 million), bed wear (Rs. 69,234 million), cotton cloth (Rs. 51,891 million), oil seeds, nuts and kernels (Rs.46,571 million), cotton yarn (Rs.33,815 million), rice others (Rs.32,324 million), towels (Rs.25,116 million), rice basmati (Rs.19,008 million) and madeup articles excluding towels and bedwear (Rs.16,922 million).

On the other hand, imports during July-September (2023 FY2023-24) totaled Rs. 3,560,763 million as against Rs. 3,650,269 million during the corresponding period of last year, showing a decrease of 2.45%.

On a year-on-year basis, imports into Pakistan during

September 2023 amounted to Rs.1,189,167 million as against Rs.1,219,956 million in September 2022, showing a decline of 2.52 percent.

On a month-on-month basis, imports into the country witnessed an increase of 10.62 percent in September 2023 when compared to the imports of Rs.1,330,458 million in August 2023.

Main commodities of imports during September, 2023 were petroleum products (Rs. 162,087 million), petroleum crude (Rs.146,179 million), natural gas, liquefied (Rs.75,331 million), palm oil (Rs. 61,388 million), plastic materials (Rs. 49,628 million), electric machinery & apparatus (Rs.44,699 million), iron & steel (Rs.44,191 million), mobile phones (Rs.37,093 million), iron & steel scrap (Rs.27,299 million) and pulses/leguminous vegetables (Rs.22,208 million).



FAISALABAD: Vendors displaying peanuts at Grain Market to attract customers.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Two ships namely, Maersk Jabal and Cap Andreas, carrying Containers, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal on Wednesday.

Meanwhile six more ships, MSC Jemima, Ardmore Chippewa, Asia Inspire, Nord Adriatic, Abram Schulte and Kanha carrying Containers, Palm oil, Coal and LPG also arrived at outer anchorage of the port on same day.

Nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them five ships, Maersk Sentosa, Cap Andreas, Al-Deebal, Gambella and African Parrot left the port on during the report period, while four more ships, Sea Treasure, Xin An Ping, Chem Harvest and Maersk Jabal are expected to sail on Thursday.

A cargo volume of 110,622 tonnes, comprising 52,187 tonnes imports cargo and 58,435 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 1,492 Containers (327 TEUs Imports and 1,165 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are nine ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, Golden ID, XT Dolphin, Nord Adriatic, Corona and MSC Jemima & two more ships, Navios Constellation and Sea Power scheduled to load/offload Cement, Palm oil, Coal, Containers and Grain are expected to take berths at MW, PIBT, LCT, QICT and FAP respectively on Thursday, Novios Lapis, Big Brezy, RDO Concord and Serene Amelia carrying containers and Coal are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Friday.

Tokyo shares drop on ME crisis

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks tracked Wall Street lower Thursday on worries that the battle between Israel and Hamas could spill over into a wider regional conflict.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index lost 1.91 percent, or 611.63 points, to 31,430.62, while the broader Topix index slipped 1.36 percent, or 31.18 points, to 2,264.16. The dollar stood at 149.72 yen against 149.93 yen in New York late Wednesday.

"A broad range of shares faced selling pressure as investors' caution strengthened. US yields climbed on the back of the escalation of the Middle East situations," IwaiCosmo Securities said.

Meanwhile, worries over earnings of semiconductor-related businesses also weighed on sentiment, IwaiCosmo added.

A sell-off across other Asian markets discouraged bargain-hunting in Tokyo, the brokerage said.

Global investors will be keeping an eye on Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell's speech in New York later Thursday, hoping for some clues about the bank's plans for interest rates.

Among major shares in Tokyo, small-car maker Suzuki Motor lost 1.15 percent to 5,834 yen following a report that it would make India an export hub for electric vehicles.

Mitsubishi Motors dropped 4.88 percent to 529.7 yen on a report that the carmaker would decide next week to withdraw from China.

Gas theft crackdown: 118 connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 118 connections while imposing fine of Rs.8.03 million and 324 under billing cases processed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 10 connections on illegal use of gas, another 04 connections on the use of compressor and 10 Under billing cases processed. The team also booked Rs.0.22 million against gas theft and Under billing cases.

In Bahawalpur, the regional team disconnected 04 connections on the use of compressor and 24 Under billing cases processed. The team also booked Rs.0.003 million against Under billing cases. The company disconnected 06 connections on illegal use of gas, another 01 connection on the use of compressor

and 77 under billing cases have been processed in Multan and amount of Rs 0.37 Million have been booked against gas theft and Under billing cases.

In Sheikhupura, the regional team disconnected 10 connections on illegal use of gas, another 02 connections on the use of compressor and 36 Under billing cases processed. The team also booked Rs. 2.47 million against gas theft and Under billing cases.

SNGPL's team in Mardan disconnected 05 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal connections, the team also booked Rs.0.08 million against gas theft.

In Peshawar, the Regional team disconnected 46 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal connections and 2 FIRs lodged against gas thieves. The team also booked Rs.1.47 million against gas theft. In Sargodha, the regional team has processed 24

Under billing cases. The team also booked Rs. 0.02 million against Under billing cases.

The regional team in Gujranwala, 01 meter was disconnected on the use of compressor while another 02 on illegal use of gas and 28 Under billing cases processed. The region also imposed fine of Rs.0.51 million against gas theft and under billing cases.

The company disconnected 26 connections on illegal use of gas and 60 Under billing cases processed, in Islamabad. The region also imposed fine of Rs.2.37 million against gas theft and under billing cases. In Sahiwal, 03 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas. The regional team in Faisalabad 59 under billing cases have been processed. Rs 0.23 Million have been booked against gas theft and Under billing cases. In Sialkot, the company imposed fine of Rs.0.29 million against gas theft and under billing cases.

Need urged for implementing reforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan Hitech Hybrid Rice Association (PHHSA) Shahzad Ali Malik Thursday urged the need for implementing sustained macro-fiscal and structural reforms, improving competitiveness, productivity and diversifying its agricultural exports to achieve sustainable economic growth and development.

Talking to a delegation of progressive farmers, he said Pakistan had huge potential to increase its exports of rice, sugarcane, and cotton products by diversifying its markets, enhancing its quality standards, branding its products, and complying with international trade regulations and requirements.

For example, Pakistan can tap into the lucrative

markets of China, Turkey, Qatar, Kenya, Afghanistan, UAE, and Saudi Arabia for its rice exports by offering different varieties meeting their quality specifications and ensuring timely delivery, said a press release issued here.

He said similarly, that Pakistan could increase its exports of sugar by improving its milling efficiency, reducing its cost of production, and exploring new markets in Africa and Asia.

Moreover, Pakistan can also boost its exports of cotton products by upgrading its textile industry, improving its compliance with environmental and social standards, and taking advantage of preferential trade agreements with various countries.

The local agriculture

sector was characterized by low mechanization, outdated technology, and weak extension services, he said, adding that only about 50% of farmers used tractors, while less than 10% use other farm machinery such as harvesters, planters, and sprayers.

Moreover, due to a lack of access to credit, information, and markets, many farmers are unable to adopt new technologies and practices that can enhance their productivity and income, he said adding that Pakistan lose about \$12 billion annually due to poor water management while we are one of the most water-stressed countries in the world, with per capita water availability of less than 1,000 cubic meters.

FFC wins best corporate, sustainability report award

Port Awards Ceremony for the year 2022



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited once again secured top ranking in the 'Best Corporate and Sustainability Reports for the Year - 2022' maintaining its traditional corporate excellence.

* First position in Best Overall Corporate Report Award for the 15th time

* First position in Best

Corporate Report in the Chemical Sector Award for the 19th time

* Joint First position in Best Sustainability Report Award for the 7th time

It is testament to Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited's good governance practices, integrated thinking and transparent reporting of both financial and non-financial information. The awards were

announced by a joint committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) and Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Pakistan (ICMAP) at the Ceremony held at ICAP, Karachi on 12th October, 2023.

Syed Imran Rizvi and Syed Mustafa Haider, represented FFC at the event and received the awards.



In brief

Fakhar ruled out
clash against Aus

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's batter and opener Fakhar Zaman has been ruled out of ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 clash against Australia at the Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru on Friday (October 20). Zaman was being treated for a knee injury and is expected to be available for selection next week.

Meanwhile, Salman Ali Agha developed fever after the last day's training and was recovering from it. All the other players in the 15 main squad were doing well. Pakistan had an optional training session on Thursday at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. It may be mentioned that this would be Pakistan's fourth league game. Previously Pakistan had won two out of three matches. Pakistan beat Netherlands in the first match by 81 runs while downed Sri Lanka in the second game by six wickets. The Green shirts first loss of the mega event came when it faced India in its third encounter and lost the game by seven wickets.

Cricket
Tournament

KARACHI (APP): Due to another brilliant century 106 by Huzaifa Ahsan Zone-II Whites beat Zone-IV Blues by a big margin of 190 runs in their 2nd match at RLCA Gulberg Ground. In the 2nd Match played at KCCA Stadium Zone-VII Blues thrilling 1 wicket victory against Zone-I V Blues. Summarized Scores: Zone-II Whites beat Zone-IV Blues by 190 runs. Zone-II Whites 284/6 in 45 overs. Huzaifa Ahsan 106 16x4, Zain Ali 83 7x5, Alwaz Ahmed 28 not out, Aliyan Asif 23. Zone-IV Blues 94 allout in 31 overs. Hamza Awan 31. Nawaid ur Rehman (mf) 4/21, Muhammad Ahmed (lcm) 4/41, S.M. Mohtisham (sla) 2/14. In the 2nd Match at KCCA Stadium Zone-VII Blues beat Zone-VI Green by one Wicket. nnZone-VI Green 134 all-out in 41.1 overs. Syed Azaan Ali 28 not out, Sufyan Kamran 18. Hammad Zaidi (ob) 4/13, Muhammad Razi (rls) 3/23. Zone-VII Blues 135/9 in 37.1 overs. Shayyan Fahim 29, Zohaib Khan 18. Abdul Wahab 2/22, Abdullah Bin Aamir 2/26, Arham Hussain 2/30, Muavia Jadoon 2/47.

Malik commends
passionate fans

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Normalisation Committee Chairman Haroon Malik has paid a heartfelt tribute to the fervent football fans whose unwavering passion transformed the FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifier match between Pakistan and Cambodia into an unforgettable and remarkable spectacle. With over 13,000 enthusiasts in attendance, the Jinnah Stadium in Islamabad bore witness to an electrifying clash that captured the hearts of fans from across the nation. These devoted supporters remained engrossed in the game from the very first whistle until the final moments, savouring every instance of thrilling football, said a press release. In recognition of the incredible dedication displayed by Pakistani football fans, Haroon Malik remarked, "The atmosphere during the Pakistan vs. Cambodia Qualifiers match felt as if the local fans were relishing a FIFA World Cup showdown on their home turf. Their spirits were sky-high, and their extraordinary love and enthusiasm for the game of football added an unparalleled significance to these historic moments."

Pakistan ready
for Australia
challenge

BENGALURU (APP): It is Bengaluru's turn to get the limelight as Pakistan take on Australia at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium tomorrow. It is the maiden contest of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 at the venue and the battle of the two cricket powerhouses promises to deliver thrill and excitement to the fans in the stands and around the world.

This is the Babar Azam-led side's fourth match in the tournament and they are placed fourth on the 10-team points table with two wins from three matches. They have had five days to rejuvenate since their arrival in the city. Over the last two days, the team has practiced under lights and in the afternoon, in their bid to acclimatise to the conditions. "I think the first impressions from everyone was cool, it is a pretty small venue. Boundaries are short here and the conditions for the game look very good," Grant Bradburn, the Pakistan head coach, told PCB Digital in the lead-up to the game. "We have done our homework on the venue – it is quite a high scoring venue that probably relates more to the boundary size, which is 63-64 meters. The batters really enjoyed the opportunity to get on some true surfaces and the bowlers enjoyed it too as there is a fair bit of bounce. "It is going to be a venue where the batters are going to really enjoy getting in on

and the bowlers are also going to be really asked some serious questions. I do not think there is going to be a lot of margin for error on this wicket ... As a bowling attack, you know, we haven't been quite as accurate as we would like to be in recent times and this venue is going to demand some discipline and accuracy."

Though the match against India at Ahmedabad did not produce favourable results, Bradburn believes that it provided some crucial learnings from which the team will benefit in the tournament. He said, "There is always pressure on the team to win. When we do not, we critique our performances very, very closely and we've done that over the last couple of days, too. I think the experiences from Ahmedabad were fantastic. "It was a great opportunity to learn and grow from the whole experience of playing in front of a very large, hostile crowd. It is unusual to play in front of a crowd, which is pretty much, you know, solely there for the opposition. However, it was nice to hear some silence as well at times when we were batting well."

"We had some really good honest conversations yesterday as a group talking about how we wanted to take the game on more and we did have an opportunity to be a little bit more assertive with the bat earlier on. "As a result, we put ourselves under a little

bit of pressure and then you know, we just didn't get enough to really put pressure on in the second innings. That, however, doesn't take away from the fact that as a group, we've also acknowledged that we didn't put enough balls in good areas. "We have also had some wonderful insights about the venues too – the ball is scuffing up quite quickly and looks like it is dog chewed after about 20 overs. It obviously means the ball becomes a little bit softer, which makes it difficult to score in the later stages. "That also brings in more reverse [swinging] which plays into our hands. So all of those elements are a good learning for us that we are taking on-board."

Australia have had an uncharacteristic start to their World Cup campaign, going down against India and South Africa before bouncing back with a five-wicket win over Sri Lanka. They have had an upper hand over Pakistan in the 50-over World Cup, winning six out of 10 matches. But, the most recent outing in the format between the two sides saw Pakistan come on top with a 2-1 win in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Super League series. Undaunted by the past record, Pakistan, Bradburn said, are all set for the Australia challenge and are eager to make it 3-1 before they move to Chennai for their back-to-back contests against Afghanistan and South Africa.

Wild card Mochizuki stuns
top seed Fritz at Japan Open

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Defending champion Taylor Fritz said he could not cope with an "incredible" turnaround from world number 215 Shintaro Mochizuki as he crashed out of the Japan Open with a stunning second round loss on Thursday.

Top-seed Fritz, the highest-ranked American in the world at number 10, lost 0-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) to the Japanese wild card, who went into the tournament without a tour-level win to his name. Fritz, who has won two titles this season, looked to be cruising into the quarter-finals when he took the first set to love in just 29 minutes.

But the momentum shifted midway through the second set when Mochizuki broke serve, and the 20-year-old fought back from a losing position in the third to force a tiebreaker and claim the win. "It was all smooth and then I had the chance to break in the second, didn't get it and then after that I feel like he was playing incredible tennis," said Fritz. "He served real-

ly well, he was constantly hitting the lines with his serve -- it was tough for me to attack."

Mochizuki, who qualified for his first Grand Slam appearance at Wimbledon this year, said he was "trying not to be nervous but I was" in his first match against a top-10 player. He loosened up in the second set and Fritz said his opponent performed "at the level of a top player for the next two sets". "I never really got time to set up and attack or feel comfortable after he started playing better," said the American.

"It felt like I could have served better but outside of that I don't think there was much I could do."

Mochizuki quickly took control in the tiebreaker and closed the match out with a volleyed smash at the net to delight the Tokyo crowd. His quarter-final opponent will be Australian Alexei Popyrin, who beat Chile's Cristian Garin 4-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2. "If I couldn't play my best, I knew that I couldn't beat Fritz for sure,"

said Mochizuki. "So I just tried to focus on myself and give 100 percent from the second set." Fritz's exit meant the top three seeds in Tokyo have all been eliminated, with Norwegian number two Casper Ruud and German number three Alexander Zverev also bowing out early.

Number four seed Alex de Minaur progressed to the quarter-finals with a 6-0, 7-5 win over Argentina's Diego Schwartzman.

The Australian said he was not surprised that so many of the tournament's big names had fallen by the wayside.

"We've all played a lot of matches this year and it's been a long year," said de Minaur.

"At times I feel like these are the types of tournaments that are more prone to surprises."

"I'm just happy I was able to keep my head down and play at a good level."

Russia's Aslan Karatsev also advanced to the quarter-finals with a 6-3, 6-4 win over China's Zhang Zhizhen.

Pakistan women's team to
depart for Bangladesh tonight

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan women's team led by all-rounder Nida Dar is set to depart for Bangladesh from Lahore later tonight. The team will feature in a series of three T20Is and three ODIs. The three ODIs are part of the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25. The series will be played in Chattogram and Dhaka from October 25 to November 10.

In Lahore, Pakistan women's team underwent a six-day training camp, which was largely affected by rain, but the players made full use of the indoor facilities at the National Cricket Academy and prepared themselves for the forthcoming series.

Pakistan, currently ranked eighth on the ICC T20I rankings, will take on ninth-ranked Bangladesh in the three T20Is, all scheduled in Chattogram on Oct 25, 27 and 29. In the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25, Pakistan are on fourth spot, earning 12 points from 12 matches, which included six wins and as many defeats. The hosts have played nine matches in the championship to date, with one win, one tie and

three losses. Four matches were declared as no-result due to rain.

Aliya Riaz, who played the role of a finisher in the recently concluded T20I series against South Africa, hopes the team will perform in the same manner in the forthcoming series. She said, "We had a rigorous training camp despite the weather challenges in Lahore. Our team is determined and well-prepared to face Bangladesh in the upcoming series. We are confident in our abilities and aim to deliver the same level of performance in the T20I series that we recently displayed against South Africa. "The ODI series being part of the ICC Women's Championship is very important and we are eager to get maximum points from the series. "Bangladesh is a competitive team, especially in their own backyard, and we respect their abilities. Our focus is on our game plan, and once we arrive there, we will try to adapt to the wickets there as quickly as possible to ensure we perform at our best."

Pakistan squad:
Nida Dar (captain), Aliya Riaz, Bismah

Maroof, Diana Baig, Ghulam Fatima, Iram Javed, Muneeba Ali (wk), Najiba Alvi (wk), Nashra Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Umm-e-Hani and Waheeda Akhtar Player support personnel: Nahida Khan (manager), Mauttashim Rashid (interim head coach), Saleem Jaffar (bowling coach), Taufiq Umar (batting coach), Muhammad Asfand Yar (strength and conditioning coach), Syed Nazir Ahmed (media manager), Rifat Asghar Gill (physiotherapist) and Zubair Ahmed (analyst)

Tour schedule:
25 Oct: First T20I at ZACS, Chattogram (Match starts at 4:30pm local time)
27 Oct: Second T20I at ZACS, Chattogram (Match starts at 4:30pm local time)
29 Oct: Third T20I at ZACS, Chattogram (Match starts at 4:30pm local time)
04 Nov: First ODI at SBNCS, Mirpur (Match starts at 9:30am local time)
07 Nov: Second ODI at SBNCS, Mirpur (Match starts at 9:30am local time)
10 Nov: Third ODI at SBNCS, Mirpur (Match starts at 9:30am local time)



PUNE: Virat Kohli and KL Rahul celebrate after the win.

Jadeja, Kohli lead India
to fourth win in a row

PUNE (Agencies): The sameness to a Virat Kohli innings in a middling chase is no criticism of his batting. The beauty of it lies in the repetitive nature of it, a mark of his hunger to make every start count. On Thursday, it helped deliver ODI century No. 48, which takes him that much closer to the man who he hoisted on his shoulders on that famous April night in 2011, before delivering an epic line that made a country of more than a billion shed happy tears.

Kohli's knock, which turned into a race between his hundred and a victory towards the end, was preceded by a run-torrent from Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill. The pair's 88-run opening stand in a chase of 257, which seemed well short of a par score, was an exhibition of batting aesthetics dreams are made of. Rohit, with his lazy elegance, ferocious cuts and monstrous pulls did the early running, and Gill took over the mantle to slowly get into top gear.

And after the two fell against the run of play, caught in the deep to shots they'd back themselves to execute 99 times out of a hundred, Kohli ushered everybody aboard his train of ODI batting that has delivered runs unfailingly. Fleeting cameos from Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul topped off a dominating win, India's fourth, that now puts them level at the top with New Zealand, their next opponents on Sunday in Dharamsala.

It was one that had been set up by Ravindra Jadeja, both with the ball and on the field with his catching. His figures of 2 for 38 may not seem blockbuster at first glance, but it played a massive role in pulling Bangladesh back from an innings that was at one point running at a breakneck speed. From 10 for 0 in five overs, the next four went for 37. Tanzid Hasan soon got into gear and

raced towards a maiden ODI half-century off 42 balls. He hooked Jasprit Bumrah, toyed with Shardul Thakur and took him for 6,4,6 in a forgettable opening over and laid down a marker for the innings. But as spin came on, Kuldeep Yadav delivered an opening in the 15th to break a 93-run stand.

In between that, India had a jolt with Hardik Pandya hobbling off three balls into his opening over, after twisting his left ankle in his follow-through. You wondered then if the absence of a sixth bowling option would hurt them. It didn't as Shardul bounced back from his opening over to bowl eight more, even picking up a wicket before Mahmudullah hurt his figures in his final over.

Pandya didn't return for the rest of their innings and wasn't needed with the bat either, but once the euphoria of the result dies down, realisation of how massive Pandya is to the balance of the team will dawn sooner.

Even as Kuldeep slowed the innings down, Jadeja brought the crowd to life with his accurate wicket-to-wicket stuff that sent back Shanto. By now, runs had reduced to a trickle and the pressure to up the ante also got Litton chipping one straight to long-off to give Jadeja a second wicket. At 137 for 4, the innings was in build-rebuild-build mode. Mushfiquir Rahim played an array of neat paddles and sweeps to keep the scorecard ticking in the hope of taking the innings deep, but the resultant pressure from Towhid Hridoy's struggles - he was on 14 off 32 - with 14 overs left, led to him trying to be a bit more enterprising, especially with Hridoy unable to capitalise after playing himself in.

One such chance off a Bumrah cutter found an acrobatic Jadeja diving full-stretch to his right to pull off a sensational grab to send back

Mushfiquir for 43. It was as exhilarating as Rahul's stunning grab at full stretch down leg to dismiss Mehidy Hasan a while earlier. The superhit moments on the field continued when Bumrah dismantled Mahmudullah with a pin-point yorker, but not before the allrounder's 46 had somewhat lent respectability to Bangladesh's total.

It set up the kind of chase teams can be wary of, not sometimes knowing how hard to go up top. But India's plans seemed clear. Rohit wasn't going to tamper with the fundamentals of his reinvigorated game that centers on taking the attack to the opposition in the powerplay. But on 48, he went for a pull that was right out of the screws, except it found deep square. Kohli had two free hits off his first four balls that he converted into a boundary and a six to fire his innings into orbit straightaway. There on, he didn't look back. He drove well, ran hard, maneuvered spin expertly, and also treaded caution especially against the skiddy Hasan Mahmud. Like Rohit, Gill too fell against the run of play after tantalising with some languid shots to signal, signs of dengue seemingly a thing of the past. Shreyas Iyer would have perhaps been a tad disappointed at not seeing the game through especially after playing himself in, but the timing of his dismissal was hardly a reason to fret for India. Rahul calmed the nerves before he reined his game in to allow Kohli to get to the landmark. At one point, India and Kohli both needed 19. You wondered briefly if No. 48 had to wait. But it didn't need to. With two needed, Nasum fired one down leg in anticipation of a wide that wasn't given. One ball later, Kohli stepped out and hacked a low full toss into the deep midwicket stands to seal victory.

Rameen to lead
Pak Women 'A'

LAHORE (APP): Off-spinner Rameen Shamim has been named as captain of Pakistan Women A for the upcoming three-match One-Day series against West Indies Women A.

The series is scheduled to take place at two venues in Lahore – Gaddafi Stadium and Ghani Institute for Cricket from 24 to 29 October 2023. The 15-member squad for the one-day series was announced after the women's national selection committee assessed the performances of the players in 28 probables camp which was held at the Lahore Country Club in Muridke.

The three one-day matches against West Indies A will be followed by a tri-nation T20 series involving West Indies Women A and Thailand women's emerging team, as well as a T20 series against Thailand women's emerging team.

Basketball workshop for
referees kicks off

ISLAMABAD (APP): To improve the standard and skills of basketball in the country, the Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) kicked off the FIBA Referee workshop for the growth and development of basketball referees here at Pakistan Sports Complex on Thursday.

The three-day workshop would be led by renowned International Basketball Federation (FIBA) Referee Instructor AbdulKarim Shakeb, hailing from Bahrain, who has been appointed by FIBA Asia. Shakeb's extensive experience and knowledge are expected to be instrumental in enhancing the skills of local referees and officials.

Prior to the main event, a National Referee Workshop was conducted at the same venue, the Sports Complex

in Islamabad. Over 40 referees participated in this preparatory workshop, which aimed to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge required for the upcoming FIBA Referee workshop.

The National Referee Workshop received guidance and instruction from key figures in the basketball community. The Associate Secretary of the Pakistan Basketball Federation and FIBA Commissioner Ouj E Zahoor played a pivotal role in organizing and conducting the workshop, in collaboration with the National Referees Board.

Secretary Referees Board Prof. Siraj Ul Haq Qureshi and members of the board former FIBA referee Yaqoob Qadry and Saadat Jehangir contributed

their expertise by conducting training sessions during the National Referee Workshop. Their valuable insights and mentorship are expected to enrich the skills of the referees who will soon partake in the FIBA Referee workshop.

This initiative by the Pakistan Basketball Federation not only emphasizes the commitment to improving the quality of officiating in basketball but also aims to strengthen Pakistan's presence on the international basketball stage.

The FIBA Referee workshop was poised to be a significant step forward in achieving these objectives, as it equips local referees with the knowledge and skills necessary to officiate international basketball events effectively.

National Hockey C'ship enters
quarterfinal stage

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a thrilling display of hockey, the 67th AWT National Hockey Championship has entered its quarterfinal stage, with the Sindh A team emerging as one of the formidable contenders.

The Sindh A team secured their spot in the quarterfinals after defeating a resilient Pakistan Navy team in a breathtaking contest, ultimately triumphing with a score of 6-3.

This victory has paved the way for the quarterfinal clashes scheduled for Friday. The competition was in progress at the Lt.Gen. Ishfaq Nadeem Hockey Stadium in Rawalpindi. The national hockey championship matches brought together teams from Sindh A, Punjab A, Pakistan Army, and Wapda, show-

casting outstanding talent.

The Sindh A team, composed of young and seasoned players, displayed their skills in the first match by defeating the strong Pakistan Navy side.

In a stunning display of prowess, they managed to score a convincing 6-3 victory, earning themselves a place in the quarterfinals. The match saw star players like Haris Nasir, Hamad Ayaz, and Sultan Mahmood contributing significantly, while Abdul Wahab led the team with three goals. For the Navy, Akbar Ali, Osman Ali, and Basharat were among the notable scorers.

The standout performers in the match were Babar Sadaat and Abdul Wahab, with both players delivering

stellar performances under the guidance of Army Welfare Trust's Proto Officer Anisur Rahman Mashwani and Muhammad Wahid.

The second match featured Punjab A facing AJK, with Punjab A dominating the game with a 10-2 scoreline. Captain Arslan led his team's onslaught with four goals, while Hasim added two more, and Abdullah, Saeed, Shamool, and Hafiz Afraheem chipped in one goal each. For Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Umair Zeeshan and Waqar were the goal scorers. This match witnessed the special appearance of Colonel Waseem Malik, Deputy CEO of Military Guard, who presented the Man of the Match awards to Aamir Sahil and Arslan.



In brief

IRSA releases 111,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 111,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 99,500 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 37,200 cusecs and 35,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1211.10 feet, which was 161.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 15,900 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 53,000, 46,000, 48,800 and 16,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 16,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 21,400 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Bike lifter arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested a bike lifter and recovered seven stolen motorcycles from his possession, said a police spokesman on Thursday. He informed that a team under the supervision of SHO, Taxila Police Station managed to net a bike lifter namely Abdullah and recovered seven stolen motorcycles and other items from his possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police, Potohar, Muhammad Waqas Khan said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind bars. He said that the operation against the bike and car lifters would further be accelerated.

20 more dengue cases reported

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 20 more dengue cases were reported in Rawalpindi during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 2,061 in the district. District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control (DCEPC), Dr Sajjad Mehmood, Thursday said that, among the new cases, 14 cases had arrived from Potohar town urban and two of each from Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi, Chaklala Cantonment and Potohar rural areas. He said 109 patients were admitted to district hospitals of which 87 were confirmed cases while 1,973 were discharged after treatment. Dr Sajjad informed that the district administration had registered 29 FIRs, issued tickets to 11, sealed one premise, and a fine of Rs 279,000 was imposed against the violations of dengue SOPs during the last 24 hours. During indoor surveillance, in the last 24 hours, the teams checked 13,782 houses and larvae were found in 509 homes. Similarly, he added that while checking 5,439 places, the teams found larvae at 140 sites during outdoor surveillance.

15 drug peddlers netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers conducted raids in different areas and rounded up 15 accused on recovery of over 11 kg charras. According to a police spokesman, Sadder Wah police held Amir for having 3010 grams charras while Hassan was sent behind bars on recovery of 520 grams charras. Mandra police recovered 1400 grams charras from the possession of Imran and 320 grams charras from Hanif.



ISLAMABAD: His Excellency Ahmad Jawad Rabei, Ambassador, State of Palestine addressing during All Parties Conference to express solidarity with the people of Palestine at Embassy of the State of Palestine.

Wasi expresses displeasure for malfunctioning screen at TIC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a surprised visit to the New Islamabad International Airport, Minister of State for Tourism, Wasi Shah, expressed strong displeasure with the current arrangements and took action to address the situation. During his visit, Minister Wasi Shah noticed a malfunctioning screen at the Tourist Information Center (TIC) in Islamabad International

Airport. He promptly issued orders to replace the screen within two days to ensure a seamless tourist information experience. The Minister was also briefed on the performance and services provided by the TIC, emphasizing that the establishment of this center aims to provide tourists with comprehensive information. Furthermore, Minister Wasi Shah highlighted the growing significance of

Gwadar as a tourist destination, attracting visitors from across Pakistan and around the world.

He stressed the vital role that modern and efficient tourist information centers play in promoting tourism globally, emphasizing the need for state-of-the-art facilities. Minister Wasi Shah made it clear that he will not tolerate any incompetence within his ministry, underscoring his commitment to improving the tourism experience for all.

SAPM launches web-based application

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for overseas Pakistanis Jawad Sohrab Malik emphasized upon maximum utilization of technology to improve service delivery to Overseas Pakistanis.

He said the Internet has revolutionized the service delivery paradigm as it has transformed the way businesses operate worldwide. Moreover, it has also led to the development of new technologies, thus, providing an opportunity to better manage business processes using state-of-the-art technology. The implementation of a web-based system has significantly enhanced the efficiency of OPF officials

operated in-house, the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Overseas Pakistanis, Jawad Sohrab Malik emphasized upon maximum utilization of technology to improve service delivery to Overseas Pakistanis.

He said the Internet has revolutionized the service delivery paradigm as it has transformed the way businesses operate worldwide. Moreover, it has also led to the development of new technologies, thus, providing an opportunity to better manage business processes using state-of-the-art technology. The implementation of a web-based system has significantly enhanced the efficiency of OPF officials

in processing outstanding dues cases of overseas Pakistanis. Now, all applications are directly entered into the system at their point of origin, which are the offices of the CWAs in Pakistan missions abroad. This eliminates the previous need to send hard-copy applications to OPF for manual data entry, a process that used to take approximately 30 days.

With the new system in place, this cumbersome transfer of applications in physical form has been reduced to a few minutes only. Furthermore, the entire application workflow has been streamlined through automation.

Police initiates stringent measures against motorcyclists

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police initiated rigorous measures against motorcyclists exceeding the speed limit and generating excessive noise within the federal capital. According to a spokesman, he said that in the initiative was aimed at reducing traffic accidents and minimizing noise pollution in the city which was created by the motorcyclists.

In this regard, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified their efforts to curb the dangerous practices of over speeding and reckless motorcycle riding and legal actions are being taken to mitigate the noise pollution caused by motorcycle riders.

ICCPO DR Akbar Nasir Khan said that riding motorcycles at high speeds and in a dangerous manner in residential areas and thoroughfares is a leading cause of accidents.

Motorcycles generating excessive noise are a source of discomfort and noise pollution for the residents, especially for the local community, elderly citizens, and patients, which is legally considered a crime.

He further said that, in the past motorcycle riders displaying such behavior have been involved in perilous accidents. Citizens are also urged to assist the Islamabad Capital Police in reducing noise and environmental pollution, aiming to protect precious lives and ensure the effective implementation of traffic laws in Islamabad.

Police carry out search operation in 'Ward 27 Chanda', adjoining areas: Police here on Thursday carried out a search operation in Ward number 27, 'Chanda', and adjoining areas in the jurisdiction of Gujjar Khan Police Station. According to a police

spokesman, the search operation was conducted in order to maintain law and order and flush out suspects following the directions of City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani.

He informed that senior police officers and police personnel including women police took part in the search operation.

Police checked as many as 50 houses, three shops and 85 individuals during the search operation.

Superintendent of Police, Sadder Muhammad Nabeel Khokhar said that police are fully prepared to shield the lives and property of the public and combing and search operation was done to flush out the suspects and hardcore criminals. He said that police are more vigilant to keep an eye on suspects and to maintain law and order in Rawalpindi.

ANF seizes 226 kg drugs in seven operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations managed to recover 226 kg drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that over 2.8 kg Ice drug concealed in a passenger's bag was recovered at Islamabad Airport. The accused, resident of Lahore, was leaving for Bahrain by flight number EK-613.

In another operation conducted in Faizabad, Rawalpindi, 135 narcotic (ecstasy) tablets were recovered from the possession of a passenger, resident of Khyber.

In third operation, 96 kg opium and over 26.4 kg hashish concealed in secret cavities of a vehicle were recovered at Motorway Toll Plaza Khanewal.

Eight ecstasy tablets were recovered

from a passenger, resident of Buner, arrested at Jinnah International Airport. The accused was leaving for Sharjah by flight number GP-543. In fifth operation, 10.4 kg Ice drug was recovered from a parcel being sent to Australia through a courier office in Karachi.

In sixth operation, 79.2 kg hashish concealed in tool box of a rickshaw was recovered on Charsada Road Mardan. Two accused residents of Nowshera, who were trying to smuggle drugs from Mardan to Punjab were rounded up during the operation. 10 kg hashish and 1.7 kg ice drug concealed for smuggling were recovered from an uninhabited area in Khyber. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against all the accused while further investigations are underway.

Nation remembers Zubaida Khanum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Veteran Lollywood playback singer Zubaida Khanum was remembered on her 10th death anniversary on Thursday.

The legendary singer was born in 1935 in Amritsar. Her family migrated to Lahore after the partition. Private news channels reported. Khanum started her career as a playback singer in Lollywood in 1951 from the film Billo. She soon gained recognition for her soulful voice. She did not have any music family background. The singer was her passion and she pursued it well.

In addition to singing, Khanum also made a name in numerous movies in the 50s as an actress. However, she continued singing and stopped acting after settling down. She recorded over 250 songs during 1950s and 1960s. Her Punjabi tract 'Assan jaan ke meet lie ankhi wey' from the movie 'Heer' is still popular among fans today. Not only this but her another song 'Dilla teri ja yaar da nazaraa lein de' is also highly admired in Pakistan.

Mushahid given Silk Road Award at BRI Forum for special contribution on CPEC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Defence, Senator Mushahid Hussain in recognition to his longstanding role on CPEC, was presented with a Special Award during the Media Cooperation Forum on Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) being held in Beijing.

The Award Ceremony was held on the sidelines of the 3rd Belt & Road Forum, and the Award was conferred by Chief of Media, Information & Communication of the Communist Party of China, Li Shulei and also member of the Party's top policy-making Political Bureau, a news release said. In his acceptance speech, Senator Mushahid Hussain said he was 'humbled & honoured' to be given this prestigious first ever 'Silk Road News Award', adding 'this is an honour for not just myself but for Pakistan and it's people'.

Two other Awardees were from Uganda and Russia, and the three Award winners were chosen from amongst 4,485 participants from 80 countries.

Mushahid thanked China for its consistent and enduring support to Pakistan, particularly its investment in CPEC projects. Referring to the speech of President Xi Jinping at the Belt & Road Forum, he said 'BRI is a new platform for international economic cooperation' terming the BRI as the 'most significant development and diplomatic initiative in the 21st Century'.

He said the core of the BRI and, indeed, Pakistan-China relations, is the people-to-people connectivity, especially the role of media, think tanks, academia, youth and NGOs to build a more 'open, inclusive and interconnected world'.

Quoting Chairman Mao that 'an idea becomes a material force when it is grasped by millions and millions of people', added Senator Mushahid, that 'BRI is today a material force in the world', bringing benefits and opportunities globally. Referring to the international situation, Senator Mushahid Hussain said in the Middle East, 'we are witnessing a genocide in Gaza, where the West is complicit in Israeli crimes as they are supporting Israel' and all their talk of human rights and democracy is 'hypocritical based on double standards'.

He termed the Gaza situation as a 'struggle between the oppressed and oppressors' and 'we are with the oppressed & heroic Palestinians'. He termed the BRI as the way forward based on connectivity and cooperation and said 'CPEC is guarantor for a better tomorrow for Pakistan and people of Pakistan, taking ownership of CPEC, will take CPEC forward towards successful conclusion'. Finally, Senator Mushahid Hussain termed fake news, falsehoods and fiction as the 'biggest challenge to BRI' since Information Warfare was being waged against BRI. He urged a collective and cooperative approach of BRI countries on the media front as a 'collective voice' will be a force multiplier. Vice Ministers for International Communication from the Publicity and International Departments of the Communist Party of China were present at the ceremony, which was hosted by 'People's Daily' at its headquarters and President and Editor-in-Chief of People's Daily, the party organs of CPC, were present alongside 200 journalists from over 60 countries.

PFA conducts nutritional awareness campaign

RAWALPINDI (APP): In the light of the instructions of the Director General of the Punjab Food Authority (PFA), a series of seminars and nutrition camps are being held to raise nutritional awareness among the public under the Safe Food Model City Project. An awareness seminar regarding food safety was organized at Arts Council Murree, in which Deputy Commissioner, Murree and

Director Operations North Amina Rafiq participated as special guests. Various food business operators from Murree and surrounding areas also participated in the seminar. The aim of the seminar was to ensure adherence to hygiene principles in food preparation as a large number of tourists visit Murree during the winter season.

The PFA representatives briefed the food business operators about the rules

and regulations of the Punjab Food Authority.

They expressed their full cooperation for the immediate solution of the problems faced by the food business operators. On the occasion, the food business operator assured full cooperation to provide healthy food to the tourists. The participants in the event appreciated the efforts made by DG PFA regarding quality food.

Aneeq emphasizes modern challenges, Islamic principles at 'World Fatwa Conference'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed who is on a visit to Cairo, Egypt to participated in 8th World Fatwa Conference being held at the Egyptian Fatwa House under the umbrella of General Secretariat of Fatwa Houses and Bodies in the world.

The conference, organized under the auspices of President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, brought together scholars, ministers and Muftis from 100 countries, said a statement issued here on Thursday. During the conference, he extended his sincere gratitude to Dr. Shawki Ibrahim Allam, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, for his warm invitation and hospitality.

He emphasized the importance of discussing the topic of 'Fatwa and the Challenges of the Third Millennium' in recognizing the unique and multifaceted challenges faced by the Muslim Ummah in this era. He said the third millennium had brought about unprecedented changes in the way people live, communicate, and navigate their faith. "Fatwa, a guidance tool for Muslims on various matters, including matters of faith, practice, and daily life, was a central topic of discussion as it provides clarity and guidance to Muslims in navigating the complexities of life while upholding their religious principles," he added.

Quoting from the Holy Quran, Minister Aneeq referenced Surah An-Nahl, 16:43: "So ask the people of the

knowledge if you do not know," highlighting the importance of seeking knowledge and guidance. He stressed the paramount importance of the fundamentals of Islam in the methodology of issuing Fatwas. He said the Holy Quran and the Sunnah, the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him, must remain the bedrock upon which Fatwas were based.

Furthermore, Minister Aneeq said the objectives of the Islamic state, as outlined in Islamic jurisprudence, played a pivotal role in shaping the methodology of issuing Fatwas as these objectives include the preservation of faith, life, intellect, and property, ensuring that Fatwas contribute to the well-being and prosperity of the Muslim Ummah.

Addressing contemporary challenges, he discussed the rapid advancement of technology and the internet, emphasizing the need to provide guidance on issues related to online behavior and ethics. He specifically mentioned issues like online harassment and cyberbullying, urging scholars to issue guidance in accordance with Islamic principles.

Shedding light on economic challenges, Islamic finance, global trade, and economic justice, he said Fatwa committees could provide guidance on financial instruments and investment practices to ensure the compliance with Islamic principles.

Minister Aneeq called for a focus

on governance issues, emphasizing good governance, accountability, and transparency in Muslim-majority countries. He said countering extremist ideologies and radicalization was another significant aspect of the conference. He said Fatwa committees could play a vital role in debunking extremist interpretations of Islam and offering alternative narratives of peace, tolerance, and moderation.

Addressing bioethics in the modern age, environmental conservation, and climate change, Minister Aneeq called for guidance on medical advancements and responsible stewardship of the earth. He provided several recommendations, including the adaptation of the methodology for issuing Fatwas, leveraging modern communication tools to reach a broader audience, and strengthening private collective Fatwa bodies. He stressed the need to harmonize Islamic values with contemporary global values where possible, emphasizing unity within the Muslim Ummah. In conclusion, the minister highlighted the importance of faith in addressing the challenges of the third millennium and the pivotal role of Fatwa institutions in providing timely and relevant guidance to Muslims worldwide. He expressed his gratitude to the organizers and participants for their dedication to addressing these critical issues and urged unity in navigating the challenges of the evolving world while upholding the values of Islam.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary Ministry of Housing and Works, Dr. Shahzad Khan Bangash during his visit to Shaheed-e-Millat Secretariat Islamabad.

Herat rattled by 4.1 quake

HERAT (Agencies): Herat residents started their day Thursday with yet another earthquake, this time a 4.1 magnitude tremor, which unsettled already terrified residents. The epicenter was in Qarah Bagh at a depth of only 10km. Parts of Iran and Turkmenistan also felt the quake that happened at 7:19am. Herat has been hit by a string of earthquakes in under two weeks, including three 6.3 magnitude quakes and multiple tremors measuring upwards of 4.0 and 5.0 magnitude.

The Frontier Post

Rabi-us-Sanni 03, 1445 — Friday, October 20, 2023

Paul met with Shir

KABUL (Agencies): The Norwegian charge de affairs in Afghanistan, Paul Klouman Bekken, met with the Deputy Foreign Minister, Shir Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, and expressed his concern over the forced deportation of Afghan refugees by neighbouring countries. According to a statement by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bekken also conveyed his sympathy for the victims of the recent earthquake in Herat and mentioned his country's assistance to the affected people.

Herat victims need protection, says UN



KABUL (Agencies): The United Nations describes the situation in Herat as dire after the earthquakes of the last two weeks and says that the affected people need protection.

The United Nations wrote on its website on Tuesday that the recent earthquakes have directly affected 66,000 people in six districts of Herat.

The news also states that satellite images taken from the earthquake affected areas show that 289 villages have been destroyed in this province.

Meanwhile, Daniel Anders, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the United Nations in Afghanistan, says that the number of victims is increasing.

"We have approximately 66,000 victims, according to our assessments, this number is increasing, but we continue to help,"

Anders said in his statement published on the United Nations website on Wednesday.

Anders also emphasized the need for tents, water and medical aid to the earthquake victims.

The Humanitarian Coordinator for the United Nations in Afghanistan, said on Tuesday that meeting the needs of the Herat earthquake victims is not a matter of a month and may take a year.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has announced the death toll of the earthquake in Herat at 1,480 and the number of injured at 1,950.

The United Nations also says that people in Herat living in tents need permanent shelter.

The construction of houses and settlements for the victims of the Herat

earthquake started on Tuesday in Sia Ab village of Zindajan district in Herat province.

The project was launched in the presence of a number of senior IEA officials including the head of information and culture, the mayor of Injil district, officials from urban planning and Herat municipality.

Maolavi Ahmadullah Muttaqi, head of information and culture in Herat, says that 2,146 houses will be built across 20 villages that were completely destroyed in the recent earthquakes.

Thousands of people have been affected by the deadly earthquakes and are living in tents. However, time is critical for these people as winter is fast approaching.

Winters in the province are very cold, snowy, and windy.

IEA begins building houses

HERAT (TOLONews): Engineers have begun building houses in the recent earthquake-stricken Zinda Jan district of western Herat province.

The initial plan is to build 2,146 modern houses in 20 affected villages in the province.

Maps for the houses have been finalized and are planned to be implemented soon.

"We hope that these houses will be ready by the time the harsh winter arrives, they will be returned to their houses and will be settled," said Ahmadullah Muttaqi, director of Information and Culture of Herat.

Jan Aqa, who is living in tents in the camp built by the UNCR in Herat province, is one of thousands facing a similar destiny.

He has lost four members of his family due to the earthquakes and his wife is injured.

"The weather has got cold, and it is difficult to live in tents, we want houses, we cannot spend our lives in tents," said Jan Aqa, a quake-affected citizen.

"It is not possible to live in winter in these tents, we ask for houses to be built for us," said Negar, a quake-affected citizen.

The quake-affected people in Herat province say that the cold weather of winter will make it impossible for them to live in tents.

They ask for their houses to be built by the winter.

"The winter is approaching, all the people and children wandering and living in tents is not possible, we ask residences to be built soon," said Abdul Satar, a quake-affected citizen.

"In winter, no one can tolerate the cold weather, we have lost everything of our houses, we had prepared clothes and blankets for winter but now they are under rubble," said Maryam, a quake-affected citizen.

The recent earthquakes have destroyed tens of villages in Herat's Zinda Jan, Enjeel, and Kesk Robat Sangi districts.

The quakes have also affected hundreds of houses in other parts of Herat province.

Aid caravan from Tajikistan arrived

HERAT (Khaama Press): The humanitarian aid caravan from Tajikistan arrived in Afghanistan unexpectedly on Thursday.

According to the Taliban official, Hafiz Obaidullah, informed the media that this caravan includes tents, drinking water, sleeping mats, blankets, and essential supplies.

The caravan, which entered Afghanistan through the Sher Khan Port, has a specific mission: to assist the earthquake-stricken residents of Herat.

Its arrival marks a crucial step in addressing the needs of the affected population, as this humanitarian effort is focused on delivering much-needed support to those impacted by the earthquake in Herat.

Furthermore, Tajikistan has announced that this caravan, consisting of 130 trucks carrying 3,250 tons of humanitarian aid, has been sent to the people of Herat from their country.

These aids, valued at USD 1.5 million, include cement and fuel materials.

This comes as the World Food Programme (WFP) states that it requires USD 19 million to assist 100,000 earthquake-affected individuals in Afghanistan.

Lord Ahmad said that ongoing limitations on Afghan women and girls will damage the gains of the past two decades in Afghanistan.

"And I think many of the gains that we were able to achieve, particularly on the rights of minorities, on the rights of women and girls and the progress we saw in education -- those are real setbacks on what we had achieved and that has been

reflected and evidenced by what we have seen in the subsequent... I think it is deep regret for many who operated that NATO team," said Lord Ahmad, UK's Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia.

The British official also criticized the Afghan caretaker government's policies against Afghan women and girls.

"The Taliban's philosophy is nothing to do with Islam, it is a draconian subversive philosophy which is against different people and different communities and as we know against women and girls," said Lord Ahmad, UK's Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia.

Lord Ahmad further added that UK has provided the Afghan people with over a half billion pounds in the first 18 months of the

Afghanistan to become a 'transit crossroads'

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation said they are trying to turn Afghanistan into a transit crossroads by creating a standardized system.

Hamidullah Akhundzada said at a National Transit Day meeting that for the first time, four countries, including Afghanistan, have been connected by transit.

The General Directorate of the Railways announced the signing of the contract with Kazakhstan to connect Aqina and Torgandi Railways.

On National Transport and Transit Day, the acting Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation said they are trying to create a regular system to turn Afghanistan into a transit crossroads.

"For the first time, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and

Uzbekistan have been connected via transit," said Hamidullah Akhundzada.

"Much effort has been made to provide investment in this sector based on a regular transit and transport system, in order to turn our homeland into a 'crossroads of the region' in less time," said Hamidullah Akhundzada, acting Minister of Transport and Aviation.

"The strategic and geopolitical position of Afghanistan is important because Afghanistan is a landlocked country, air transport and air corridors are currently operating..." said Rustam Hafizyar, Head of the Planning Department of Ministry of Transport and Aviation.

At the same time, the general director of the railway says that they have signed a contract with



Kazakhstan's professional engineers to connect the Aqina and Torgandi Railways.

"In the next week or ten days we will sign another agreement with Kazakhstan, so that experienced Kazakh engineers will come and perform rail service in Aqina and make

transfers from Torgandi to Aqina," said Bakh-ur-Rahman Sharafat, General Chairman of the Railway.

According to statistics and data from the National Statistics Administration, more than 309,000 tons of goods have been transited through Afghanistan in the first quarter of this year.

Deputy PM's absence from events raises questions

KABUL (TOLONews): For 40 days, there has been no official conferences and meetings of Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the political deputy prime minister of the Islamic Emirate.

The last meeting of the deputy prime minister was on September 4 with the former Turkish ambassador, but he has not had an official visit since then.

Meanwhile, the head of the press for the political deputy prime ministers' office said that Kabir is sick.

There is no news of official visits with the deputy prime minister over the past forty days.

At the meetings as Climate Change, Teacher's Day, the opening of the Qosh Tapa Canal, the 14th round of police forces graduation and some other meetings along with the presence of cabinet members, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the political deputy of the prime minister was not present and no pictures of him were broadcast.

"The political deputy of the Prime Minister was sick and is currently in Kabul at his residence. He has recovered and will soon return to his job," said Hassan Haqyar, Head of Press and Political Assistance Ceremony.

Some political analysts have said that the presence of the deputy of the prime minister in meetings, and meetings with representatives of countries, is beneficial.

"There is no doubt that top officials of any government can cover all

areas be it social, cultural, and economic. Their presence is important," said Omar Nehzat, political analyst.

"There might be ambiguity about his absence in the meeting, but I think these things are not important for the leadership of the Islamic Emirate and

their focus on the economy," said Hadi Zazai, political analyst.

Although the deputy political director of the prime minister is normally seen with representatives of countries, his last meeting with the former Turkish ambassador to Kabul was on September 4.



Exhibition held for agricultural products in Kabul City

KABUL (TOLONews): The Second Deputy of the Prime Minister said in the 29th exhibition of agricultural products that eighty percent of the workforce is working in the agricultural sector, and if attention is paid to the agricultural sector, it can create 1.2 million jobs in a decade.

Mullah Abdul Salam Hanafi said that 21 to 33 percent of the GDP of the country is agricultural products.

"Currently, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Rural Development, and the Ministry of Energy and Water, each of them has been entrusted with the task of work in this regard," said Hanafi.

The Deputy PM for economic affairs, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, said that 68% of the country's food is made up of agricultural products, and he asked

all government institutions to use agricultural products.

"I specifically ask the government departments to support agricultural products and meet their needs with agricultural products that have vitamins and healthy properties," said Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar.

The Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate also said in a message that good grounds has been provided for the growth of agriculture in the country and asked investors to invest in the sector.

"Alhamdulillah, now that the occupation has ended and security has been ensured in all regions of the country, there is a good basis for increasing agricultural products," said the Prime Minister.

"We have decided to divide Afghanistan into five parts...", said the Minister



of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Ataullah Omari.

Some of the participants of the 29th exhibition of agricultural products consider it beneficial to hold such exhibitions.

"It is very useful because many people who are girls cannot participate

here, we can be role models for them and come here to participate in the exhibition," said Sakina Ataye, a participant.

The exhibition continues for four days and the participants have displayed their products in 263 booths, including 56 booths for women.

Islamic Emirate rule over Afghanistan.

"We provided over half a billion pounds in the first 18 months... to reach 50 percent Afghan women with our humanitarian assistance," said Lord Ahmad, UK's Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia.

Earlier, UK's defense minister, in his interview with the Daily Mail on the first anniversary of the

Islamic Emirate, said that the UK had come with correct goals to Afghanistan and added that the UK had done much for Afghanistan's security, economic development, education and other sectors while arguing that the goals had failed.

He had also said that UK's mission in Afghanistan failed with the loss of hundreds of its soldiers.

WHO seeks \$7.9m to aid 114,000 Herat victims

KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Health Organization (WHO) has urgently called for \$7.9 million in funding to provide vital services to the 114,000 residents of Herat severely impacted by the recent earthquake.

This financial support is essential to address their immediate healthcare needs following the devastating tremors.

On Thursday, the World Health Organization stated that women, girls, children and other vulnerable communities make up more than 90 per cent of the casualties and injuries from the Herat earthquake.

The requested funds will be instrumental in ensuring that medical services reach

those most in need, especially vulnerable groups like women, children, and marginalized communities, constituting over 90% of the earthquake's casualties and injuries in Herat.

According to this organization, at least 40 health centres in 9 districts of Herat have been damaged, and access to health services for 58,000 people is challenging.

Earlier, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs declared that a total of \$93.6 million is needed to address the needs of earthquake victims in various sectors in Herat.

The World Food Programme also previously announced that it requires a

budget of \$19 million for emergency assistance to tens of thousands of Herat earthquake survivors.

The United Nations has reported that the Herat earthquake has had a profound impact, directly affecting over 43,000 individuals in the region. This disaster has left more than 3,330 residential houses in ruins, underscoring the magnitude of the devastation the local population faces.

The immediate need for humanitarian aid, shelter, and support for those who have lost their homes is evident, and efforts to rebuild the affected communities will be a significant undertaking in the wake of this natural catastrophe.

Japan pledges continued cooperation in educ sector



KABUL (Agencies): Acting Minister of Education Habibullah Agha met with former Japanese Ambassador to Afghanistan Takashi Odaka and his delegation this week where they discussed issues around the education sector in the country.

Odaka said that Japan

supports the plans and programs of the ministry of education and said Tokyo was prepared to build more schools in the future in coordination with the ministry.

Japan has in the past built 165 schools at a cost of \$25 million in Afghanistan.

Agha meanwhile thanked the Japanese envoy for Tokyo's assistance in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and in their assistance in the education arena.

He also said the ministry is ready to provide the necessary support to Japan in their endeavors to implement projects in the country.

intelligence services" for the conflict between Iranians and Afghan immigrants following the increase in harassment of the immigrants in Iran.

"Enemy's spying apparatuses are working on this after being frustrated in creating a disturbance," he said.

However, Iran's interior minister admitted that some Iranian people have concerns about the situation of the immigrants, that this concern is acceptable and that the immigrants will be organized. Vahidi previously blamed the "enemy's

is the work of hypocrites.

"Iran helped these people and gave them facilities so that their students could go to schools. But some people are trying to turn the good relations between the people of the two countries into a challenge, and this is definitely the design of the enemies of the two countries," he said, but did not actually name any country.

However, Iran's interior minister admitted that some Iranian people have concerns about the situation of the immigrants, that this concern is acceptable and that the immigrants will be organized. Vahidi previously blamed the "enemy's

intelligence services" for the conflict between Iranians and Afghan immigrants following the increase in harassment of the immigrants in Iran.

"Enemy's spying apparatuses are working on this after being frustrated in creating a disturbance," he said.

Iran's Interior Minister says illegal Afghan immigrants must leave Iran

KABUL (Agencies): Ahmad Vahidi, the Minister of Interior of Iran, said that illegal Afghan immigrants should leave Iran.

"We organize those who are legal and have visas," Ahmad Vahidi added.

He also said that creating differences between Iranians and Afghan immigrants

is the work of hypocrites.

"Iran helped these people and gave them facilities so that their students could go to schools. But some people are trying to turn the good relations between the people of the two countries into a challenge, and this is definitely the design of the enemies of the two countries," he said, but did not actually name any country.

CJCSC witnesses PAF's 14 Nation Air Exercise

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, visited an operational air base of Pakistan Air Force to witness the on-going aerial exercise Indus Shield-2023. On his arrival at the base, the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee was received by Air Chief Marshal Zaher

the 14 nation Exercise Indus Shield which in addition to boosting the operational readiness of PAF, would also prepare the participants for contemporary warfare challenges. He further reiterated that the exercise employing cutting edge niche technologies and hi-tech fighters not only offers a unique opportunity for participating air forces to bring their unparalleled skills and operational

Interacting with the participants of the exercise, the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee accentuated the paramount importance of multinational air exercises in the pursuit of common objectives amidst the ever-evolving dynamics of air warfare. He lauded the professionalism of participants of exercise and appreciated the efforts of Air Power Center of Excellence in orchestrating this monumental exercise, which would not only fortify the existing partnerships among key allies but would also enhance interoperability among the participating Air Forces. The visiting dignitary also admired the dynamic leadership of the Air Chief, whose firm resolve and relentless efforts paved the way for this exercise to be one of the mega aerial exercises of the region.

Exercise Indus Shield-2023 is witnessing participation from 14 esteemed Air Forces including Pakistan, Turkiye, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Egypt, Oman, Bahrain, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Morocco, Uzbekistan, China, and Hungary. The exercise offers a unique opportunity for participating air forces to bring their unparalleled skills and operational capabilities on a single platform.

Likewise, the meticulous planning and execution of Exercise Indus Shield serves as a testament to the vision of the esteemed Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, in recognizing the pivotal role played by PAF in advancing technology, modernizing its capabilities and deploying contemporary combat tactics to effectively address shared challenges in aerial defence.



Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force.

The Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee was briefed on the Air Power Center of Excellence training facility as well as the scope of exercise which aims to project mutual cooperation between the participating air forces and consolidate upon modern concepts of aerial warfare. The Air Chief appreciated the utmost support extended by General Sahir Shamshad Mirza and lauded his efforts in the promotion of tri-services synergy.

He highlighted the significance of

IMF asks Pakistan to raise gas tariff

ISLAMABAD (INP): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has asked Pakistan to 'immediately raise' gas tariff, sources within the finance ministry informed on Thursday. The IMF is seeking 100pc 'rise' in the gas tariff to minimize the losses and circular debt in Pakistan's gas sector.

The international lender showing concerns about not increasing the gas tariff from July 1 during a virtual meeting with the Pakistan finance ministry officials, demanded the caretaker government of Pakistan to immediately approve the hike in gas tariff, the source claimed. They further said IMF asked the Pakistan finance ministry that denying the increase in gas tariff is a 'violation' of the Standby Agreement.

IMF has suggested for recovery of Rs46 billion loss of gas companies from July to September. During the talks, the IMF officials were informed that caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamsad Akhtar is in China. The minister will return to Pakistan today, the sources said. In this context, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) meeting has been summoned on Monday to give a nod for jacking up the gas rates.

Prior to this, it emerged that the government would increase the gas tariff for the fertilizer-producing sector. Under the new pricing model, the fertilizer sector is expected to experience an increase in gas tariffs to approximately Rs580 per MMBtu for feedstock purposes. The gas would be made costlier for fertilizer fertilizer-producing sector by Rs278 per MMBtu, the sources said and added that the new rate of gas would be Rs1,580 MMBtu. The talks for the second tranche of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout will likely be held in the last week of October.

Price hike for K-Electric consumers likely

KARACHI (INP): The consumers of Karachi Electric (K-Electric) could be in for some more bad news, as the authorities have prepared to for a second price hike in a single quarterly adjustment. The K-Electric has submitted a request to National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) for a further increase of Rs3.02 per unit on electricity consumers.

Nepra is scheduled to hear the authority's request today. K-Electric has sought the hike in the form of quarterly adjustments for April to June 2023. On a previous request of the government, there has already been an increase of Rs3.28 for Karachi in the quarter of April to June this year.

After the hearing, Nepra will send its decision to the federal government. After the approval of the federal government, the increase will be applicable to K-Electric consumers.

Afghan Taliban decides to formally join BRI

KABUL (Reuters): The Taliban administration Thursday expressed the desire to formally become part of President Xi Jinping's ambitious as well as far-reaching 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) as part of its efforts to rebuild war-torn Afghanistan through Chinese investment.

"We requested China to allow us to be a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Belt and Road Initiative... (and) are discussing technical issues today," Afghanistan's Acting Commerce Minister Haji Nooruddin told Reuters in an interview on the sidelines of the BRI summit in Beijing. The reference to the "economic corridor" pertains to a significant section of the Belt and Road Initiative located in Afghanistan's neighbour, Pakistan.

Azizi also disclosed that a technical team would soon be dispatched to China for discussions on this matter. This announcement underlines China's efforts to enhance its relationship with the Taliban-

led government, even in the absence of recognition from other foreign governments.

Notably, China recently appointed an ambassador to Kabul, making it the first country to do so. In contrast, other nations have retained their previous ambassadors or appointed heads of mission in a charge d'affaires capacity, bypassing the formal presentation of credentials to the government. Azizi revealed that a technical team would be sent to China to gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles preventing Afghanistan from joining the initiative.

While specific impediments were not detailed, Afghanistan's wealth of coveted mineral resources, including lithium, copper, and iron, could make it an attractive prospect for Chinese investment. Several Chinese companies, including the Metallurgical Corp. of China Ltd (MCC), have a presence in Afghanistan and have discussed projects, such as a potentially

vast copper mine, with both the Taliban administration and the previous Western-backed government.

Security concerns have been raised by investors, particularly in light of past attacks by the Daesh militant group on foreign embassies and establishments frequented by Chinese investors in Kabul. Regarding these security challenges, Azizi emphasised that security was a top priority for the Taliban-led government.

He noted that after two decades of conflict, more regions of the country were now considered safe. This could open opportunities to explore provinces with industrial, agricultural, and mining potential. In a positive development, Afghanistan, along with 34 other countries, agreed to collaborate on the digital economy and green development on the sidelines of the Belt and Road Forum. This engagement demonstrates Afghanistan's intention to participate in global economic initiatives and seek opportunities for growth and development.

ECP invites observers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) spokesperson Haroon Shinwari Thursday said that the ECP was trying its best to ensure transparency and credibility in upcoming general election polls where they had invited international and national observers to observe the electoral process.

While talking to media, he said that national and international observance

will provide us neutral feedback about the electoral process, adding, that the Election Commission accorded approval to the code of conduct for International Observers and also allowed to publish it on a priority basis. He added that the voter lists across the country will be frozen on October 25, formally stopping the process of registration, correctness and transfer of voters.

He said all of the regis-

tered nationals will cast votes in the upcoming general elections, adding, that there are only 6 days left for the registration, transfer and correctness of the voters' data. Replying to a question, the Spokesperson said the Elections Act 2017 empowers the electoral body to invite local or foreign observers to monitor the elections, adding, that under section 238 of the act, they can observe the election process.

Sunak tells Netanyahu

(Continued from Page 1)

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak arrived in Tel Aviv after President Biden's departure, delivering similar messages of support and condolences for Israelis. He expressed solidarity with the Israeli people, emphasising that the United Kingdom stood with them in the wake of the recent terrorist attack. Inside Gaza, health officials reported that the bombings had killed nearly 3,500 people and wounded over 12,000.

The destruction was widespread, with entire areas reduced to rubble. The situation has caused widespread suffering and displaced approximately half of Gaza's population, making it one of the most densely populated places on Earth.

The ongoing conflict and the suffering of Gaza's civilians have stirred outrage in the Middle East, complicating efforts by Western leaders to rally Arab support to prevent the conflict from spreading. President Biden's plans to meet with Arab leaders were disrupted by an explosion at a Gaza hospital on the eve of his visit, leading to the cancellation of a

summit. Palestinians attributed the explosion to an Israeli airstrike, while Israel claimed it resulted from a failed rocket launch by Palestinian fighters.

Protests erupted across the region, and President Biden, who spoke to Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi by phone on his return flight, emphasised that US evidence supported the Israeli account of the hospital explosion. Egypt has stated that its Gaza crossing is open on its side but remains inaccessible due to Israeli bombardments. Cairo has also rejected the idea of opening the border for a mass exodus of Gazans.

The situation remains complex, with efforts to provide humanitarian aid, negotiate a ceasefire, and address the needs of the civilian population in Gaza continuing as the conflict rages on. Israel has bombed and targeted areas with bakeries in Gaza over the course of the war while dozens of Palestinians were lining up to buy bread, causing high numbers of dead and wounded, Salam Marouf, the head of the government media office, said in a statement.

By repeatedly targeting bakeries, he said that Israel sought to worsen the humanitarian situation, inflict a greater number of casualties and "make it more difficult for citizens, to the point that obtaining some loaves of bread has become a dangerous journey." More than five bakeries were targeted in different areas to the north and south of Gaza, either directly or in the area where they are located, Maarouf said.

Aid groups, including the World Food Program, have warned Gaza is running low on food supplies with shops only having a few days worth of supplies left. More are available in warehouses run by humanitarian organizations, but these are hard to reach because of constant bombardment.

Meanwhile, the leaders of Egypt and Jordan have condemned Israel's "collective punishment" policy against Palestinians in Gaza and its efforts to displace "Palestinians from their lands to Egypt or Jordan." King Abdullah and President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on Thursday discussed the military escalation in Gaza during their talks in Cairo.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi in a meeting with State of Palestine Ambassador in Pakistan Ahmad Jawad Rabei and expressing solidarity with people of Palestine.

Abid Boxer arrested from Kasur

KASUR (INP): Civil lines police on Thursday claimed to have arrested the former police inspector Abid Boxer from Kasur. According to the police statement, several cases have been registered against former police officer Abid Boxer in three different police stations.

Abid Boxer was booked in several cases including terrorism, extortion, money laundering, and ransom. The police handed him over to the investigation wing for further investigation of the cases registered against him. The police produced the ex-police officer Abid boxer in Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC). The judge Abhar Gul Khan after hearing the case, approve a seven day physical remand of the ex-police inspector.

Earlier this week, the Lahore Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) claimed that they found extortion and money laundering evidence against former inspector Abid Boxer. The Lahore CIA investigators made progress on the probe against the ex-inspector Abid Boxer. During the initial investigation, it emerged that the former cop owned plazas and flats worth billions, whereas, he was also involved in extortion and money laundering. The CIA said that Abid demanded extortion from different housing societies in Islamabad and Lahore and the investigators also found evidence against him. Additionally, Abid's bank account was also used for money laundering which was allegedly committed through Farooq Dar. The CIA also collected records of bank transactions.

The former cop was using a SIM card registered with his wife's credentials. The CIA Iqbal Town officials also acquired Abid Boxer's mobile data. The scope of investigation against the ex-inspector was expanded by the Lahore police and more arrests are likely to be made in the coming days.

Police ordered to recover Sheikh Rashid

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Lahore High Court Rawalpindi Bench has issued a final deadline for the recovery of Awami Muslim League chief Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed. This order comes after a hearing on the case pertaining to Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed's disappearance.

Justice Sadaqat Ali Khan, the presiding judge of the Lahore High Court Rawalpindi Bench, oversaw the proceedings and listened to pleas for additional time to locate and recover Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed. Acknowledging the request, a court granted an extension for the recovery efforts and specified the critical date of October 26 as the ultimate deadline for ensuring Sheikh Rasheed's safe return.

The backdrop of this case involves the mysterious circumstances surrounding Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed's arrest from a private housing society in Rawalpindi, after which he was reportedly taken to an undisclosed location. The arrest was carried out by individuals dressed in civilian attire, raising questions and concerns about his well-being and whereabouts.

However, it's worth noting that the Rawalpindi Police initially denied any involvement in Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed's arrest. In an official statement, they clarified that neither did they arrest Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed nor did they have him in their custody, refuting the initial reports about his arrest by the Rawalpindi Police.

KP govt adheres to strict financial discipline: CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan has said that the provincial government is adhering to strict financial discipline, and through a number of measures under austerity policy, unnecessary expenditures have been drastically reduced whereas prudent and judicious and realistic use of available financial resources is also being ensured adding that as a result of the above mentioned measures, the incumbent caretaker government has not yet taken any overdraft from banks.

He said that due to huge recruitments during the previous tenures, the budget of salaries and pensions of the provincial departments and government universities has increased manifolds due to which the provincial government as well as the higher educational institutes are facing financial crunches as major chunk of provincial government budget is spent on salaries and pension.

He was talking to the participants of 25th National Security Workshop of National Defense University who called on him here on Thursday. Major General Raza Aizad from National Defense University, Islamabad, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary, Additional Chief Secretaries Muhammad Abid Majeed, Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah and Secretary Finance Amir Sultan Tareen were also present on the occasion.

The chief minister said that due to decades long instability in the region, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province especially the

erstwhile tribal belt has been badly affected resulting in law & order situation, poor economy and slow paced development adding that the newly merged tribal districts needed special attention of the government for their development and redressal of their decades long deprivations. He maintained that commitments made by the federal government and the federating units with regard to the fast track development of the Newly Merged Districts on the time of merger had not yet been fulfilled. Azam Khan remarked that the province is not getting its due shares in various federal transfers including NFC, net hydel profit and oil & gas royalty etc. due to which the provincial government is faced with a major challenge of financial crunches.

The participants were briefed about the overall security situation, administrative and financial affairs and development portfolio of the province, and told that crackdown is underway against all types of illegal spectrum including smuggling, extortion, hundi-hawala, fake documentation etc, and added that an effective coordination mechanism amongst civil administration, security forces, intelligence institutions, federal and provincial entities has been established for this purpose.

Besides, Counter Terrorism department has also been strengthened on modern lines in order to effectively deal with the issues of extortion and terrorism in the province. It was informed that profiling of non-custom paid vehicles in the newly merged districts and Malakand Division is also in progress. The partici-

pants were told that law enforcing agencies have made significant achievements in the operation against terrorism and illegal spectrum.

Briefing about the development portfolio of the province, it was informed that the totally development outlay of settled areas consists of 1505 development projects with a total cost of Rs. 1794 billion; and similarly, the development portfolio of the NMDs consists of 686 development projects with estimated cost of Rs.897 billion.

The participants were briefed that the province is mostly dependent on federal transfers for its revenues as 94% of its revenue comes from various federal receipts. It was told that with the merger of erstwhile FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the population of the province has increased but the share of the province in NFC Award has not been increased accordingly which needs to be revised to enable the province to get its due share; and added that as per the existing population after merger of erstwhile FATA, the NFC shares of the province comes to 19.6% of the total but the province is getting only 14.6%.

The participants were apprised that the provincial government was taking concrete measures under a well devised strategy to increase its revenue by exploiting its potentials in various sectors including hydro power, agriculture, mines & minerals and tourism adding that health and education sectors have been the top priority of the provincial government and significant financial resources are being spent on these sectors.

Pakistan blindly trusts China

(Continued from Page 1)

and Road Forum and his address to the High-Level Forum were telecast live.

The prime minister's meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping at People's Great Hall, Premier Li Qiang at Diaoyutai State Guest House and other top leadership as well as signing of several memorandums of understanding were widely covered by the local media. During his visit, the prime minister also held a meeting with Member of the Standing Committee of Politburo of Communist Party of China, Li Xi.

He also held a series of meetings with the chairpersons and chief executive officers of top-ranking Chinese companies and addressed an interactive roundtable attended by a number of academics, scholars and researchers from notable Chinese think tanks, in Beijing. A number of Chinese scholars commented on different aspects of the prime minister's visit on television and wrote articles in the newspapers.

The prime minister will also visit Urumqi, Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China, to enhance trade, investment and people-to-people relations. PM Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar is visiting China on the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping. This is his first visit to China after assuming office in August 2023.

PM encourages Chinese firms to explore Pakistan's vast potential: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar encouraged China's corporate executives to explore the vast investment potential of Pakistan. The prime minister said this in a meeting with a number of Chinese

corporate executives on the sidelines of the Third Belt and Road Forum here.

The CEOs and executives of Chinese enterprises who called on the prime minister included Minmetals, MCC, China Construction Company (CCCC), China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), COFCO, Amer International Group, China Energy, Power China and China Gezhouba Group.

The prime minister apprised the Chinese businessmen of Pakistan's initiatives for economic and financial stability. Sharing Pakistan's vision for sustainable and inclusive development, he outlined Pakistan's investor-friendly policies; including the establishment of Special Investment Facilitation Council, which will act as a one-window platform to facilitate foreign investment.

He encouraged the Chinese corporate executives to explore the vast investment potential of Pakistan, especially in ICT, agriculture, renewable energy, textile, digital economy and, mining and minerals sectors. Appreciating the measures taken by Pakistan to attract foreign investment, the entrepreneurs briefed the prime minister on their business portfolios in Pakistan.

They also expressed their keen interest in working with Pakistani partners to expand their business footprint in Pakistan. Prime Minister Kakar also invited the executives of Chinese companies to Pakistan to discuss their business interests with relevant ministers.

CPEC to bring about Pakistan's economic prosperity, regional connectivity: Caretaker Prime

Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, terming CPEC a landmark project in the history of Pakistan-China relations, said it would bring about economic progress and prosperity in Pakistan and contribute to regional connectivity and development.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Chairman of China International Development Cooperation Agency LuoZhaohui, lauded the vision of connectivity and partnership under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and its fruits over the last ten years in terms of economic milestones for Pakistan.

Prime Minister Kakar and CIDCA Chairman Luo discussed the collaboration in socioeconomic development projects under the CPEC framework in agriculture, health, education, vocational education, water supply and poverty alleviation. The chairman welcomed the prime minister's proposal for the swift implementation of CIDCA's GDI projects in Pakistan.

Prime Minister Kakar lauded the dynamic partnership between Pakistan and CIDCA and especially commended CIDCA's strong commitment to development projects in Pakistan. Chairman Luo assured the prime minister of CIDCA's long-term commitment to high-quality development of CPEC.

PM lauds CPC's role to cement Pak-China ties, fostering greater understanding: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar appreciated the role of the Communist Party of China in cementing the Pakistan-China relationship and fostering greater understanding between the two countries.