

PM arrives in Islamabad
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar arrived here on Friday after concluding his five-day visit to China. During the visit, the prime minister addressed the Third Belt and Road Forum held in Beijing. On the sidelines of the Forum, he also met with the leaders of different countries, including Russia, Kenya and Sri Lanka.

@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX No. 272 Regd. No. 241 RABI-US-SANNI 04 1445 -- SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21 2023 PESHAWAR EDITION 12 PAGES PRICE. 30



ISLAMABAD: After concluding his visit to China, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar arrived in country.

SL Army Commander calls on COAS

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Lieutenant General H L V M Liyanage, Commander of the Sri Lankan Army called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), COAS at General Headquarters, on Friday. During the meeting matters of professional interest, ways for enhancing bilateral defence ties were discussed. Sri Lankan Army Chief praised Pakistan Army for its professionalism and successes in ongoing operations for bringing peace and stability in the region. COAS highlighted that Sri Lanka has historic relations with Pakistan and its Armed Forces, particularly in the fields of Defense and Training cooperation.

Four terrorists killed in Lakki

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Semu Wanda, Lakki Marwat District, on reported presence of terrorists. During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and the terrorists, resultantly four terrorists were sent to hell, while one terrorist got injured and was apprehended by the security forces. These terrorists remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces as well as target killing of innocent civilians. A cache of arms, equipment and explosives was also recovered during the operation. Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism.

Hamas says it frees two US hostages

Martyrdom toll touches 4,137; UN says aid to reach Gaza in 'next day or so'

GAZA (Reuters): The Hamas said on Friday it had released two US hostages - a mother and daughter - for what it called "humanitarian reasons" following Qatari mediation efforts. Hamas spokesman Abu Ubaida issued a statement announcing the release of hostages. The United Nations has also announced that the first aid delivery into Gaza via the Rafah border crossing with Egypt is expected to occur "in the next day or so." Martin Griffiths, the UN humanitarian chief, stated that they are engaged in advanced negotiations with relevant parties to facilitate the aid operation. The UN's aim is to ensure a swift and secure start to this humanitarian effort. While the exact timing remains uncertain, there is hope for a prompt and sustained delivery of aid. The humanitarian community emphasises the urgent need for a mechanism to transport aid into southern Gaza, all while continuing to call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Desperately needed international aid is accumulating in Egypt near Gaza, where Palestinians are facing critical shortages of food and water due to ongoing Israeli bombings. The situation in Gaza has deteriorated rapidly, with over one million of its 2.4 million residents displaced. Originally, Egyptian state-linked broadcaster Al Qahera News had announced the opening of the Rafah crossing on Friday, which serves

GCC, ASEAN leaders call for permanent truce in Gaza

RIYADH: Gulf and ASEAN leaders have issued a statement calling all parties involved in the Gaza conflict to implement a permanent ceasefire, and condemned the attacks on civilians in the Palestinian enclave. Summit leaders also called for much-needed delivery of humanitarian aid, relief supplies and other essential necessities and services to Gaza. In their statement, the leaders urged parties to the conflict to protect civilians, to refrain from targeting them and to adhere to international humanitarian law, especially the principles and provisions of the Geneva Convention regarding the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The statement all called for the immediate and unconditional release of hostages and civilian detainees, especially women, children, the sick and the elderly, and urged all parties to work towards reaching a peaceful solution to the conflict. The leaders of the two regional blocs also expressed their support to revive the Middle East peace process, and to resolve the conflict between Israel and its neighbors in accordance with international law. The regional leaders also agreed on the Framework of Cooperation 2024-2028, aiming to further strengthen partnership and cooperation to realize the potential for growing cooperation between both sides. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman earlier reiterated the Kingdom's support for efforts to reach a just solution to the Palestinian cause in his opening speech at the summit. The crown prince also said that he was 'saddened' by the escalating violence in Gaza, for which innocent people were paying the price, and firmly rejected the targeting of civilians. Indonesian President Joko Widodo, who led the 10-nation ASEAN this year, in his opening statement also called for an end in the violence in Gaza in accordance with international laws. — Arab News

as the sole route into Gaza. However, Cairo later cited the need for road repairs and postponed the opening. The recent escalation in violence stems from a major attack launched by Hamas from the Gaza Strip on October 7. The attack resulted in substantial casualties, with Israeli officials reporting at least 1,400 deaths, primarily among civilians. In response, Israel has conducted extensive aerial bombings, causing significant destruction. An impending ground invasion is anticipated, heightening concerns about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. As of now, the situation remains critical, with at least 4,137 Palestinians, mainly civilians, reported dead due to the ongoing conflict, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

Pakistan urged to provide assistance to Afghan refugees

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: US State Department has asked Pakistan to uphold its obligation with regard to Afghan refugees and asylum seekers. When asked by an Afghan journalist that Pakistan and Iran should be pressurized not to kick out Afghan refugees, the US State Department Spokesperson, Matthew Miller stated that "we urge all nations including Pakistan to uphold its obligation in their treatment of refugees and asylum seekers." Matthew Miller also stated that Pakistan should seek assistance from UNHCR in help the Afghan refugees. It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan has given November 1, 2023 deadline to all illegal immigrants residing in Pakistan to voluntarily leave the country otherwise legal action will be taken against them. It is also pertinent to mention here that it is mostly the Afghan refugees who are illegally overstaying in Pakistan. On the other hand; Pakistan's concern is that members of TTP (Tehrike Taliban Pakistan) disguise as Afghan refugees while staying in Pakistan and then they conduct terrorist activities inside Pakistan. In the midst of this scenario; the demand of Pakistani visa from Afghanistan has spiked upto 1500 US dollars and the whereabouts of this income from visa is still unknown. According to The Frontier Post, several travel agents and middlemen are involved in minting this wealth, which ranges to almost half a million US dollars everyday. Several interim Afghan government officials have recently publicly requested Pakistan to review its policy towards the Afghan refugees. Message to other countries: Matthew Miller also commented that the message of the US to other countries is that "do not enter this conflict." He further added several times that the U.S. will continue its support to Israel and that Israel has the right to defend itself. On China: On China, US State Department Spokesperson, Matthew Miller said that Secretary Blinken during his recent visit to Israel and other middle eastern countries, had made a phone call to China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi because when there are other crisis in the world, China can use its influence to solve those crisis.

Israel-Palestine tension Pakistan, China jointly call for ceasefire

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and China on Friday expressed deep concern over the current escalation of tensions and violence between Palestine and Israel, and called for an immediate ceasefire. In a joint statement issued at the conclusion of Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar's visit to China, both sides reiterated that the fundamental way out of the conflict lied in implementing the "two-state solution and establishing an independent State of Palestine." The joint statement called for the cessation of hostilities and every possible effort to protect civilians and avert an even worse humanitarian disaster in Gaza. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and to jointly upholding the international system with the United Nations at its core, the international order underpinned by international law, and the basic norms governing international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. "Both sides stand for unity and cooperation of the international community, oppose hegemonism and power politics, adhere to true multilateralism, and promote humanity's common values of peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom," it said. Pakistan and China

agreed to actively promote the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Industrial Cooperation to support the industrialization, and encourage Chinese companies to set up manufacturing facilities in Pakistan. The two sides reiterated that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was an open and inclusive platform for win-win cooperation. The corridor welcomed third parties to benefit from investments in CPEC cooperation priority areas such as industry, agriculture, ICT, science and technology. During the visit, Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar met President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang and Li Xi, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Secretary of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. In a warm and cordial atmosphere, leaders of the two countries had in-depth exchanges of views and reached extensive consensus on strengthening the China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, practical cooperation in various areas, and international and regional issues of mutual interest. The two sides reaffirmed that mutual trust remains at the core of China-Pakistan relationship. The two sides

agreed that China and Pakistan are All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partners and iron brothers, friendship between the two countries is time-tested and unbreakable. The Chinese side reiterated that the China-Pakistan relationship was a priority in its foreign relations. The Pakistani side underscored that the Pakistan-China relationship was the cornerstone of its foreign policy. The two sides will continue to view the relationship between China and Pakistan from a strategic and long-term perspective, move forward together on the path of development, and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan Community with a Shared Future in the new era. The two sides reaffirmed their support for each other on issues concerning their respective core interests and major concerns. The Pakistani side reaffirmed its firm commitment to the One-China Principle and that Taiwan was an inalienable part of China's territory, and Pakistan firmly supported the Chinese government's efforts to achieve national reunification, and opposes any form of Taiwan independence. Pakistan firmly supports China on issues concerning the South China Sea, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Xizang.

(Continued on Back Page)

Nawaz reaches Dubai ahead of Pakistan return

DUBAI (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif reached Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), ahead of his much-anticipated return to Pakistan. Nawaz, who has been in self-imposed exile since 2019, left for London in the middle of his seven-year jail term on medical grounds. The elder will leave for Pakistan via Dubai on Oct 21. Nawaz will be meeting a selected group of people during his two-day stay in Dubai. The former premier will reach Islamabad on Saturday afternoon and will be accompanied by around 150 people on his return to Pakistan in a chartered plane. Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) has decided to hire a private jet to bring the party supreme

mo Nawaz Sharif to the country on October 21, sources said. Sources disclosed that the PML-N leaders contacted a private aviation company to hire a private jet for Nawaz Sharif. The political party sought chartered plane service from a private company from Dubai to Islamabad. Moreover, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has also been contacted to grant permission for the private jet route, sources added. It was also learnt that PML-N has also acquired a private company's services to shower flower petals at the party's rally at the Minar-e-Pakistan following the return of Sharif. It emerged that the Cessna plane would be used for showering flower petals on the PML-N's rally venue

and other parts of the city. The CAA also issued a notification for using the private jet for showering petals on the city at 3:30 pm. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Thursday granted protective bail to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif in Avenfield and Al-Azizia cases until Oct 24. The former premier had approached the IHC, seeking court's restraining order from arrest as he could approach the court. The IHC announced the verdict yesterday, restraining the authorities from arresting Sharif on his return to the country on Saturday (October 21). Meanwhile, an accountability court also suspended permanent warrant of former PM Nawaz Sharif in Toshakhana case.



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Children Hospital adds 36 beds in emergency ward on CM's order

LAHORE (APP): Responding swiftly, 36 beds were promptly added within 48 hours on the ground floor of the Children's Hospital, effectively augmenting pediatric treatment capacity and efficiently managing the influx of patients.

Late at night, Chief Minister personally inspected the medical emergency section on the ground floor, the newly established baby ward on the first floor, and the emergency section still under construction.

In line with the Chief Minister's directives, the existing space within the medical emergency was optimised to accommodate the additional beds. Expressing his satisfaction at the immediate implementation of this initiative, CM Mohsin Naqvi announced plans to further increase the emergency bed capacity to 150.

During his visit, the chief minister engaged with the children receiving treatment and sought feedback from their mothers regarding the facilities provided. He also provided specific instructions to the hospital management and medical staff, emphasising the paramount importance of providing the best possible care for the children. In the newly established baby ward, a concerned mother raised a grievance regarding a delayed MRI procedure by four days. Responding promptly, Mohsin Naqvi directed the Deputy Medical Superintendent (DMS) and attending doctor to expedite the MRI for the child.

Expressing disappointment at the high patient-to-bed ratio and subpar sanitation in the new baby ward, he issued directives for better bed management and an immediate improvement in

sanitation arrangements.

Inspecting the ongoing construction in the emergency section, CM Mohsin Naqvi urged for an acceleration of construction activities and emphasised the need to maintain a comprehensive record of AC units, furniture, and other items removed during the renovation.

The CM instructed the hospital administration to upgrade the doctors' rooms and to compile a comprehensive list of items. Provincial Minister Bilal Afzal, Inspector General of Police, and Secretary of Communication and works were also present during the visit. Later, during his visit to Samanabad police station, Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi conducted a thorough examination of the station's records and various departments. He engaged with the policemen, inquire

ing about their concerns and promptly ordered the immediate registration of an FIR on a petitioner's request.

CM Naqvi reiterated a zero-tolerance policy towards delayed FIR registration and personally reviewed cases of detainees in custody. He directed a re-evaluation of a murder case based on a request from the accused, with specific instructions to the Capital City Police Officer (CCPO).

Additionally, CM Mohsin Naqvi emphasised the need for an expeditious improvement in the condition of Samanabad police station, assuring that funds have been allocated for station upgrades, and work will commence shortly. Provincial Information Minister Amir Mir, Inspector General of Police, and CCPO Lahore were also present during the visit.



KARACHI: Ambassador of Japan Mitsuhiro along with the delegation of WADA calls on Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori at Governor House. —APP Photo

Sindh anti-corruption dept transfers 136 cases to NAB

KARACHI (INP): Sindh's anti-corruption department on Friday transferred 136 cases to the National Accountability Bureau after the NAB amendments were nullified by the Supreme Court.

In a majority 2-1 verdict, the top court approved the PTI chief's petition challenging amendments made to the country's accountability laws during the tenure of the previous Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government.

The top court also restored graft cases against public office holders that were closed down

following the amendments to NAB laws.

As per details, the Dawood University corruption case, Works and Services' XEN corruption case, education, revenue, irrigation, livestock and other references have been transferred to NAB.

It is to be noted that the caretaker federal government has challenged the Supreme Court's (SC) September 15 verdict, annulling the amendments made to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

NAB recovers 600 million from Arain City Management through plea bargain

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has successfully recovered Rs 600 million from the management of Arain City Fateh Jang Rawalpindi through a plea bargain, and this amount will soon be distributed among the victims.

The NAB spokesperson stated that Accountability Court Number 1 granted approval for the plea bargain. According to the records maintained by NAB, there are 1,019 victims in Arain City Fateh Jang Rawalpindi case.

He urged the victims to get in touch with NAB Rawalpindi to initiate the process of reclaiming the stolen amount. The Arain City Administration launched a housing society in Fateh Jang 18 years ago without obtaining the necessary NOC and collected a significant sum of money from the public. However, it failed to provide ownership of plot to any of the buyers.

KPIC, PIC vow to collaborate in RTI implementation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa information Commission (KPIC) and Pakistan Information Commission (PIC) Islamabad vow to collaborate in Right to Information (RTI) implementation in the true spirit.

As the Chief Information Commissioner, KPIC, Mrs. Farah Hamid Khan called on Chief Information Commissioner, PIC, Mr. Shoaib Ahmad Siddique here at Islamabad.

Both the commissioners discussed the achievements made and challenges confronted by both the information commissions. Farah Hamid Khan said that political will is mandatory for the implementation of the RTI law



2013, when the government was interested in the implementation of this law, the KPIC was considered as an ideal organization.

"More than 1700 complaints are pending in KPIC due to vacant posts of the information commissioner. More than 24 thousand peo

ple in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have practiced RTI law, 13 thousand of which have received information directly from the government department.

In contrast, more than 10 thousand citizens have filed complaints to KPIC," Mrs. Farah Hamid Khan said. She further added "The Commission on these complaints has passed more than 8 thousand orders/directions and ensured the provision of the information to the citizen."

In the meeting both the chief information commissioners exchanged the documents and discussed future plan of RTI implementation in their respective domains and stressed on collaboration to find solutions of the future challenges.

Minister orders crackdown on substandard beauty products

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare Dr. Jamal Nasir has ordered a crackdown on those producing and trading substandard beauty products in the province.

He issued directives during a review meeting with district drug quality control boards' secretaries on Friday. He ordered a crackdown on unauthorised individuals administering beauty injections, stressing the use of only Drug Regulatory Authority-approved injections for beauty and skincare. Dr. Jamal highlighted that only qualified skin specialists and surgeons should administer these injections, and ordered strict action

against unqualified individuals violating the rules.

Additionally, he addressed the issue of substandard beauty creams, which could pose serious health risks, including cancer. He said that stringent policies would be implemented to regulate non-standard cosmetics and beauty creams. Standard operating procedures for cosmetic cream preparation would be established, and licences would be issued to cosmetic cream manufacturers.

Dr. Jamal Nasir emphasised the importance of hepatitis screening for all beauty parlour and hair salon employees to ensure public safety. He also called for an urgent inquiry

into suspension of 11 drug inspectors related to Avastin injections, reaffirming the government's commitment to transparency and accountability.

The minister declared a zero-tolerance policy on corruption within the

Health Department and warned against any wrongdoing. He denounced production, sale or facilitation of counterfeit drugs and emphasised the critical role of drug inspectors in safeguarding the public health.

SUIT NOTICE

In the court Miss Ambreen Navid Judge Banking Court-1 Peshawar Federal Judicial Complex, Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar Case No: 32/1 of 2023 Date of hearing: 18-11-2023 Suit for the recovery of Rs.2,956,922/- Bank Alfalah Limited (Consumer Finance centre) Lamssy Arcade, Fakhre-e-Alam road, Peshawar Cantt: Vs Ihsanullah. Notice Versus:- Ihsanullah son of Syed Sultan, House No.1616, Bagh korona, Opposite Railway Station Takhtibhai. Office Add: Apply Canada, Suit No. 35-36, upper ground omer shopping Plaza opposite GPG college Mardan. Where as the plaintiff bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of Rs.2,956,922/- Against you under section 10(2) of the Financial Institution (Recovery of Finance) Ordinance 2001, you are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/publication of the notice in the newspapers. Failing which an ex parte decree shall be passed in favour of the plaintiff Bank with costs. Issued today on 13-10-2023 under my signature and seal of the Court.

Registrar, Banking Court-1 Peshawar

SUIT NOTICE

In the court Miss Ambreen Navid Judge Banking Court-1 Peshawar Federal Judicial Complex, Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar Case No: 101/1 of 2023 Date of hearing: 27-11-2023 Suit for the recovery of Rs.363,367/- Habib Bank Limited Through Manager Charsadda branch, Charsadda. Vs: Mst: Seema. Notice Versus:- Mst Seema wife of Gul Khan R/o:- Mohallah Haleem abad, Utmanzai, Tehsil and Distt: Charsadda. Where as the plaintiff bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of Rs.363,367/- Against you under section 10(2) of the Financial Institution (Recovery of Finance) Ordinance 2001, you are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/publication of the notice in the newspapers. Failing which an ex parte decree shall be passed in favour of the plaintiff Bank with costs. Issued today on 14-10-2023 under my signature and seal of the Court.

Registrar, Banking Court-1 Peshawar

SUIT NOTICE

In the court Miss Ambreen Navid Judge Banking Court-1 Peshawar Federal Judicial Complex, Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar Case No: 35/1 of 2023 Date of hearing: 18-11-2023 Suit for the recovery of Rs.156,504/- Bank Alfalah Limited (Consumer Finance centre) Lamssy Arcade, Fakhre-e-Alam road, Peshawar Cantt: Vs Shafqat Azam. Notice Versus:- Shafqat Azam son of Muhammad Azam Khan, R/o:- House No.160, Street No.13, Phase 6, Sector F9, Hayatabad, Peshawar. Office Add:- Assistant Manager, Rehman Medical Institute (RMI), Phase 5, Hayatabad, Peshawar. Where as the plaintiff bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of Rs.156,504/- Against you under section 10(2) of the Financial Institution (Recovery of Finance) Ordinance 2001, you are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/publication of the notice in the newspapers. Failing which an ex parte decree shall be passed in favour of the plaintiff Bank with costs. Issued today on 13-10-2023 under my signature and seal of the Court.

Registrar, Banking Court-1 Peshawar

PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)
INVITATION TO BID

Sealed bids (in accordance with PPRa Rule No. 36(b) are invited by below mentioned office for the following requirements in Pak Rs.:-

Description & Bid No.	Bid Fee (PKR)	Fixed Bid Security (PKR)	Bid Submission Date/Time	Bid Opening Date/Time/Place	Last date for issuance of Bidding Documents	Basis PKR (Price)
Procurement of Qty. 10 CPU Card Make ATME ARM-9 P/o FIDS LED Board Installed at JIAP Karachi HQCAA/1992/216/XXLN	1,500/-	Rs. 84,253/-	09-11-2023 1100 Hours	09-11-2023 1130 Hours Log. Center (S) (Log. ANS Branch)	08-11-2023	F.O.R

Bids may be submitted as per conditions set out in Bidding documents downloadable from the website www.caapakistan.com.pk (visible / downloadable after publication/uploading of Invitation to bid notice) and obtainable physically from the address given below on any working day between 0900 Hrs to 1230 Hrs by paying Bid Fee (non-refundable) through deposit slip in Account No. 6-1-2-20614-714-115525 (Title of account "Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority") in Habib Metropolitan Bank Ltd. Star Gate Branch Karachi and submitting the request letter along with bank deposit slip, proof of Active Taxpayer, GST/NTN certificates of the bidder. No Bidding Documents would be issued on the Bid opening date. Bids must be dropped in I/T drop Box placed at under mentioned office by or before due date as per schedule. **Bids will be opened in the public on the date, time mentioned in I/T form. If it's holiday/off day on the date of opening, the bid will be opened on next working day at the same time and place.**

Note: All bidders downloading the bidding document from CAA website shall immediately inform PCAA through Intimation letter (along with proof of active taxpayer list [ATL for sales tax and income tax] of FBR) at the address below OR on email: sajid.noor@caapakistan.com.pk, for inclusion in subsequent communication. PCAA will not be responsible for any lack of communication or non-receipt of information/Intimation letter by bidders due to ignorance / violation of this instruction.

Time period for performance of contract: Till the satisfactory completion of contract and warranty period.

PCAA reserves the right to accept/reject any or all bids due to cogent reasons which will be communicated to bidders on request. This advertisement is also available on PCAA website www.ppra.org.pk and CAA website www.caapakistan.com.pk.

Warning: Any financial instrument submitted by bidder, if found fake or got dishonored at any stage would result in blacklisting and legal action as per law.

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Logistics Center (South), Hqs Civil Aviation Authority,
JIAP Karachi Pakistan Tel: 021-99072265, 021-99072261 Fax: 021-99242675
PID(K)#1212/23

Poliovirus confirmed in 4 environmental samples

ISLAMABAD (APP): Poliovirus has been confirmed in the environmental samples of four districts of the country. According to the spokesperson of the Ministry of Health, these samples were confirmed from cities including Karachi, Rawalpindi, Chaman, and Peshawar.

The genetic analysis revealed that the virus found in all the samples belonged to the poliovirus cluster in Afghanistan. Caretaker Minister for Health, Dr Nadeem Jan, said that 43 positive environmental samples had been reported in the country, which was very worrying.

He added that Pakistan had the world's most sensitive polio surveillance system, as rapid confirmation of the virus in environmental samples demonstrated that the system was working efficiently.

The presence of viruses in the environment was a threat to every child, Dr Nadeem Jan said. He said the crippling disease was incurable and that the only vaccine provided lifelong protection to children.

"We have organized many polio campaigns this year," he said, adding in November, in the areas where the virus was present, the children would be vaccinated through a campaign. He said parents must give polio drops to children in every campaign.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Only those persons or firms registered with Directorate General Mines & Minerals Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as Minor Minerals Contractors can participate in auction. Interested parties can register themselves in the Directorate General Mines & Minerals Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The registered parties / individuals shall submit application form with application fee of **Rs.10,000/-** (Ten thousand only) non-refundable alongwith 2% Sales Tax under Second Schedule (S.No. 16) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sales Tax on Service Act, 2022 on any working day at least three (03) days before the auction. Last date for submission of application form is **10/11/2023**.
- Blacklisted / Defaulter persons or those persons who are not registered with Directorate General Mines & Minerals are not allowed to participate in the auction.
- The interested parties can visit and check the advertised areas before auction. The sketches of the 27 areas are available for the interested parties in the office of Assistant Director (Tech) Minerals Department Kark.
- Call deposit shall be deposited under account No. **0066-2008140092** and application fee under account No. **0066-2008209319** in any branch of Bank of Khyber.
- The registered applicants / parties shall also submit attested copies of CNIC, income tax registration certificate (NTN) and partnership deed/article / memorandum of association along with evidence of paid up capital (if applicant is partnership firm/company).
- The successful bidder shall deposit 1/4th of the total bid money as security within three days from the date of auction, otherwise, call deposit shall be forfeited in favour of the Government and the bid of second highest bidder shall be considered as highest bid, subject to condition that the difference between the first and the second highest bids is not more than 10 percent of the highest bid.
- The successful bidder shall demarcate his leased area within fifteen days from the issuance of Allotment Letter on his own expenses.
- The successful bidder shall be bound to pay Excise duty to Commissionerate of Mines or its approved excise duty collection contractor on government notified rates.
- The successful bidder betre issuance of allotment letter shall be bound to deposit withholding tax under Rule-236-A of ITO2011 with Income Tax Department and Professional Tax as per rules to the Excise & Taxation Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The successful bidder will be bound to pay surface rent to the land owner under The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines & Minerals Act, 2017.
- The successful bidder shall be responsible to work in leased area strictly in accordance with the provisions of The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines & Minerals Act, 2017.
- The successful bidder shall be bound to use only verified challans for transportation of minor minerals duly verified by the concerned Assistant Director. Transportation without a verified transit challan shall be considered as un-authorized transportation and action under section-56 of the ibid Act shall be initiated against the lessee as well as other offenders.
- The competent authority reserves the right to accept or reject any bid with cogent reason.
- In case if party is interested in more than one areas, separate application be submitted for each area.
- Other Section of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Act, 2017 shall apply.
- Other information in this regards can be obtained from the office of undersigned during office time i.e. **09:00 AM to 05:00 PM** on any working day.

INF(P)#2586/23 **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (Tech) Minerals Development, Karak**



Recovered Rs2.5b, continue fearless mafia crackdown

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to make Peshawar, the provincial capital, as load-shedding free model city after making of Mardan district a load-shedding free model city. A plan has been drawn up to speed up the recovery of dues from defaulting electricity consumers and to stoppage the misuse of electricity in Peshawar city. Necessary instructions have been issued to the district administration, police officials and PESCO operational teams across the province. It has also been decided to speed up the process of installing meters in the areas deprived of the facility of electricity meters and to increase the recovery

targets from the defaulting electricity consumers of all feeders.

In this regard, the fourth meeting of the Provincial Task Force for Energy was held under the chairmanship of Additional Chief Secretary Finance & Tribal Affairs Mohammad Abid Majeed, Secretary Energy & Power Nisar Ahmed Khan, all Divisional Commissioners, Regional Police Officers, Chief Executive PESCO, Deputy Secretary Industry Maqbool Hussain were also attended the meeting.

It was told in the meeting that in a short period of one and a half month, the provincial task force has so far recovered more than Rs. two and a half billion from the bill paying consumers, and more than Rs. 28 thou-

sand illegal connections have been disconnected by imposing fines. More than 17,000 raids were conducted in different areas, cases were registered against 10,000 people and 650 accused were arrested.

The head of provincial task force, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Abid Majeed, expressed his satisfaction with the measures taken for the recovery of dues and stopping of electricity theft in Mardan district, and Mardan city had been declared as free from load shedding. He congratulated to all stakeholders of task force on this achievement.

He further said that on the instructions of the caretaker chief minister of KP and chief secretary, work has been started on making

Peshawar district a load-shedding free city. He issued necessary instructions to achieve the set target by forming teams to Peshawar through PESCO chief, police officials along with the commissioner.

The task force chief directed PESCO chief to intensify the campaign against power theft in illegal housing societies and industrial areas so that the big fish can be caught as a lesson.

He urged all the officers to speed up operations as fearless against mafia so as to remove the impression among the public that only poor electricity consumers are being operated. He paid tribute to all the stakeholders involved in the provincial task force for their excellent performance and coordination on the national issue.



PESHAWAR: Federal Secretary Economic Division Dr. Kazim Niaz meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan. Chief Secretary KP and Representative of ADB in Pakistan also present on occasion.

Fake engine oil recovered

PESHAWAR (APP): Action of the district administration, 3000 liters of fake engine oil was found, with six people were arrested here on Friday, a spokesperson of the district administration told media men.

He said that action was taken in Haji Camp, three godowns have been sealed and the accused were packing fake engine oil in famous brand packaging.

Spokesperson of the district administration disclosed that packing material, stickers, empty gallons and machinery have been taken into custody and legal action will be taken against the arrested persons.

Progress on foreign funded projects discussed

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Secretary Economic Affairs Division, Dr. Kazim Niaz and Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary on Friday jointly a meeting to review progress on foreign-funded projects in the province.

The participants received a detailed briefing on progress of foreign-funded projects and related matters. It was emphasized that ongoing projects should be expedited and timely execution of pipeline projects should be ensured.

The meeting reviewed

27 foreign-funded projects related to different sectors in the province of which 10 were funded by World Bank (WB) and 13 by Asian Development Bank (ADB) and one by IFAD.

Secretary Economic Affairs highlighted federal government's readiness to facilitate these projects and stressed that timely completion of the same would benefit local population.

The Chief Secretary directed administrative secretaries and relevant officials to regularly review the progress on projects in their respective departments. He

added that proactive approach would help identify and resolve any bottlenecks that could hinder the smooth implementation of important projects.

The Chief Secretary acknowledged that these projects would play a key role in improving health-care, education, infrastructure and enhancing climate resilience in Pakistan.

Additional Chief Secretary, WB and ADB representatives, administrative secretaries of line departments, project directors, and other relevant officials were in attendance.



PESHAWAR: Provincial present of Awami National Party Aimal Wali Khan addressing a public gathering. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

SPO, SBBWU collaborate to spotlight rural women's role

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a resounding success, the Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO), Peshawar, in collaboration with Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University (SBBWU), hosted a significant event at Eleanor Roosevelt Corner Peshawar, focusing on the pivotal role of rural women in climate change resilience.

The guest of honour Prof. Dr. Hasnain Shaheed Soharwardi, Chairman Department of International Relations, University of Peshawar gave an enlightening talk on the pivotal role of women in climate change resilience. Dr. Soharwardi reiterated that global warming is a challenge affecting not only Pakistan but the entire world. He urged all atten-

dees to recognize their role in mitigating climate change's impacts and emphasized the importance of immediate action. Students engaged in discussions and activities centered on their success stories being from rural backgrounds and making it to the mainstream through resilience and commitment.

The Chief Guest Mr. Afsar Khan, Deputy Director EPA was appreciative about the collaborative effort between SPO and SBBWU he emphasized that not only it increased awareness about the crucial role of rural women but is also empowering students with enriched knowledge for effective climate action.

These vital platforms foster knowledge exchange and driving climate action, contributing to sustainable

development in the region.

Prof. Dr. Safia Ahmad (T.I), Vice Chancellor of SBBWU, commended the efforts of Ms. Tashfeen Zia, Deputy Registrar of Affiliation & Monitoring Section, Dr. Hamida Bibi, Asst. Professor and Uncharged of the Department of History and Pakistan Studies along with her faculty and Ms. Sania Siraj, Lecturer, Department of Art and Design for organizing this insightful event.

The event concluded on a high note with the distribution of certificates and shields to the participating students and organizers. These certificates symbolize the commitment and active engagement of the students in understanding and addressing the critical issues of Climate change resilience.

Bail plea of ex-MNA confirmed

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: District and Session Judge (D&SJ) Peshawar Ishfaq Taj confirmed interim bail plea of former Member National Assembly (MNA) Gul Dad Khan in recruitment against the law in Department of Education, on Friday.

D&SJ Peshawar Ishfaq Taj ordered Anti-Corruption for submission of record in the case.

According to prosecution, Anti-Corruption had registered case against former MNA Bajaur Gul Dad Khan for recruitment of class-IV employees in Department of Education which had caused losses to finance's department.

The counsel Muhammad Adil advocate argued that for confirmation of bail plea as former MNA is contesting the allegation before court of law.

D&SJ Peshawar Ishfaq Taj granted bail to former MNA Gul Dad Khan till 31st October and ordered Anti-corruption to submit record in this regard after arguments.

PR employees stage protest

PESHAWAR (APP): The Railways Employees in Peshawar staged a protest besides sitting up for a hunger strike camp in front of Press Club on Friday.

Protest and hunger strike camp of railway employees in favor of their demands as the employees are waiting for the salaries and pension. The employees in a protest wore black bands as well. The employees have locked their mouths as a sign of hunger strike.

Salary should be issued from AGPR, Railway employees demanded. In the name of reforms in pension rules, the exploitation of employees should be stopped, Railway employees said.

IPC playing effective role for national harmony: Masood Ahmed

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretary Inter-Provincial Coordination Masood Ahmed has said that his department has developed ideal coordination with the federal and provincial governments and due to close support from the federation and other units, long-standing problems being resolved apart from the economic issues of the province.

"Economic and security issues at national level have also been successfully progressed through this forum", he added. He said this while expressing his views on the performance of the Inter-provincial Coordination (IPC) department KP at the program 'Studio 92' of Pakhtunkhwa Radio Peshawar here on Friday. Journalist Hasnain Malik hosted the program while Ghulam Hussain Ghazi, Station Director of Pakhtunkhwa Radio was also present on this occasion.

Masood Ahmed said the IPC department was working effectively for provincial harmony and national unity. This platform, he maintained, is actively promoting coordinated efforts to bring provinces closer together and create liaison among provinces for resource acquisition and proper utilization. He said that his department is fostering effective national unity through better coordination and communication between provinces besides resolving bilateral disputes. This resulted in participatory and consultative deci-

sions between the provinces and the federal government, he added.

To a question, the secretary IPC department said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inter-Provincial Coordination Department was established in 2007.

Earlier, no such body formally existed, but at the provincial level a separate section in the Establishment Department looked after the affairs of the Council of Common Interests and Inter-Provincial Liaison. Similarly, he said, different departments used to interact with other provincial and federal institutions on their own. He said that after the 18th constitutional amendment, the importance and essentiality of the inter-provincial coordination department has increased manifold because close relations with other federation units was the need of the hour for better governance, effective coordination, cooperation and achieving national goals.

To another question

regarding Pakhtunkhwa Radio Network, Secretary IPC said that the importance of Pakhtunkhwa Radio was in its place for presenting the soft image of KP government. He said that after the announcement of radio fee in electricity bills, the IPC department did not have its details at present, however, if the Information and PR Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wanted to raise any point of its interest in this regard to CCI or CIPCC, then the IPC will obviously provide full support in this regard till achievement of the goal.

Regarding the Council of Common Interest (CCI), he said that the CCI has been established under Article 153. It is the highest forum for reconciliation and communication between the provinces and the federal government for dispute resolution. He said the CCI formulates the policies provided in Part II of Article 54 of the Federal Legislative List. He said

the CCI rules are framed in 2010, henceforth it worked the best. Regarding the performance of the IPC in CCI and IPCC, the Secretary said that the CCI in its 41st session on the basis of AGN Qazi Committee for the year 2016-20, the recommendations of the inter-provincial coordination department have been approved for the payment of 638.662 billion rupees to KP, which was a long-standing demand of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

However, there is still a need for adequate steps to be taken by the Federation to ensure the implementation of the above decision of CCI.

He revealed that in the 43rd meeting of CCI, alternative arrangements were approved for exploitation of oil and gas reserves in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which saved KPOGCL from wasting billions of rupees. Our tireless efforts in this regard were continued and more successes were expected, he concluded.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary KP Nadeem Aslam Choudhry and Caretaker Provincial Minister Barrister Feroz Jamal Kakakhel presiding over a meeting.

Youth must equip with digital & info technology

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A prominent trader's representative and Tajeer Insaf Peshawar president Shahid Khan stressed on importance of digital media and argued for equipping youth with the Information Technology, on Friday.

This he said while addressing media personnel during Video Journalist Forum training workshop held at Peshawar press club.

He added that Information Technology had changed global dynamics in every sphere of life.

The traders stressed that Pakistan must equip young generation with digital and information technology for competing with demands of global market.



He claimed that unfortunately Pakistan potential in this regard didn't utilized properly.

He urged government for provision of relief to traders because terrorism, Covid-19, inflation and load shedding as well as

inflated electricity prices had already impacted businesses in the province.

He added that relief will ensure creation employment opportunities in the country because traders play role of backbone in national economy.

Chairman ATP calls for nurturing politics on principles basis instead of personalities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) chairman Muhammad Faiq Shah emphasized there should be nurtured politics on the basis of principles instead of personalities.

Chairing a meeting here at the party's central office on Friday, Shah noted the leadership deficit has dented the democracy, democratic norms/culture and foundation of the country.

He condemned instigating the people for welcoming a party head.

The ATP chairman said people don't have come concerned with who is coming and who is going but they require facilities, resolution of issues and ease of difficulties.

A collective leadership can steer the country out from the prevailing crisis situation, he added.

Faiq said politics-based on personality, heroism and inheritance has trampled democracy, justice system and authority.

He said we must learn the lesson from the past instead of making the coun-

try an experiment site.

Issues would be resolved if the ATP's collective leadership system and strategy could be adopted, Shah said.

He said personality-based politics gave birth to hatreds, biasness and confrontation between the federating units.

The party leader made it clear that the situation will get further worse if all institutions and political parties couldn't be brought under a single system.

Nawaz Sharif, Zardari, Imran Khan, Maulana

Fazlur Rehman and other personalities tied around their ego/personal life, he added.

He said everything has been put at stake for the sake of personality-based politics.

Similarly, he said everything covered up for political survival. Is this democracy?

Had the founding leader Quaid E Azam made a struggle for this kind of democracy?

He said people and institutions must think about it. He said real democracy

can only come from a complete system wherein importance will be given to manifesto, program, road map and ideology.

We should root up the politics-based on personalities so the people can hold rulers and politicians accountable about their manifesto.

He said ATP has brought a workable and revolutionary manifesto in which people will be directly involved and they will get rights, justice and lead the country from progress and prosperity.



PESHAWAR: Traders chanting slogans against Israel during a protest demonstration to show solidarity with Palestinian people.



In brief

Three die as car cylinder explodes F.P. Report

MANSEHRA: The gas cylinder fitted in a car exploded when the vehicle collided with a truck killing three people and injuring another near Panu Interchange on Expressway in Mansehra on Friday. As a result of the fatal smash between the car and the truck, the car suddenly burst into flames due to gas cylinder fitted in it. Three people sitting in the car died on the spot while another sustained injuries. Mansehra medical team provided first aid to the injured and later shifted him to the King Abdullah Hospital. Meanwhile, robbers stole two million rupees cash, jewelry and other valuables from a house during broad day light in village Gandhian, Baffa police station jurisdiction in Mansehra on Friday. According to details, family of Rashid Khan was on visit to house of a relative residing in College Doraha Mansehra to attend an event in connection with death anniversary of his maternal aunt. The robbers taking advantage of absence of family broke opened the locks of the house and took away Rs20,00,000 cash, seven tola gold jewelry, three torches and new bed sheets. After getting information, police visited the scene of crime, collected the evidences and after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

Two critically injured F.P. Report

PABBI: A dental technician named Ziad has been critically injured along with pedestrian in firing opened by unknown gunmen at Pabbi bazaar on Friday morning. According to details, unknown culprits opened dentist Ziad when he was bringing breads from tandoor nearby to the hospital in which a pedestrian named Papu was also critically injured. Both the injured persons were shifted to Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) Peshawar for further treatment. It is worthy to mention that incident was happened over alleged personal enmity.

Bodies of couple found

ATTOCK (INP): Bodies of two including husband and wife were found from a house in village Kamalpur, Rangoo police station jurisdiction in Attock. According to police, unidentified armed men gunned down Shehzada and his wife Samara inside their house. The bodies were shifted to Tehsil Headquarter (THQ) Hospital Hazro for postmortem. The police after registering a case into dual murder have started an investigation.

Three killed in road mishap

JACOBABAD (INP): At least three persons, including two minor girls, were killed and two other were wounded in a road accident in Jacobabad on Thursday night. According to details, the accident occurred in Bhat Garhi area near Jacobabad where two motorcycles collided, killing a woman and two minor girls on the spot and injuring two other persons. Police and rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the dead and injured to Civil Hospital. According to police, the deceased were identified as three-year-old Afshan, five-year-old Khalida and their mother Bano.



LOWER DIR: KP IGP Akhtar Hayat Khan offering dua after inaugurating Command and Control Room. - F.P. photo

132 KV Grid Station formally energized

F.P. Report

HARIPUR: A 132KV Grid Station was formally energized in Hattar Special Economic Zone on Friday to provide uninterrupted power supply to the industrial units of the zone and address the electricity related problem of the investors.

In this connection, an impressive but simple ceremony was held at Hattar Special Economic Zone with KP Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Syed Aamir Abdullah as chief guest on the occasion, who inaugurated the energization of the grid station. Besides, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC), Javed Iqbal Khattak, members of Board of Directors Tayab Swati and Hasan Farid, office bearers of the Hattar Industrial Association were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the participants of the inaugural ceremony, the Provincial Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education (IC&TE), Syed Aamir Abdullah said that the energization of the grid station will help resolve electricity related problems

of the industrial units to maximum level. He reiterated the resolve of the provincial government that it would continue taking such initiatives for the resolution of the general public and investors with the same zeal and enthusiasm in future also.

He went on to say that this endeavour will not be limited to only the development of infrastructure, rather other hurdles including bureaucratic red-tapism will also be removed to resolve problems faced by the investors and general public. The provincial minister said that he had already taken up the issue of the wheel-charges on electricity with the chairman National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) who has assured its resolution of the issue soon.

Syed Aamir Abdullah said that he has a detailed list of the problems of the industrialists of the zone and reiterated his commitment for taking steps for their resolution.

He appreciated the performance and resolve of the management of KP-EZDMC and Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) and said that if they continued working with the same spirit and dedication, then there will be no hurdle in the industri-

al uplift of the province and vowed that he will leave no stone unturned in the resolution of their problems.

Earlier, in his welcome address, the CEO KP-EZDMC, Javed Iqbal Khattak highlighted in details the efforts and achievements of the company for the development of the economic zones to attract domestic and foreign investment.

He said that Hattar Special Economic Zone (HSEZ) is a flagship project of KP-EZDMC along with Rashakai Special Economic Zone. The zone has a total area of 438 acres with 324 acres of leaseable land, whose all plots have already been allotted.

The CEO KP-EZDMC said that seven industrial units have become operational with the investment of Rs.8 billion with six more near commencement of production while more than Rs.60 billion will be invested in the remaining under construction units. He said that the energization of this new Grid Station, Hattar SEZ is poised to become even more attractive destination for businesses seeking to establish their operations, ultimately leading to increased job opportunities and economic growth in the region.

Modern Science and Tech Park will be built on 100 acres

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Mayor Mardan Himayat ullah Mayar while addressing to City Local Council Session said that Modern Science and Technology Park will be built on 100 acres at the cost of Rs3 billion which will not only be a source of recreation but also a center of knowledge and art in the field of modern technology and science for the people of Mardan.

The council meeting was chaired by Babar Khan, and was attended by Members of the council, government officials, and media representatives. Mayor Mardan, while addressing the Council Session stated that the native Afghans are citizens of this country, and they have all the rights under the constitution and the law. They should be granted citizenship under international laws, their migrant parents should also be given citizenship and treated accordingly.

"Afghans here are involved in various businesses and pay taxes regularly. He added and demanded the government of Pakistan to stop the ongoing operations and baseless cases against Afghans.

Mayor Mardan expressed that Palestine is fighting for its freedom, but they are facing state oppression and violations of human rights by Israel. Continuous attacks on children, women, and hospitals, leading to Palestinian casualties, Neither United Nations nor all Muslim countries led any action, remaining silent spectators to this oppression. He mentioned that so far, no benefit has been gained from the Organization of Islamic Council meetings, and no

progress has been made on charters and resolutions related to Palestine from the United Nations to grant Palestinians a separate and free state.

Mayor Mardan condemned the severe oppression and injustice being carried out in Palestine and demanded that, OIC, United Nations, and other countries should play their role and declare a formal ceasefire. According to the United Nations' resolutions, Palestine should be recognized as an independent state.

"By-laws have been enacted in Mardan for the improvement of the public park, which will be implemented soon. He also said that after a significant reduction in the prices of the dollar and petrol, measures should be taken by the local administration to reduce food items and rents". He added

In the meeting, Resolution were unanimously accepted regarding solidarity with Palestine, citizenship for native Afghans, and price reductions. Council members expressed their opinions on the agenda during the meeting. After the meeting, a protest march led by Mayor Mardan Himayat ullah Mayar was carried out to the Commissioner Mardan office, where the agreed resolutions were presented to the Commissioner.

Prominent PTI leader says goodbye to party: President of the Insaf Sports and Culture Wing Faisal Awan has said good bye to PTI. According to details, Faisal Awan, a well-known PTI leader who served as the President of the Insaf Sports and Culture Wing, has

announced his departure from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) after a long 27-year association with the party. He made this announcement during a press conference, addressing a large gathering. Faisal Awan expressed his deep concern about the events that took place on May 9 and stressed that Pakistan and its national institutions should be the top priority for everyone.

He mentioned that he initially joined PTI back in 1996 because he believed in Imran Khan's unique vision for the country. However, over the past decade, he observed increasing chaos in the party's decision-making process, especially regarding the distribution of party tickets. He pointed out that some members joined PTI purely for the allure of power, without any prior loyalty to the party.

Faisal Awan's arrest and subsequent incarceration were consequences of the events on May 9. He expressed his disappointment with PTI's policies and highlighted how the trust and respect for longstanding party workers were slowly fading in favor of newcomers. It's worth noting that PTI had faced allegations, institutional criticism, and corruption accusations during its previous term, which has led to disillusionment among some of its veteran members who are now leaving the party. On another note, a recent notification from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf District Mardan has nominated Haji Saifur Rahman Masood, a well-regarded businessman as General Secretary, in recognition of his dedication to the party.

Blind Association hold 'protection right strike'

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Pakistan Association of Blind (PAB) District Larkana held strike for Protection of Right at Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto Memorial Library in which District Council Larkana Chairman Ejaz Ahmed Laghari, Deputy Mayor Muhammad Amin Sheikh, Chamber of Vice President of Commerce and Industry Abdul Wahid Sheikh, Deputy Director Special Education Larkana Saeed Ahmed Jatoti, President of Pakistan Association of Blind Riaz Hussain Memon were present.

Addressing on this occasion, the speakers said that since our organization Pakistan Association of Blind came into existence, from that day, people who are deprived of light, instead of living on their stomachs. They have proved to be the best citizens by acquiring skills while there are innumerable problems of visually impaired people.

It is sad to say that the elected members of the regions are not interested in solving their problems. The event has been organized to highlight the importance of giving priority to visually impaired people. On this occasion, District Council Chairman Ejaz Ahmed Laghari said that the care of visually impaired persons and special persons is given by Pakistan Peoples Party. It is included in the manifesto of which efforts are being made to solve their problems on party basis. Right-Strike gifts were given to the deprived persons and special persons.

PTA held protests in favor of their demands:

The primary teachers' organization of Larkana district protested against the promotion of senior teachers of all primary schools to the next grade by the Primary Teachers Association (PTA) and the demand of bribes by the education officers from the teachers.

Addressing the demonstration, the leaders of the Primary Teachers Association, Irshad Ali Tunio, Ghulamullah Sangi and others protested that the district officers of the Education Department neglected to promote the senior teachers of all the primary schools of Larkana district to the next grade. By not including them in the seniority list and often neglecting the teachers is a stigma on the education department, while in the seniority list of PST to GST, 60 to 70% names of junior primary teachers have been added under the bogus list.

The most senior teachers who have completed 40 years of service in the education department with B. ED, this is a complete abuse of them, it is no less than cruelty. While it is a legal right for senior primary school teachers to get the next promotion, he demanded Sindh's caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Maqbool Baqir, Education Minister Rana Hussain and Provincial Education Secretary Dr. Shireen Begum to resolve the matter. By ordering an impartial inquiry, the teachers of the senatorial primary schools should be promoted to the next grade so that all the teachers of the district can get rid of the confusion.

IGP inaugurates CCTV, Command and Control Room in Dir

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur inaugurated CCTV command and control room during his visit to Dir lower district, on Friday.

According to details, Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur visited Lower Dir district and police line Timergara, inaugurated the command and control room to ensure the safety of life and property of the police installations and the people of Lower Dir district. Regional Police Officer Malakand Range Muhammad Ali Khan, DPO Lower Dir Ziauddin Ahmed, SPCTD Amjad Khan, SP Investigation Zahoor Ahmed and senior police officers were also present, DPO Lower Dir Ziauddin Ahmed. IGP Akhtar Hayat Khan while giving a briefing to Gandapur regarding CCTV cameras said that 203 CCTV cameras have been installed at different places throughout the district, at all entrances and exits of the district, at busy squares. Cameras have been installed which will be monitored by technical

police officers in the command and control room while the number of CCTV cameras will be increased, he added that the main purpose of the command and control room system is to prevent street crime, terrorism. Dealing with vehicle theft in a timely manner and ensuring the security of police facilities using modern technology and equipment and security monitoring of markets including monitoring of all police stations, checkpoints, roads, squares, and other sensitive places through CCTV cameras.

Crime detection, quick response mechanism and traffic management will be directly monitored through police command and control system, on this occasion he inspected various departments, DPO Lower Dir Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur. And gave a detailed briefing to RPO Muhammad Ali Khan regarding the overall security situation and security of the district. Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan while talking to the media said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police is a brave and self-sacrificing force which has always. He offered his life and

did not hesitate to make any sacrifice for the sake of protecting the life and property of the people. He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police will use all kinds of resources to protect the life and property of the people, policing through modern technology. Innovation is being brought in the quality of police. Earlier, upon the arrival of police line Timergara, the armed forces of Lower Dir police saluted, visited the martyrs' memorial and prayed for the elevation of the police martyrs, on this occasion they also planted a plant.

Fine imposed on shopkeepers: On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner District Dir Lower Fawad Ahmed and under the supervision of District Food Controller District Dir Payin Kashif Ehsan, Riyaz Ahmed (Assistant Food Controller) and Shabbir Ahmed (Food Inspector) visited the shops of various fruit and vegetable vendors in Timergara Bazaar.

A number of fruit and vegetable vendors were fined under the Food Act for exceeding the official price list. Fruit and vegetable vendors will be checked on daily basis and implementation of official price list will be ensured.

Buner marble industry at verge of collapse

F.P. Report

BUNER: Buner Marble Industry facing stress due to inflated electricity and high inflation which has led to closure of 30% factories out of 426 facilities in the district. The industry had provided livelihood to residents of Buner as well as to adjacent districts of Hazara and Malakand divisions.

According to details, as many as 450 factories and 316 marble mines had employed thousands of people at their native area as well as laborers of Shangla and Tor Ghar districts are also working at the facilities in Buner. The unprecedented hike in electricity prices had put marble industry at the verge of collapse which is only facility for employment for residents of Buner as well as underdeveloped districts of Malakand and Hazara divisions.

Moreover, four thousand trucks along with other heavy machinery are operating for mining, transportation and finish products of marbles in the Buner district. The marble ores and mines in Buner comprised of 68% of national reservoirs.

The president Buner

Marble Association Khursheed Khan claimed that 30% marble factories had been closed due to high inflation and unprecedented hike in electricity cost. He added that marble industry of Buner contributing Rs470 million in royalty as well as paying Rs420 million for electricity bills and Rs50 million is Excise Duty in this regard.

The president argued competent authorities for redressal of problems faced by marble industry otherwise thousands of workers will lose their livelihood in this high inflated situation which will further deepen unemployment crisis. He added that it will also make lost to provincial exchequer as Buner Marble Industry contributing Rs470 million in royalty.

A laborer named Munir Rehman said that closure of factories will face workers with starvation because they have no other skill to obtain their livelihood as he working since 2017 in marble industry at Buner. He claimed that workers are engulfed by of unemployment which will them with starvation.

A mechanic Iqbal claimed that they were

installing 10-12 facilities of finish products of marble in Buner annually but from last two year no new factory is established in the district. The added that earlier he was repairing electronic machinery used on daily basis now after weeks they can't obtain job of repairing in this regard.

In nutshell, the collapse of marble industry will affect length and width of Buner district especially and other adjacent districts in particular by starvation as well as unemployment as most of the residents depend upon the industry or obtaining livelihood from aboard. It is high time for competent authorities including federal, provincial governments as well as Industry and Mining departments to secure marble industry from collapse otherwise it impacts will be felt at national and provincial level.

However, a question to be upheld for taught that how much shares of royalty which stand at Rs470 are utilized for socio-economic uplift and human development of Buner because aquatic life, drinking water and infrastructure destroyed by marble industry.



QUETTA: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi in a group photo with Vice Chancellors of private sector universities.

AKF collects Rs 5m for Palestinians in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) established a disaster response center in the Lower Dir district which was inaugurated during a function held here on Friday. The additional assistant commissioner revenue Tariq Khan was chief guest on the occasion. The AKF deputy general secretary Fazal Mahmood, district president Hafeezullah Khaksar, JI district chief Izzul Mulk, Malik Sher Bahadar, advocate Riaz Muhammad and others addressed the function.

They said the central

organization had provided equipment for the center worth Rs 5 million. The Rescue 1122 also provided necessary training to 74 volunteers of the AKF. The speakers said the Al-Khidmat Foundation had been serving the needy and helpless people irrespective of their political affiliation, colour, caste and religion. They said the newly established center would help reduce human and property losses during natural disasters in the district. They said the AKF volunteers had reached Turkey to help the oppressed Palestinians. They said the AKF had signed an

agreement with the government of Turkey and Syria in that regard.

Meanwhile the AKF also set up donation camps for Palestinians in different areas of the district wherein the locals wholeheartedly donated money and even ornaments at some camps. The AKF district president Hafeezullah Khan told this reporter that about Rs 5 million had been collected during the last two days in different parts of the district. He said the AKF donation camps would continue and all the donations would be sent to the Palestinians brothers.



‘Where will sleep come from?’: My struggle as a ‘displaced’ Gaza mother

GAZA STRIP (Agencies): Life during this ongoing war is unpredictable and challenging. Every time I sit down to write this diary, I am interrupted by air raids, news of someone we know losing their life, reports of bombings near our location, or the daily struggle of securing water and an internet connection.

Yesterday, I ventured out for the first time since our displacement to Deir el-Balah to assess the situation and gather information on the conditions of those displaced to the south. I was aware of the inherent risks, given the constant air raids. Both my husband and my brother accompanied me, using the opportunity to buy groceries for our family. As we prepared to leave, many thoughts raced through my mind. I couldn't shake the idea that one of us should stay with our children in case something happened to the other, to ensure their safety.

"Are you ready, Maram?" my husband called out as he waited for me. We began our journey on foot, as it seemed like the safer option and there was minimal traffic on the roads. Turning onto the next street, a massive explosion shook the area, filling me with fear. The worries I had before leaving the house came rushing back, and our family immediately called us, urging us to return. We paused to watch the billowing smoke after the air raid. The street was crowded with people rushing to pick up essentials, but the atmosphere was far from normal. Tension hung in the air as people hurried to finish their errands.

We continued until we reached a market where people were buying essential groceries. The cashier was swarmed with customers and some shelves were already empty. The supermarket owner was diligently taking notes on his stock. As a journalist, it's challenging to talk to people in such circumstances. Everyone was in a hurry - men, women, children. The owner was willing to provide some information about the market, but for the customers, particularly the women, it was more difficult. I noticed a woman entering the market with her children and thought she might offer valuable insights in an interview. I approached, asking her, "Are you displaced, or are you originally from Deir el-Balah?" She replied with a sad smile, "Displaced," and we shook hands, sharing our common experience.

Throughout my journey, I encountered many people with similar stories. Some were hesitant to share, while others used the opportunity to express their thoughts and emotions. People were doing their best to continue with their lives, buying food to survive. At one point, I saw people filling up with water at a nearby mosque. I tried to engage them in conversation, but they were too preoccupied to spare a moment to talk. I, too, was torn between my journalistic role and the need to collect water for my own family.

Later, my husband asked if I was ready to return home. His question reminded me that we are all in the same dire situation, regardless of our professions. Whether doctors, journalists, paramedics, or NGO workers, we are all under attack. A few hours after returning home and while finalising my piece about the current challenges faced by those displaced to the south, devastating news broke about the bombing of al-Ahli Arab hospital, with the death toll surpassing 400. The news left us in deep shock, our



hearts pounding with disbelief. I closed my laptop, leaving the text unfinished.

The overwhelming grief I felt when I heard the news made me realise how unbearable this situation had become for people, and words cannot adequately express the immense pain gripping this coastal enclave. Wiping away my tears and holding my children close, I sought refuge in my sleeping area. As the kids drifted off to sleep, my thoughts remained with those lost in the hospital, "Where will sleep come from?"

Meanwhile, the wing of a medical facility is not where most love stories begin. But that's why al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza - the oldest one in the besieged enclave - was more than just a hospital, says Hammam Farah. The facility, with a name that means "The People's Arab Hospital" in Arabic, is where Farah's lineage came together. His grandfather, Elias Farah, began working at the hospital when he was just 17.

He started as a server in the cafeteria during the British Mandate of Palestine more than 80 years ago and later became a procurement manager, responsible for buying food, medication and supplies. One day, he spotted the woman who would soon become Farah's grandmother, known to many as Lady Sura.

Lady Sura was a principal at the nearby Beach B Elementary school in the UNWRA-run Al Shati refugee camp and visited the hospital often. There, their courtship began. Now the hospital stands decimated, the site of carnage following a bombing that killed at least 500 people, its memories and stories perishing. "The hospital was a community," Farah told Al Jazeera. Some 40 years after his grandparents met in its corridors, in 1983, Farah himself was born in that hospital. And so was his sister. While he has not been able to visit Gaza in 23 years, the psychotherapist now based in Toronto, Canada, cherishes childhood memories from there. His grandfather often took him to the hospital during his shifts. "There were children playing about, a ping-pong table, it was a community centre, diners were held there," Farah listed nostalgically. The hospital, founded in 1882 and run by the Anglican Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, also had a church, a tennis court - where Farah's grandfather often played - and a large courtyard. Now, massacred bodies lay in heaps, the hospital damaged. Upon hearing news of the blast, which Israel has blamed on a failed rocket launch by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group, Farah panicked.

He still has family back in Gaza, relatives who have been sheltering in a church in the vicinity of the hospi-

tal. Still, being so close to the destruction, they have witnessed the carnage, he said. "They can smell the burning bodies," Farah said. His family in the Gaza Strip - aunts, uncles, cousins and other distant relatives - have been surviving on canned tuna and dried pasta, as food and other supplies are fast running out, with Israeli forces preventing humanitarian aid from coming in. A day earlier, Farah's mother spoke to one of his aunts there.

"She's not normal," his mom told him. All of his relatives' homes were destroyed in the near-two weeks of Israeli bombardment. Now he and his mother are contemplating how they may relocate their family once - and if - they are able to leave Gaza. Since Israel retaliated for Hamas's attack 13 days ago, the mental health professional has been unable to do much else besides work. "My eyes are glued to my phone or TV," he said, adding that his entire schedule is put on hold as he awaits news from his relatives every day. Farah last visited Gaza in the year 2000, not knowing it would be his last visit. His family lived in the United Arab Emirates for many years and would make trips there every summer. He was always bewildered by his relatives' reactions when he and his family would leave at the end of the summer.

"There would be traumatic wailing and crying, as if it would be the last time we saw each other," Farah said. In 2000, he was just 17 and thought he would return the following summer like he always did. Farah "freaked out," he said, as he desperately tried to get in touch with them, only calming down when he learned they had not been harmed by the blast. But that chance never came. The blockade Israel imposed on Gaza in 2007 has made it challenging to go back.

Each year since, Farah hoped to visit, especially to see his grandparents, but still that chance never came. "They started to pass away, one by one," he said. Now, his memories of them are forever imprinted in his brain. His grandmother Sura, in particular, continues to profoundly impact Farah's Palestinian identity. And impactful she was: The school for refugee children she worked at was known as "The School of Lady Sura," he said. "While others took up arms to resist the Israeli occupation of Gaza after 1967, Lady Sura picked up her principal's yardstick and taught a generation of refugees their basic self-respect," Farah wrote in an Instagram post shortly after her passing in 2019. In a posthumous address to his grandmother, he wrote: "It will be easier to see you in the afterlife than it has been in Gaza."

Russia detains journalist with dual Russian and US citizenship

MOSCOW (Agencies): Russia has detained a Russian-American journalist at a government-funded US media outlet for failing to register as a "foreign agent" when she entered the country during a family emergency. The outlet Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) said in a statement that Alsu Kurmasheva, an editor and a dual citizen of Russia and the United States, faces up to five years in prison.

"Alsu is a highly respected colleague, devoted wife, and dedicated mother to two children," said RFE/RL acting President Jeffrey Gedmin in a dual statement with the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a press freedom group. "She needs to be released so she can return to her family

immediately." US State Department spokesman Matt Miller told reporters that the arrest "appears to be another case of the Russian government harassing US citizens". "We have not been officially notified by the government of Russia about this arrest," he said. Russia has tightened controls over the media following its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, designating many reporters as "foreign agents".

Kurmasheva, who works for RFE/RL's Tatar-Bashkir Service, is the second US reporter to be detained by Russia this year, after Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich was arrested in March on espionage charges. Press freedom groups and the US govern-

ment have strongly criticised such detentions as a form of stifling dissent. CPJ called the charges against Kurmasheva "spurious" in its statement with RFE/RL. "CPJ is deeply concerned by the detention of US-Russian journalist Alsu Kurmasheva on spurious criminal charges and calls on Russian authorities to release her immediately and drop all charges against her," said Gulnoza Said, CPJ's Europe and Central Asia programme coordinator.

Tatar-Inform, a state-held news agency in the Tatarstan republic, has reported that Kurmasheva is being held in a temporary detention centre. The outlet says that Russian authorities have accused Kurmasheva of collecting information on the Russian

military to pass along to foreign sources. Kurmasheva, who lives in Prague, travelled to Russia on May 20 for a family emergency, RFE/RL said. She was stopped at Kazan International Airport on June 2, where officials confiscated her passport and administered a fine for failing to register her US passport with Russian authorities, the outlet said. The editor was awaiting the return of her passports when new charges were announced. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has issued a call for her "prompt and unconditional" release. "Journalists must be left to do their vital work free from pressure, intimidation and reprisals," OHCHR said.

France bestows further honor on former UN ambassador

ATLANTA (AP): France wants the world to know it has not forgotten about Andrew Young. The former mayor of Atlanta, ambassador to the United Nations under President Jimmy Carter and onetime confidant of Martin Luther King Jr. was further honored by France, with Young being promoted to the rank of officer in the country's Legion of Honor.

Laurent Bili, the French ambassador to the United States, bestowed the 91-year-old Young with the new rank, crediting his

work to end racial segregation "and paving the way for a fairer America." Bili also noted Young's advocacy for human rights and efforts to settle a war in what is now Zimbabwe, ending white minority rule there. President Emmanuel Macron promoted Young in recognition of his outstanding contributions to human rights and equality. "Ambassador Young, you are a living legend," Bili said. "Your name is forever inscribed into the history of the American Civil Rights Movement. For decades

now, you have worked to foster peace and justice throughout the world."

France describes the Legion of Honor, founded by Napoleon Bonaparte, as its highest honor, bestowed upon citizens of France and other countries who have served France or upheld its ideals. Award came nearly 40 years after French President Francois Mitterrand initially inducted Young into the order during a visit to Atlanta in 1984, when Mitterrand also placed a wreath at the tomb of Martin Luther King Jr.

Young was mayor at the time, promoting an economic development policy based in part on international ties. "There's been this partnership in democracies that's helped the change the world and make it a global economy that we have today," Young said after he was honored. "That's what made Atlanta work."

Young regaled Bili before the ceremony with how he first met Mitterrand in the late 1950s when Young traveled to France as an employee of the National Council of Churches.

NK to build partnership with Russia

SEOUL (Agencies): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his nation wants to build a "forward-looking" relationship with Russia, state media reported. Kim's remarks came as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visits Pyongyang to meet with Kim and other officials.

North Korea's government wants "to work out a stable, forward-looking, far-reaching plan for the DPRK-Russia relations in the new era," Kim said. Lavrov thanked North Korea on Oct. 18 for its "fundamental, unequivocal support" for Russia's war against Ukraine. Kim Jong Un made a rare international visit to Russia last month, traveling by armored train to meet with Russian dictator Vladimir Putin in the far-eastern Amur Oblast. The visit signaled deepening ties between the two nations, and possibly resulted in a new arms deal. US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Oct. 13 that North Korea had already sent Russia shipments of weapons and ammunition following the talks.

War could spark regional crisis: Lavrov

MOSCOW (Agencies): Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has warned that the conflict in Gaza risks spilling into a regional crisis, saying efforts to pin blame on Iran were adding fuel to the fire, according to Russia's Interfax news agency. The remarks by Russia's top diplomat came days after President Vladimir Putin said he believed no major actors wanted the war between Israel and Hamas to escalate.

This week, Russia proposed amendments to a draft UN resolution that would have called for an "immediate full" ceasefire and ending attacks on civilians, but it was rejected by the Security Council. The final draft, which called only for humanitarian pauses, was vetoed by the United States, with Russia abstaining. Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said the draft had "no clear call for a ceasefire" and would "not help to stop the bloodshed".

Russia has so far taken a careful approach to the latest escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that erupted on October 7, when Hamas fighters launched an unprecedented attack inside Israel that has killed some 1,400 people. Since the attack, about 3,500 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's bombardment of the Gaza Strip. Moscow offered a delayed statement affirming Israel's right to defend itself after Hamas's attack, which also killed at least 16 Russian citizens, but denounced Israel for responding with "cruel methods". "In my view it is unacceptable," said Putin of Israel's air campaign in Gaza. "More than 2 million people live there [in Gaza]. Far from all of them support Hamas by the way, far from all. But all of them have to suffer, including women and children."

Russia, which supports an independent Palestinian state with occupied East Jerusalem as its capital, has not labelled Hamas a "terrorist" group like many Western states. Putin, meanwhile, has over the years maintained close ties with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu despite key foreign policy clashes between the two states, including over the war in Syria. In his first public statement on the crisis on October 10, the Russian president pointed the finger at the United States for playing a "destructive" role saying the conflict is a "vivid example" of Washington's failed policy. "[They] tried to monopolise regulating [the conflict], but was unfortunately unconcerned with finding compromises acceptable for both sides," Putin said, according to the Moscow Times.

Lavrov also said efforts to blame Iran for the war were "provocations" in a likely reference to the US. While the US has not directly blamed Iran for involvement in Hamas's attack, it has said Tehran is "broadly complicit" due to its long-time backing of the Palestinian group. US President Biden has also warned Iran to be "careful" not to escalate the conflict.

‘We will cut out your tongue’: Filipino activists recount kidnap ordeal

MANILA (Agencies): When Jonila Castro and Jhed Tamano were abducted last month while volunteering with fishing communities opposed to reclamation activities in Manila Bay, human rights groups suspected the state was involved. When the security forces claimed the pair had surrendered as communist rebels, their contemporaries believed they had been forced into doing so but were unable to prove it.

At a government-organised news conference, they got their answer. Rather than going along with the official story, Castro, 23, and Tamano, 22, shocked everyone by announcing they had been abducted by military officers who had forced them to surrender. "They were confident we would lie to the public," Castro told Al Jazeera. "The important thing was for the public to know the truth." The two activists filed for a legal protection order after speaking publicly.

In the court filing, they accused military members of forcing them into an SUV, blindfolding them, and subjecting them to eight days of interrogation. Facing death threats from their captors, the two women were often brought to tears and feared for their lives. "I was hoping we could get out alive," Castro said. "But there was a possibility it wasn't going to happen." The military has maintained that Castro and Tamano were not abducted, but kidnapped by the communist New People's Army (NPA) before escaping and surrendering to the military. It filed perjury charges against the two activists. "There is no abduction based on the duo's sworn statement," army spokesperson Col Xerxes Trinidad told Al Jazeera, citing documentation that "they surrendered and sought the assistance of the military for them [to] be reintegrated into mainstream society". The accounts of Castro and Tamano, who spoke to Al Jazeera about their experience, provide a rare insight into the alleged abduction of activists in the Philippines.

At least 18 community organisers and activists have been abducted since President Ferdinand Marcos Jr took office in June 2022. Most of the time, the victims "don't surface, or they parrot the narrative forced upon them by the state", said Dino de Leon, the lawyer for Tamano and Castro. Many activists are pressured into surrendering after being "red-tagged" or falsely branded as rebels affiliated with the NPA, which has been fighting against the government for more than 50 years. Most never dare to speak out against state security forces. "I was really nervous," Tamano recalled, thinking before the news conference. "I knew that it was something that is usually not done." Before they disap-

peared, the activists were volunteering with AKAP Ka Manila Bay in Bataan, about three hours' drive from Manila. The group opposes land reclamation projects in Manila Bay that have stoked concern over their environmental impact and the involvement of Chinese investors.

Marcos said in August he would suspend the reclamation projects pending further environmental review, but ships have continued dredging the bay, Bataan, which lies across the bay from the capital, is a "grey area" where reliable data on land reclamation has not been collected by environmental groups, said Aldrein Silanga, an advocacy officer with the Manila-based environmental NGO Kalikasan PNE. After arriving in Bataan, Castro and Tamano said they discovered several projects that began during coronavirus lockdowns without the knowledge of nearby communities. They even witnessed one village being demolished after residents refused an offer of cash compensation and were forced to leave. They quickly realised they were being watched when they were approached multiple times by a man who photographed them and accused them of being communist rebels. Castro's mother, Rosalie, was visited at her home by men identifying themselves as military officers and asking about her daughter. "Any advocates against the reclamation are being red-tagged," Castro said.

Castro and Tamano were walking to a bus stop on September 2 when they were abducted by armed men wearing face masks, who forced them into an SUV when they tried to run away. At first, the pair were unsure who had abducted them. But one man knew Castro's name and mentioned that her mother was looking for her, leading her to suspect the military. The abductors interrogated the two women in separate rooms, according to the court filing, threatening to use physical violence and to arrest them on charges of rebellion. One told Tamano: "We will cut out your tongue if you do not speak." "I thought they were going to shoot me that night," Castro said. "I was blindfolded. Our hands were tied. I was waiting for a bullet to be shot at me." The pair were kept in a motel in separate rooms, with five to six men in each, and continuously interrogated, according to the court filing.

On the third day, Castro was given a form with the stamp of the 70th Infantry Battalion. One of the abductors showed Castro his graduation picture from the military academy, while another shared a video from an encounter with rebels. "It was really obvious" they were members of the military, Castro said.

Mahsa Amini honoured with EU's top HRs prize

BRUSSELS (Agencies): Mahsa Amini, the 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman whose death in police custody sparked a wave of women's rights protests in Iran, has been awarded the European Union's top human rights prize.

Amini, along with Iran's Women, Life and Freedom movement that emerged in a months-long street protest campaign following her death, received the EU's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, European Parliament President Roberta Metsola announced, honouring them for their defence of "human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Announcing the prize, Metsola said Amini had triggered a "historic" women-led movement in the country and hoped the award would "serve as a tribute to the brave and defiant women, men and young people of Iran" pushing for change.

"The world has heard the chants of 'Women, Life, Liberty'. Three words that have become a rallying cry

for all those standing up for equality, for dignity and for freedom in Iran," Metsola said. Part of Iran's minority Kurdish community, Amini was arrested in Tehran last year by the "morality police" for allegedly not complying with the country's hijab rules. She died in police custody three days later. Amini's family have said she was entirely healthy beforehand and eyewitnesses have said they saw her being beaten while entering a police van. Iranian authorities have denied responsibility, attributing Amini's death to a heart attack.

Her death triggered widespread protests across Iran for nearly three months in 2022, with some women attendees defying the strict headscarf rules and others chanting antigovernment slogans. Solidarity protests spread throughout the world, with demonstrations in Paris, Berlin, Beirut, Istanbul and other major cities. Iranian authorities violently cracked down on the protest movement, killing 500 people and

detaining 22,000, according to rights groups. Tehran has rebuffed calls to open an independent inquiry into the crackdown. "Not one official has been criminally investigated, let alone prosecuted and punished for crimes committed during, and in the aftermath of, the uprising," said Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa in September 2023.

Amini is not the only Iranian woman to draw global attention for her influence on women's rights. Earlier this month, Iranian human rights activist Narges Mohammadi, who is serving a 12-year jail term for her activism, won the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize. "The Norwegian Nobel committee has decided to award the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize to Narges Mohammadi for her fight against the oppression of women in Iran and her fight to promote human rights and freedom for all," the committee said in its announcement.

Niger junta say ousted president tried to escape

ABUJA (BBC): The military government in Niger says it has foiled an attempt by the deposed former President, Mohamed Bazoum, to escape from custody. The former president attempted to flee in the night with his family, cooks and security, a military spokesman said.

There were plans for the group to fly out on helicopters but the plan was foiled, he added. Mr Bazoum has been under house arrest since members of his presidential guard staged a coup in late July.

Niger is a key part of the African region known as the Sahel - a belt of land that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. The area is plagued by jihadists and beset by military regimes. The attempted escape happened, military spokesman Amadou Abdramane said on state television. "The ousted president Mohamed Bazoum and

his family, his two cooks and two security elements, tried to escape from his place of detention," he said. The escape bid failed and "the main actors and some of the accomplices" were arrested, he added. The elaborate plan involved Mr Bazoum getting to a hideout on the outskirts of the capital Niamey, Mr Abdramane said. The group had then planned to fly out on helicopters "belonging to a foreign power" towards Nigeria, he added, denouncing Mr Bazoum's "irresponsible attitude". It is not clear where the former president and the rest of the group are now being held. An investigation has been launched. The Niger military overthrew the democratically elected president in a coup on 26 July.

It mirrored similar military takeovers in neighbouring Burkina Faso and Mali, amid an Islamist insurgency and a growing Russian influence in the wider Sahel

region through its mercenary group Wagner. Mr Bazoum has refused to officially resign. Despite his captivity, he was able to publish an article in The Washington Post stating that he was a hostage and that the coup would have "devastating consequences for our country, our region and the entire world". Soon after Mr Bazoum's overthrow, US President Joe Biden called for him to be "immediately released", and for the "preservation of Niger's hard-earned democracy". That followed the expiration of a deadline by Ecowas, a power bloc of West African states, for the coup leaders to stand down. Its threats of military intervention were not followed through, and the junta continues to ignore demands for the president's freedom. Mr Bazoum's party and family members say he has had no access to running water, electricity or fresh goods.

The Frontier Post

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Leaders’ purblindness or policy of blind trust

CARETAKER Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has termed the Pak-China friendship a heavenly relationship and noted that Pakistan blindly trusted China and Islamabad would not allow anything to undermine its bilateral strategic partnership with Beijing. During a meeting, Prime Minister Kakar told Chinese President Xi Jinping that Pakistan firmly supports the One China policy and would demonstrate its faith through actions, not mere words and would not take an inch back when it comes to Pakistan's ties with China.

The People's Republic of China has convened a successful third Belt and Road Forum (BRF) to mark a decade of the magnificent Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, which advertised Xi's vision around the globe. During his landmark speech to the world leaders at the forum, President Xi put forth a Chinese version of the new world order that not only offers the world nations vast prospects for physical connectivity through the BRI but also presents equal economic and trade opportunities to countries located in the adjoining territories alongside the modern silk route. Because of its unique geostrategic location, geographical proximity and longstanding partnership with Beijing, Pakistan is one of those countries that are the biggest beneficiaries of the Chinese modern economic model. China's Belt and Road Initiative is a well thought and practical solution to the US-led Western political, economic and civilisational module that has become unaffordable and challenging for many nations in the world, as the West has made a mockery of fundamental human rights, democracy and global conventions in pursuit of its strategic objectives worldwide.

Historically, China invited all regional and extra-regional states including the US, the EU and their regional ally India to partner in all economic, trade and technological projects under the Belt and Road Initiative to achieve shared objectives and collective growth. So far Beijing has not offered any extraordinary incentives for Islamabad in respect of the BRI or its subsidiary China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Beijing has lavishly invested in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and the CARs together with several other nations in multiple regions from Mali to Djibouti and Maldives to the Solomon Islands to enhance its core objectives whilst Pakistan is the most crucial nation that acts like a fulcrum/force multiplier in Beijing's strategic economic and military agendas in the region and beyond. Therefore, the purblind Pakistani leaders must have a clear appreciation of their country's worth and a thorough evaluation of other nations' interests so they bargain with the world instead of trading their country for peanuts or pounds in a display of self-blindness or imaginary faith.

Historically, Pakistani leaders mostly failed to identify their national interests and made high hopes from friendly countries that often remained unfulfilled throughout history. Hence, the distasteful wait for the US sixth fleet in 1971 to a potential incursion by the PLA into Kashmir during the Kargil conflict, together with seeking strategic depth in Afghanistan to expect support from Muslim nations against India, all policy assertions were mistaken and the fault of Pakistani Strategists and policymakers, that cost a huge price to our nation in the past decades.

Historically, statesmanship and leadership do not come as a family heirloom in a democratic nation; rather it comes after years-long politics and service to the nation. Similarly, global diplomacy and foreign relations always move on to the core interests of the nation rather than the like, dislike or political affiliation of the ruling elites. Pakistan has suffered unbelievably from wrong priorities of its leadership and misjudgement of its policymakers, who brought about fresh crises after each catastrophe ranging from the partnership in the Cold War to Afghan jihad, and patron ship of the Taliban movement to participation in the global War on Terror (WoT). Currently, an unelected government with limited powers is solely taking long-term policy decisions relating to the national economy, foreign relations, defence and national security and continuously insisting on self-extended rule along with self-imposed blindness. The public urges them to keep enjoying foreign trips on taxpayers' money till their tenure ends but resist muddling into sensitive policy matters without due authority.

A new global order imperative

AFTER the American President, the Anglo-Indian British Prime Minister has reached Tel Aviv to pay a solidarity visit to Israel. While sharing podium with far-right Israeli leader, Rishi called it the darkest hour of the Jewish nation and offered all possible support to the state of Israel. Unfortunately, the British Premier broke all records of arrogance through complete denial of Israel's inhumane bombardment in Gaza together with the recent attack on a hospital that killed several hundreds people in a single moment. Like other western leaders, Rishi Sonak backed Israel's blatant aggression against innocent civilians and warcrimes against humanity in so-called hot pursuit of Paestinians armed groups.

It is heart wrenching for the civilized world that western nations have completely ignored the historical and humanitarian aspect of Israel-Palestinian conflict that is not a terrorism issue but a case of right to self determination under the UN charter that had been categorically recognized and conferred upon by the UN Security Council more than seven decades ago. In fact, successors of Rushi Sonak had sowed the seeds of tussle by creating political disputes in their former colonies in the Indo-Subcontinent, the Middle East and Africa, when they left those territories under extreme political pressure from indigenous people.

Historically, both Sunak and Netanyahu tried to mislead the world about history by terming the current moment as their darkest hour. Neither Netanyahu nor Sunak belong to the land they claimed too. The migrants' sons represent colonial powers and occupier states, so they never witnessed dark hours in their lives. Although Hamas acted out of the way and inflicted heavy losses to Israel in a surprise attack. Israel and Palestinians have been at war over the past multiple years. Furthermore, continuous Israeli atrocities, utter denial of right to self determination and putting a permanent tab on the long held unresolvable political dispute, undoubtedly the world must expect such conditions when a group of people lose hope in the global community.

The world can not accept such kind of behavior from the western nations, and their indentured multilateral forums which cry unanimously over the arrest of a few Ukrainian children by Russian troops but unable to speak a word over Israel mass warcrimes against humanity. It is high time that the global community must raise its voice against dual standards of western nations, the discrimination and bias at the United Nations. Otherwise, a new balanced and multi polar system is of utmost importance for preservation of global peace and stability.

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War on Gaza: Unraveling Britain’s knotted ball of mutual hate

Jonathan Gornall

AT a time like this, one hesitates to delve into the rights and wrongs of the tragedy unfolding in Israel and Gaza. Certainly, it is worse than pointless to indulge in tit-for-tat condemnation based on a myopic perspective that looks back no further than the last outrage by one side or the other. History, however, tells us clearly where the ultimate blame lies for the current situation, which is merely the latest consequence of the perpetual disaster initiated over a century ago by the perfidy of the British government.

Britain, with its back up against the wall at the height of the First World War, had its own interests at heart when, in November 1917, Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour wrote a fateful letter to Lord Rothschild, scion of the international banking family and a prominent British Zionist. The Balfour Declaration, as it came to be known, declared that "His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object." Both the British government and the state that would eventually take root in this document soon forgot the proviso that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine."

Britain cared little for the Zionist ambition to create a homeland for the Jews in the Holy Land. Its motive was to secure the financial and political support of influential American Jewry for Britain's war against Germany. It is, of course, an antisemitic trope to suggest that "the Jews" have, or have ever had, any kind of undue influence over the political or financial affairs of nations. But it is a fact rather than a conspiracy theory that, at the height of the First World War, powerful Jews in the US and Britain successfully pressed the Zionist case for a Jewish homeland in Palestine at the highest levels of the two governments.

In the US, Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, a friend and ally of President Woodrow Wilson and a prominent advocate for the "recreation" of a homeland for the Jews in Palestine, heavily influenced American policy over the issue and worked directly with Balfour. What is not widely appreciated - but evidenced in the Cabinet papers preserved in the National Archives - is that the Balfour Declaration was secretly submitted in draft form for the approval of 10 leading Jewish figures in Britain in October 1917, most of them prominent Zionists. One was Lord Rothschild, to whom the finalized declaration would ultimately be addressed barely two weeks later. Another was his friend Chaim Weizmann, the Russian-born president of the Zionist Organization and the future first president of Israel.

Of course, even as they were wooing the world's Zionists, the British, in a successful bid to encourage the Arabs to revolt against the Turks, had already promised the sharif of Makkah that the Arabs

could have their own independent homeland on the territory from which the Ottoman Empire was soon to be evicted. As if this duplicity were not enough, in 1916, the British and the French signed the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement, in which they agreed to carve

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that the Balfour Declaration was secretly submitted in draft form for the approval of 10 leading Jewish figures in Britain in October 1917, most of them prominent Zionists. One was Lord Rothschild, to whom the finalized declaration would ultimately be addressed barely two weeks later. Another was his friend Chaim Weizmann, the Russian-born president of the Zionist Organization and the future first president of Israel.

Of course, even as they were wooing the world's Zionists, the British, in a successful bid to encourage the Arabs to revolt against the Turks, had already promised the sharif of Makkah that the Arabs

up Ottoman lands at the end of the war.

As masters of Palestine under the mandate later awarded them by the League of Nations, the British reneged on their promise to the Arabs, a betrayal of which T.E. Lawrence, who talked the Arabs into rising up, later declared himself to be "continually and bitterly ashamed." Jewish immigration to Palestine, which had begun in the late 19th century in response to persecution in Russia, increased dramatically in the early years of the British mandate.

The initial signs of tension between Jews and Arabs were soon seen, with the first riots breaking out

in Jerusalem in April 1920.

The British had created an impossible situation that remains insoluble to this day, as even they soon began to appreciate. In January 1915, just two months after Britain had declared war on the Ottoman Empire, Herbert Samuel, the first practicing Jew to serve as a British minister, circulated a paper within the British Cabinet entitled "The Future of Palestine." In it, he urged the government to consider annexing Palestine after the war and opening it to Jewish immigration. This, he said, "would win for England the lasting gratitude of the Jews throughout the world," especially in "the United States, where they number about two million." After the war, in an extraordinarily insensitive move, Samuel was appointed British high commissioner of Palestine. The appointment alarmed even the postwar British military government of Palestine. The Arabs, wrote Field Marshal Edmund Allenby, would see the appointment as "handing (the) country over at once to a permanent Zionist administration." The Muslim-Christian Society warned that it "cannot accept responsibility for riots or other disturbances of peace."

But as Jewish numbers in Palestine continued to increase, there was no going back. A UN vote in favor of a partition plan, which envisaged "an independent Arab state, an independent Jewish state" and "international trusteeship for the city of Jerusalem," led to a civil war in 1947. Finally, on May 14, 1948, the British threw up their hands and walked away. The next day, David Ben-Gurion, president of the World Zionist Organization, announced the foundation of the state of Israel. If ending this seemingly unstoppable cycle of violence seems impossible, that is because it almost certainly is - none of the many initiatives designed to unravel the knotted ball of mutual hate and mistrust has ever succeeded in doing so. Now, with the bloody and unjustifiable Hamas attack on Israel, and the equally bloody and unjustifiable Israeli reprisals in Gaza, the tragedy continues, embroiling another generation in the endless fight no one can win.

All eyes on US

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

GULF Cooperation Council foreign ministers on Tuesday held an extraordinary meeting in Muscat to discuss the new escalation in Israel's war against Gaza. Before their meeting, they had an audience with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, indicating the importance Oman attaches to the crisis. A week earlier, the issue was also high on the agenda of the annual meeting of the GCC-EU Joint Council of foreign ministers, which was also held in Muscat.

There was unreserved condemnation of the relentless and clearly indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets, including homes, schools and hospitals, resulting in the death and injury of thousands of innocent civilians. Such acts are clearly grave breaches of the rules of war.

The attack on one of Gaza's main hospitals on Tuesday left hundreds dead and many more injured. While Israel has typically denied responsibility, Palestinians and international organizations have blamed Israeli attacks. "We are horrified by the recent Israeli bombing of Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, which was treating patients and hosting displaced Gazans. Hundreds of people have reportedly been killed," Doctors Without Borders, which operates in Gaza, said. "It is absolutely unacceptable," it added. Israel had already ordered the evacuation of all hospitals in northern Gaza, apparently as a prelude to attacking them. The massacre at the hospital appeared to confirm Israel's no holds barred policy in this war. On Oct. 10, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant gave his soldiers a free hand, saying: "We have removed every restriction."

In addition to the dead and injured, there are thousands missing, many believed to be buried alive in the rubble of toppled buildings. Hundreds of thousands of Gazans have been forced to flee at the urging of the Israeli army. For many, this flight is reminiscent of the mass expulsions of Palestinians from their land in 1948 and 1967. Israel has not allowed those refugees from previous wars to return to their homes, hence the reluctance to leave Gaza now, no matter how severe the conditions are. The GCC ministers expressed support for their steadfastness and warned against any attempts to displace or transfer them. The ministers demanded an immediate ceasefire, a swift end to the blockade and unhindered access to relief supplies, water, food, medicine and fuel, as well as electricity, which Israel shut off at the start of its latest Gaza campaign.

The GCC ministers were even-handed, as they called on "all parties to the conflict" to protect civilians, reminding them of their obligations under international humanitarian law to take every measure to spare noncombatants. The ministers called for the release of innocent hostages and detainees, especially children, women, the sick and the elderly.

They announced an urgent humanitarian aid operation to help meet the needs of the Palestinians of Gaza, including immediate financial contributions of \$100 million, while stressing the "need for this aid to reach Gaza urgently" and without hindrance in a reference to Israel's decision to seal off the Gaza Strip, not allowing any relief supplies to reach it from the outside world. Long lines of aid con-

voys had formed at Egypt's border with Gaza, prevented by Israel from entering despite pleas from around the world, including from the US and UN, to allow their passage. Since then, a limited easing of that blockade has been announced, but it is not enough.

While it is urgent to deal with the current war and devastation, it is important to deal with the underlying issues that have kept the conflict boiling beneath the surface for decades, with extreme flare-ups every few years. Thousands of innocents have died and many more injured in this conflict this year alone. Millions have been uprooted from their homes, living as refugees throughout the region or internally displaced within the boundaries of Palestine. To stop the vicious cycle of never-ending violence, the world needs to address Palestinians' longing for a homeland, just like every other nation in the world. The ministers therefore stressed the need to revive the moribund peace negotiations. It is regrettable that Israel has frustrated the repeated attempt to revive such talks, even when urged to do so by its closest allies, such as the US. Earlier this year, Saudi Arabia led the newest effort to reactivate that process, together with the EU, the Arab League, Egypt and Jordan. There is universal consensus on the parameters of the solution: Two states living side by side within secure borders along the 1967 lines, according to UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, which was proposed by Saudi Arabia and supported by all Arab countries and many from outside the region.

The Palestinians' right to dignity and self-determination is supported by nearly every country in the world, including the US, as President Joe Biden has made clear since the start of this war. Scores of countries have already recognized the state of Palestine. For innocent young Palestinians, the fact that this conflict has continued for so many decades can be seen as a sign of the world's indifference to their suffering, if not complicity in Israel's refusal to recognize their legitimate rights. The failure of the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution on the current conflict only adds to those frustrations.

The reluctance of some of Israel's closest allies to call for a ceasefire or to pressure Israel to stop its nihilistic war against defenseless civilians is inexplicable. There appears to be an implicit resignation that Israeli leaders need to vent their anger and "avenge" the atrocities committed against Israelis on Oct. 7. However, the civilian population of Gaza had nothing to do with those attacks and should not be made to pay for them. The US is obviously the main country capable of restraining Israel and breaking the deadlock at the UN, which is caused by Washington's veto. The US has clearly sided with Israel in this war, sending additional forces and military assets to the region as soon as the war began, along with material and ammunition to replenish Israel's formidable arsenal. But the US can equally provide leadership in pushing Israel toward a political solution, first to the issues underlying the war against Gaza, but then to the wider Middle East peace process. All eyes are on Washington.

Arab News

Erasing Palestine

Omar Suleiman

As the siege and bombardment of Gaza continues at full force, killing hundreds each day, maiming many more and wiping entire families out of the civil registry, the international community is still watching idly by. The global conversation on the assault on Gaza is shifting towards the annexation of yet another part of historic Palestine by Israel, with countries around the world rushing not to prevent the injustice but to ensure Palestinians made into refugees as a result won't end up coming their way.

Today, the fear of what comes next is looming larger for Palestinians than the cruelty of the world's apparent indifference to their suffering. This time, the Nakba is being televised, and it has a stench of finality to it. What is happening in Palestine can no longer be described as genocide or even ethnic cleansing. It is beyond mass extermination - it is total erasure.

Alongside the deranged and morally rotten military campaign to extinguish the lives of innocent Palestinian civilians - most of whom are women and children - is the equally if not more sinister campaign to entirely erase their identity. Open Apple, Google or any other digital map, Type "Palestine". You won't find it. You will only find Israel. If you're lucky, you may be directed to a small patchwork of what is called "Palestinian Territories" firmly embedded inside Israel lest anyone mistakenly think it is an independent nation-state. And of course, you will find nowhere on any map the keyword that precedes Palestinian Territories to lay bare the ugly, but necessary and harrowing truth: "Occupied."

Every single Palestinian alive today has had either the brutal experience of being rendered stateless and/or homeless, or waking up to the reality that the homeland of their parents is apparently fictional. I will never forget the experience

as a young boy born and raised in Louisiana when my mom had to explain to me why my second-grade teacher said "Palestine doesn't exist." Suddenly all the maps, flags, pictures, culture, and even old coins from prior to 1948 that had "Palestine" written on them were supposedly a lie. This, even though my father is five years older than the state of Israel. Everything about us is supposedly non-existent. It's not just the Palestinian people or the name of the country that's disappearing, but the word Palestine itself. Palestine is being deliberately erased from our consciousness and discourse, during war and even in peace.

The Abraham Accords, the supposed blockbuster deal brokered by the United States to normalise relations between Arab states and Israel, somehow manages to exclude the main aggrieved

party: the population of Palestine. One would assume that the plight of the Palestinians, which has supposedly been the single biggest impediment to peace between Arab states and Israel, would have made the Palestinian people a critical - if not the central - stakeholder in such a monumental deal. Yet, as far as the Abraham Accords are concerned, the Palestinians are non-existent. And now, the current genocidal campaign being waged by the occupying state of Israel against Palestinians is being universally - and erroneously - described as "a war between Israel and Hamas". Somehow the Palestinian people, who have been subjected to Israeli occupation and oppression for 75 years before October 7, no longer matter. This sinister public relations move is deeply problematic for two reasons.

First, it allows for a simplistic story of good vs evil, where Israel takes on the role of the peace-loving, civilised democracy minding its own business and Hamas the inexplicably evil and barbaric militia group - decorated with all the anti-Muslim trimmings and tropes imaginable - that attacks it out of the blue. This despite the fact that according to Human Rights Watch, Amnesty and even numerous Israeli human rights organisations, Israel is in fact an apartheid state and illegal occupier that has implemented the most inhumane open-air incarceration system on earth. Israel may have dozens of political parties, but the oft-repeated claim that it is the only "democracy" in the Middle East cannot be taken seriously when its veteran prime minister, who is embattled with corruption charges, can undermine the judiciary and appoint to his government senior officials that openly refer to themselves as fascists. Second, and far more disturbingly, by strategically erasing

Palestine from the narrative, Israel entirely sidesteps any awkward questions about the attacks of October 7 being linked to its more than 70 years of occupying the Palestinian people.

The simple truth is that the word "Palestine" is deeply damaging to Israel's image on the international stage. The word "Palestine" carries with it so much universally recognised victimhood and so many stories of oppression, subjugation and genocide that when it is included in the conversation, Israel simply cannot dispute, however desperately it tries to, its crimes. The moral weight of Palestine is so heavy that every time the word is uttered, you can hear the deflating hiss from Israel's PR bubble. And yet, it is Israel that stands in front of the United Nations, year after year, pleading to be protected from the "barbarian" nations that supposedly wish to erase it from the map. The irony may be hysterical, but the hypocrisy is real.

Stop Israel now - the Middle East cannot take another major war

Ahmed Twaij

AS the mortifying destruction of the besieged and overpopulated Gaza Strip by Israel continues at full speed, with hundreds of Palestinians losing their lives in a single attack on the al-Ahli Arab Hospital on Tuesday evening alone, fears that the conflict may spill over and trigger another multi-front war in the region are also growing.

The Israeli missiles that already transformed much of Gaza into piles of rubble have also struck targets in Lebanon and Syria. In Syria, Israeli missile strikes left two major airports out of service. In Lebanon, Israeli shelling in the southern part of the country killed Reuters journalist Issam Abdallah, and injured several others. Egypt has also been directly affected by the escalation, with Israel repeatedly bombing the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza. On Wednesday, Iran warned of a possible "preemptive" action against Israel in response to the devastation caused by the attack on the hospital. Earlier, members of Iraq's powerful Popular Mobilization Forces indicated a readiness to intervene should the attacks on Gaza persist and the Lebanese Hezbollah has already fired some rockets at Israel in response to its attacks on Lebanese territory. The United States and the United Kingdom have also stipulated a larger conflict is on the cards, and swiftly dispatched powerful aircraft carriers and navy ships to the already volatile Eastern Mediterranean. Joe Biden and Rishi Sunak also paid visits to Israel. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of people across the world, from Washington, DC, and London, Istanbul to Beirut took to the streets to express their solidarity with Palestinians and to call for an end to the attacks on Gaza.

It is clear that unless something

happens to stop the violence, we could be faced with a world-changing war. If the senseless violence, which already claimed over 3000 Palestinian lives in Gaza, spreads across the Middle East and North Africa, the death tolls and the devastation experienced by the long-suffering peoples of the region would be unprecedented. Most countries in the Middle East are desperately trying to heal and maintain some stability after decades of deadly hot conflict, and simply cannot take another major war, let alone a multi-fronted, multi-party regional confrontation like the one that appears to be looming.

Take my country of origin, Iraq. Today, Iraq is doing relatively OK. Its economy is one of the fastest growing in the world and the nation is experiencing a rare period of relative stability. But the country did not get here easily. It has taken Iraq 20 years to heal from the US-led invasion in 2003. From 2003 to this day, a whole generation of Iraqis have known nothing but war. In just a few days following the 2003 invasion, some 15,000 Iraqis lost their lives (compared with less than 10,000 civilian deaths in Ukraine since the Russian invasion began until now). At the end of 2006, the death toll had reached 600,000 and continued to increase rapidly in the following years as the sectarian tensions and unprecedented political instability caused by the invasion resulted in a catastrophic civil war.

Should the current conflict in Gaza spread to other nations, it would undoubtedly destabilise Iraq and reverse some, if not all of the progress it made in recent years. The security vacuums that a major regional war would inevitably create could reignite deep-rooted

geopolitical and sectarian tensions across the Middle East and invite renewed violence. As a result of the 2003 invasion and the consequent civil war, Iraq still suffers from a chronic energy crisis, a healthcare system on the edge of collapse and widespread governmental corruption, among other challenges. Should the Gaza crisis fully spill outside the besieged enclave's borders, it will inflict similar, long-term, even permanent damage to basic infrastructure, overall progress and development in Iraq and other countries in the region.

Syria is similarly healing from years of conflict and is at risk of plunging back into chaos if it gets pulled into a major war with Israel. Almost 70 percent of the Syrian population is already in need of humanitarian assistance with 90 percent living under the poverty line. If another conflict reaches the country's borders, the suffering of the Syrian people will be immeasurable. Likewise, Yemen, which was described as the "world's largest humanitarian crisis" in March by the United Nations, would face devastation if it finds itself in the middle of a regional conflict before its own devastating war is over.

Lebanon, meanwhile, which suffered many wars with Israel in the past, is four years into one of the worst financial crises in modern history and facing a real risk of state collapse. Getting sucked into yet another war with Israel would plunge the country into an unprecedented disaster that may make its recovery and long-term survival impossible. Since the very beginning, Israeli authorities have been equating Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel with 9/11, signalling their intention to respond to it with the

same lack of care for human life and international law we've seen in America's so-called "war on terror".

The US-led invasion of Iraq - which was a direct response to 9/11 - was deemed illegal by then United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Now, Israel has embarked on its own illegal war in response to its own 9/11. Against all tenets of international law, it is punishing Palestinians in Gaza collectively for Hamas's actions. It is clear that Israel has learned nothing from the myriad mistakes the US made, and the countless crimes it committed, in its efforts to avenge 9/11. Just like the US, Israel is determined to spill as much blood as possible, but is not interested in addressing the root causes of the conflict and breaking the cycle of violence.

If Israel remains on this path and triggers a new multi-party conflict in the Middle East, consequences for Israelis, Palestinians, other countries in the region and the world at large would be unthinkable. The international community needs to act and it needs to act now. We have a very short time frame to ensure we do not repeat the mistakes of the past and push the Middle East, beyond the unimaginable nightmare in Gaza, into yet another period of senseless death, violence and suffering - an episode that many countries in the region might never be able to recover from.

The first, and most important, step the world needs to take to prevent another major war in the region is putting an end to Israel's ongoing atrocities against Palestinians. The Middle East cannot take another major war - but it won't idly watch the senseless massacre of Palestinians in Gaza for much longer, either.

Aljazeera

Belt and Road cooperation will be more inclusive and innovative

Binod Singh Ajatshatru

IN his speech at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation on Wednesday, President Xi Jinping emphasized that humankind is a community with a shared future and China can only do well when the world is doing well.

One of the major announcements President Xi made during the speech was that another 80 billion yuan (\$10.93 billion) will be injected into the Silk Road Fund, saying that the Belt and Road Initiative will focus not just on infrastructure and trade, but also on promoting civilizational dialogue among Belt and Road countries. He said China is willing to share its prosperity with its neighbors and the rest of the world.

The new goals of the Belt and Road Initiative are open, green, and clean development. Xi stressed that further deepening cooperation is the only way to go forward. Clean, green development will be the new mantra of the initiative in the next decade, he said, adding that the Belt and Road is a global development initiative with sustainable development for all as its ultimate goal. The main strength of the initiative is the involvement of more than 150 countries and 30 international organizations, which makes it one of the largest development initiatives in history. Earlier, to mark the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, President Xi announced some major plans to further expand the scope of the initiative.

The third Belt and Road Forum, which concluded on Wednesday, was attended by the representatives of many countries and global organizations, addressing whom, Xi said the international community is welcome to collectively find solutions to the major problems, including climate change, facing the world today. While summarizing the experiences of the 10 years of the initiative, Xi said China is open to working with international organizations and learn from their experiences, not least

because it adds value to the Belt and Road projects.

Emphasizing that the initiative's high-quality development will help modernize the countries of the Global South, he said the initiative is set to make greater contributions to global growth. Mutual learning and mutual benefit are the guiding principles of the initiative's policy, and China believes that the Belt and Road Initiative complements the other developmental plans in Asia, Africa and Europe. The construction of railways, including high-speed railways, in some countries has already boosted their economic development. And China's funding and technologies have accelerated the development programs of many developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. By building and improving infrastructure, China intends to further facilitate the smooth movement of goods and people in Asian, European and African countries. Underlining the importance of cultural exchanges among the Belt and Road countries, President Xi said the initiative will promote multilateralism and bridge the development gap between the Global North and the Global South.

The initiative will promote harmony among countries by using development as a major foreign policy tool, he said. Belt and Road projects are diverse and comprehensive, and facilitate the social and cultural development of the countries involved, promote mutual understanding among them, and create new opportunities for holding regular dialogue on the issues plaguing the world.

The initiative meets the developmental needs of the Belt and Road countries without imposing political or ideological conditions. Similarly, in a "volatile world, we (all nations) can jointly address various risks and challenges facing humanity today", Xi said. No wonder many countries

have expressed confidence in the Belt and Road Initiative's ability to use innovative ideas to meet the different demands of the countries involved.

On the other hand, Russia has proposed that an international logistics corridor (Northern Sea Route) be built, a proposal that is still being discussed by the Belt and Road countries and might be finalized in the near future. The North Sea trade route being developed by Russia is another project the international community is looking forward to. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that a mechanism for cooperation on logistics with BRICS member states should be established where all Belt and Road economies can discuss ideas such as developing more international trade corridors. Countries of the Global South have realized that without infrastructure, real development cannot be achieved. Since supplying drinking water, building sanitation facilities and generating and supplying electricity to building and maintaining schools and hospitals, and providing internet services for the people cannot be done alone by many less-developed countries, the Silk Road Fund, the BRICS New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank should release funds to complete such development tasks.

Yet the availability of funds alone cannot guarantee good infrastructure. So Belt and Road countries should use the know-how and experiences of countries such as China to achieve their respective development goals. The Belt and Road projects can build a bright future only if they are properly implemented. Indeed, the next decade will help the countries of the Global South to catch up with the developed world, by improving their infrastructure and creating equal opportunities for all to achieve common prosperity.

Boris Bondarev

RUSSIAN assertions that space infrastructure like satellites are legitimate military target are nothing new. Rather, they reflect Russia's long-running efforts to prevent weapons from being deployed in space. But more recently, this rhetoric has become an attempt to frighten Western countries away from continuing to support Ukraine.

Russia's desire to prevent space from becoming filled with weapons appears noble in its essence. However, it is dictated, like all other policies of the Russian leadership in the international security field, by Moscow's fear of Washington's plans to deploy a global missile defense system to neutralize Russia's nuclear potential.

The system would include satellites to detect the launch of ballistic missiles, and interceptor missiles that can hit these weapons at any stage of their trajectory. According to paranoid Kremlin voices, this makes Russia easy prey for the US military. The belief among NATO countries that outer space could become a conflict zone adds more fuel to the fire. Given the enormous economic, scientific and industrial might of the United

States, Moscow fears that such a missile defense system may be deployed in the foreseeable future. Therefore, Russia has been fighting against Washington's plans for the past 20 years, trying to discredit them.

This was the motivation behind the Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and the Threat or Use of Force Against Space Objects (PPWT) proposed by Russia and China in 2008. The draft treaty, whose momentum has since stalled, raises many questions about how to define "weapons in space," and how to verify that weapons have been put into orbit.

In 2020, Britain proposed a compromise to establish voluntary rules and accepted norms for responsible behavior in space. It sought to do this with a regulatory framework to stop conflicts from developing in near-Earth space. This idea was immediately met with hostility by Russia, and Russian diplomats devoted themselves to disrupting it. In particular, the initiators proposed to include tests of anti-satellite weapons in the category of "irresponsible behavior," which forced Russian

diplomats to take a contradictory position.

While they accused the United States of conducting such tests, they also defended their own right, as well as that of China and India, to do the same. This rhetoric has escalated since the outbreak of the war with Ukraine, with Moscow issuing weakly camouflaged threats against Western satellites, whose services have been used by the Ukrainian armed force. Since Ukraine's intelligence cooperation with NATO is no secret, Moscow considers NATO to be directly supporting the Ukrainian military. This apparently egregious behavior would not be let go without a harsh rebuke from the Russian Foreign Ministry, which began to say that NATO satellites are a legitimate target.

However, it is also worth considering what Russia omits from its statements about space warfare. Firstly, an attack on spacecraft (including satellites) will be unequivocally regarded as an act of aggression against the State-owner of these spacecraft. If an American satellite is taken offline or shot down, the United States would be forced to respond. Such a hostile

step against the US, a NATO member, would trigger the alliance's Article 5, compelling Washington's allies to come to its aid. Moreover, it is physically impossible to shoot down all or at least most of the American spacecraft at once.

As a result, Washington's ability to meet its needs in communications, navigation, and intelligence will not be seriously disrupted. Secondly, destroying a spacecraft using anti-satellite weapons, like surface-launched missiles, will create a cloud of debris that moves in orbit, with a high risk of hitting other spacecraft. Space debris, unlike Russian diplomats, are indiscriminate. They are just as likely to damage not only the satellites of NATO countries, but also those of China and India. It is unlikely that these states will be understanding if this happens.

All this confirms that the Russian Foreign Ministry has turned from being policymakers, who must carefully weigh their statements, into propagandists trying to appeal primarily to a domestic audience while squandering what little trust the international community has left.

The Moscow Times

Major take aways from President Biden's Oval Office speech

Sadiq Shaban

IN a no-holds-barred address, US President Biden linked Russia's Ukraine war to Hamas's surprise attack on Israel, demanding Congress's backing in the face of what he described as two imminent threats. Against the backdrop of an increasingly divided America, Biden implored citizens to look beyond their borders and rallied support for crucial foreign aid to American allies.

The sweeping funding request, a whopping \$100 billion, including a jaw-dropping \$60 billion for war-torn Ukraine and a substantial \$10 billion for Israel, has now ignited a political firestorm as it heads for approval, or scrutiny, through the Senate and the Republican-led House, currently left leaderless for more than two weeks.

Biden, in his rare prime time address, aimed to establish a clear contrast with the isolationist stance embraced by many of his Republican contenders, including the former President, Donald Trump, who seem suspicious of extending military support overseas. The US President, straddling both domestic and international fronts, made a fervent appeal to Americans, urging them to comprehend the urgency of lending assistance to allies around the globe.

In a poignant twist, the US President also passionately underscored the critical need to unequivocally denounce hate in all its forms. "We must, without equivocation, denounce anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. We must stand united," he pro-

claimed, highlighting the suffering faced by various communities. Noting a recent spate of horrific events, including the stabbing of a mother and the murder of a six-year-old Palestinian American boy, Biden voiced a resounding call for solidarity. President Biden emphasised the

tion. President Biden called for unequivocal denunciation of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and expressed support for communities facing hate and discrimination.

President Biden reassured Israel of US support, making an urgent request for funding to bolster Israel's security, especially the Iron Dome defence sys-

We must, without equivocation, denounce anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. We must stand united," he proclaimed, highlighting the suffering faced by various communities. Noting a recent spate of horrific events, including the stabbing of a mother and the murder of a six-year-old Palestinian American boy, Biden voiced a resounding call for solidarity.

importance of Americans thinking beyond their borders and highlighted the interconnectedness of global events.

He urged Congress to approve significant funding, approximately \$100 billion, to support Israel and Ukraine. This funding aims to assist Israel and help Ukraine combat Russia. President Biden contrasted his approach with the isolationist views of some Republican candidates for the 2024 nomination, emphasising the importance of US military aid abroad. He stressed that both Russia and Hamas aim to destroy neighbouring democracies. This commonality was used to justify the need for US interven-

tem. The President discussed the urgent need for humanitarian aid to Palestinian civilians in Gaza and reaffirmed the commitment to a two-state solution. He acknowledged the increasing levels of hate, racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia within the United States. President Biden emphasised that the world watches the US response in Ukraine and Israel, as it could impact global security and influence potential aggressors. He concluded with a reminder that America is a beacon to the world and called for unity and responsible leadership, emphasising that the US is the "indispensable nation."

Gulf News

Joe Biden owns this

Andrew Mitrovica

SO, US President Joe Biden got off a big plane in Tel Aviv on Wednesday and embraced a war criminal whose war crime-addicted military had, only hours earlier, committed yet another war crime of such horrendous nature and scale that it is destined to reverberate in memory and history.

That will be the sick, defining image of Biden's presidency: a hug on an airport tarmac with an Israeli prime minister who has always revelled in killing Palestinians, even desperate children, women and men who thought they were beyond Benjamin Netanyahu's malevolent reach on the grounds of a hospital in besieged Gaza that, bit by bit, is being erased in blatant acts of genocide. It is worth remembering amid all the touching scenes of fraternity that Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have spent much of the past three years distancing themselves - to put it charitably - from a politician whom a lot of Israelis believe is not only a career crook, but a rank authoritarian.

Rather than hold Netanyahu close to their loving bosoms like the suddenly smitten Biden, hundreds of thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets, week after week, demanding his conviction and resignation using blunt, hard-to-miss language. Not too long ago, Biden and Blinken were so eager not to be seen with the accused swindler turned Machiavellian despot that they have not invited Netanyahu to the White House, lest, I suppose, they were stained by the stench of his toxic presence and character.

But times and fickle attitudes have, of course, changed. Biden hopped on Air Force 1 for a quick, presidential vote-eve date in Israel to tell his beau not to worry, all is forgiven, while shoring up his "tough guy" credentials and support with a powerful constituency that he needs to win re-election - the thousands of mutilated, maimed and dead Palestinians be damned.

True to indecent form, leave it to a tactless American president to invoke a grotesque sports analogy to try, predictably, to deflect fault for an atrocity that compounds all the lethal indignities, deprivations and wanton violence already visited upon an imprisoned people by their occupier - not for days, weeks, months or years, but

decades. The "other team", Biden said, was to blame for the massacre of hundreds of defenceless Palestinians holed up at al-Ahli Arab Hospital on Tuesday.

Apparently, the forgetful octogenarian commander-in-chief requires reminding that his "team" has concocted exculpatory "evidence" and lied again and again - I know this must come as a shock to him - to cover up its complicity in the killing of countless Palestinians, including the murder in 2022 of 78-year-old Omar Abdulmajeed Asaad, whom he and his diplomatic sidekick, Blinken, could not have cared less about, despite the fact that the retired grocer carried a US passport. I need to remind Biden and Blinken of these other flagrant facts:

His "team" is depriving millions of Palestinians in Gaza of the necessities of life - food, water, fuel and electricity. His "team" is determined, in effect, to starve and dehydrate Palestinians in Gaza to death.

His "team" is carpet-bombing Palestinians in Gaza with US-supplied weapons to kill as many of them as possible, in the shortest time possible, in advance of a ground invasion that will, inevitably, result in more appalling massacres. His "team" is attacking schools sheltering Palestinians with nowhere else to turn since escape is impossible.

His "team" has showered Gaza with white phosphorus meant to permanently disfigure and burn children, women and men to the bone. His "team" may permit humanitarian assistance to reach Palestinians who, even if they receive that blockaded help someday, will likely be killed by his "team" anyway.

His "team" has held millions of Palestinians "hostage" in Gaza, the occupied West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem from Israel's inception. His "team" is shooting Palestinians on sight in the West Bank for daring to resist the occupation and decrying the murder of their brothers and sisters in Gaza who took refuge at a hospital.

His "team" has described Palestinians as "animals", "savages" and "vermin" who need to be eradicated in order to strip them of their humanity, and justify its ethnic cleansing and plans to establish a fortified "buffer" between Gaza and Israel. The result: His "team" - in a repeat of the

ruinous Nakba in 1948 - is forcing millions of Palestinians to abandon the shattered remains of their homes and businesses with the barrel of a high-powered gun pressed against their hearts and heads. Joe Biden owns all of this - every despicable aspect of the calamity unfolding in Gaza perpetrated by America's ever-reliable and obedient proxy, Israel.

The cataclysm that the world is witnessing is the by-product of the, by now, familiar mantra at the core of every modern US president's so-called Middle East "foreign policy": Kill first, think later. In the aftermath of Hamas's ruthless assault, the urgent moment required a temperate mixture of outrage and calm. Instead, Biden opted, on cue, for bluster and self-aggrandising posturing.

Instead of understanding that the pursuit of blind vengeance and the use of incendiary rhetoric would not dampen the prevailing bloodlust, but only fuel the breathtaking loss and awful scenes of grief and despair, Biden chose hysteria over statesmanship. Instead of taking care with his words and actions, Biden trafficked in hideous fabrications at hastily held news conferences that he subsequently had to "walk back".

Still, the deep and sinister damage was done. Palestinians - every one of them - had been dehumanised once more to condone killing them indiscriminately and en masse. As I said: Kill first, think later. But that is the American way: in South East Asia, South and Central America, Africa, and Iraq and Afghanistan - graveyards all, brimming with the innocent victims of the arrogance and ignorance of a succession of cocky presidents who blundered their way into war without pausing to consider the disastrous and, ultimately, humiliating consequences.

Is it any wonder that Biden is being praised by the same unrepentant, evangelical keyboard cavalry who applauded the wholesale destruction of Iraq and Afghanistan yesterday, and are applauding the wholesale destruction of Gaza today? They will never learn from the past because they are consumed by the moment. It is too late to retreat from the abyss. Biden's hubris, blindness and obstinacy will not permit it. The cruel course has been fixed. The cement is set. The horrors have just begun. That will be Joe Biden's shameful legacy.



PSX contuse with bullish trend, gains 366 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) Friday continued with bullish trend, gaining 366.72 points, a positive change of 0.73 per cent, closing at 50,731.87 points against 50,365.15 points the previous day.

A total of 430,052,557 shares valuing Rs 14.611 billion were traded during the day as compared to 427,476,593 shares valuing Rs14.593 billion the previous day.

As many as 350 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 188 of

them recorded gains and 145 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 17 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Pak Refinery with 42,467,382 shares at Rs 18.13 per share, K-Electric Ltd with 35,749,829 shares at Rs 3.26 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 31,023,989 shares at Rs 1.28 per share.

Pak Hotels XD witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 35.72 per share price, closing at Rs 512.25, whereas the runner-up was

Murree Brewery XD with a Rs 18.67 rise in its per share price to Rs 267.66.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 190.00 per share closing at Rs 7,200.00, followed by Pak Tobacco with a Rs 37.60 decline to close at Rs 737.33.

Gold rates up by Rs.2,200 to Rs.208,500 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.2,200 and was sold at Rs.208,500 on Friday compared to its sale at Rs.206,300 the previous

day of trading.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.1,886 to Rs.178,755 from Rs.176,869 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.163,859 from Rs.162,130, 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 \$27 to \$1,999 from \$1,972, the Association reported.



KARACHI: Visitors takes interest at stall in Health Asia Expo 2023.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships namely, Maersk Jabal, Navios Constellation, XT Dolphin, Golden ID and Nord Adriatic carrying Containers, Palm oil, Chemicals and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Thursday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Sea Power and Nakhal Siver with wheat and Palm oil also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the same day.

Ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, two ships, Xin An Ping and Sea Treasure left the port on Friday morning, while three more ships, Navios Constellation, MSC Jemima and Chem Harvestare expected to sail on same day afternoon.

Cargo throughput of 94,754 tonnes, comprising 54,730 tonnes imports cargo and 40,024 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 3,395 Containers (1,645 TEUs Imports and 1,750 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 07 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them four ships, Abram Schulte, Sea Power, Corona and Kanha & two more ships, N Orhan and Navios Lapis carrying Containers, Coal, Wheat, Palm oil, LPG and Containers are expected to take berths at PIBT, FAP, LCT, EVTL, SSGC and QICT respectively on Friday and gas carrier 'Milha Ras Laffan' & containers vessel 'Taydo Star' are due to arrive on Saturday.

Tokyo stocks close lower

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed lower on Friday after falls on Wall Street, but pharma group Daiichi Sankyo soared over 14 percent after it announced a cancer drug deal with Merck.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index ended down 0.54 percent, or 171.26 points, at 31,259.36, while the broader Topix index slipped 0.38 percent, or 8.51 points, to 2,255.65.

The Tokyo market started with losses as investors were "discouraged by a rise in US long-term yields", but oil-linked shares and some high-techs traded higher, IwaiCosmo Securities said.

Overnight, all three major US indices declined, with the Dow losing 0.8 percent to end at 33,414.17, the broad-based S&P 500 slipping 0.9 percent and the tech-heavy Nasdaq slumping 1.0 percent.

US Fed Chair Jerome Powell said on Thursday that US inflation is "still too high", leaving the door open for another interest rate hike.

The dollar fetched 149.86 yen in Asian trade, against 149.81 yen in New York late Thursday.

Tokyo investors are also awaiting corporate earnings results, said Yuta Okamoto, market analyst for Tokai Tokyo Research Institute.

Shares in Daiichi Sankyo soared 14.41 percent to 4,095.0 yen, after the pharma group the cancer drug deal with US giant Merck worth up to \$22 billion.

Merck will pay Daiichi for the rights to three drugs in development known as antibody-drug conjugates, which attack cancer cells without damaging surrounding healthy ones.

Clearance of fruits-laden vehicles: Merchants reveal corrupt practices

F.P Report

PESHAWAR: Fruit merchants unmasked the corruption practices in connivance with authorities concerned in clearance of fruits-laden vehicles from Kharlachi to Ghulam Khan Checkpoints.

According to traders, customs staff at Kharlachi and Ghulam Khan Checkpoints cleared vehicles loaded with fruits from Afghanistan to Pakistan by showing false declaration and underweight.

These fruits-laden trucks under surveillance of the customs personnels dispatch from one to other check posts, which is sheer unjust with traders and importers who clear their consignments/trucks by paying all taxes/duties at Torkham border, the traders' said.

The traders said the illegal practices were inflicting massive loss to the public exchequer on head of duties/taxes.

The serious revelations came into discussion during a meeting between a delegation of Peshawar Fruits Traders Association and President of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fuad Ishaq here at the chamber house, said in a press release issued here on Friday.

The traders' delegation was headed by the association president Haji Alif Jan Mohmand and vice president Haji Mushtaq Hussain.

Sanaullah Khan, senior vice president of the chamber was also present in the meeting.

Other members of the traders' delegation include Haji Khan Muhammad, Haji Faqir Muhammad, Haji Samdani, Haji Imtiaz, Haji Wali Khan, Haji Noorani, Haji Nawab Khan, Haji Sheena Khan and Haji Taj Muhammad.

The ban on export of Kinnow was another central point that had been discussed thoroughly in the meeting. On the occasion, the participants elaborated about restriction on Kinnow export.

Fuad Ishaq promptly responded to this crucial matter, stating that a ban on Kinnow export was enforced before December 01.

The SCCI chief explained Pakistan's kinnow was not fully ready till December.

He added this restriction on export was aimed at preventing from damaging the quality Pakistani kinnow in the global market.

Bumper crop of Kinnow is ready before time owing to climate change, so the associations in consultation with relevant institutions

have agreed on that this year, the export of Kinnow should be allowed before 15 days.

Fuad Ishaq said there was also agreement between federal ministry of Food and Agriculture, relevant authorities and association on consensus about export of Kinnow before time. However, he said the Ministry of Commerce was yet not issued formal notification in this regard.

Eventually, the SCCI chief made a demand for allowing export of Kinnow before 15 days or from (Nov 15, 2023).

On the occasion, Fuad Ishaq gave a concrete proposal for prevention of smuggling in mutual trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan, calling for bringing Pakistani import duties/taxes equal to Afghanistan imports duties so that will not only eradicate smuggling but abolish transit trade as well.

Earlier, members of the delegation of Peshawar Fruits Traders Association formally congratulated the newly elected president Fuad Ishaq and senior vice president Sanaullah Khan and expressed hope that both new office bearers along with rest of the cabinet will play an important role in resolution of the business community issues.

Zong 4G signs MoU with LCCI to strengthen ecosystem



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Zong 4G, Pakistan's leading digital network, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industries. Zong 4G and Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industries (LCCI) are dedicated to building synergies that would empower LCCI and its member companies with comprehensive digital communication solutions."

Through this strategic alliance, Zong 4G's Enterprise Solutions will play a pivotal role in meeting the evolving communication needs of LCCI and its esteemed members, as it aims to foster collaboration and synergies between LCCI and its member companies. Speaking on behalf of

Zong 4G, the official spokesperson expressed

unwavering commitment to advancing the digitalization of Pakistan's corporate sector. He stated, "Together, Zong 4G and Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industries (LCCI) are dedicated to building synergies that would empower LCCI and its member companies with comprehensive digital communication solutions."

This collaboration promises to enhance diversity and bring cutting-edge technologies and advancements. Leveraging Zong Enterprise Solution's robust data capabilities and state-of-the-art technology, this partnership is poised to sig-

nificantly enhance the country's digital landscape.

Mr. Kashif Anwar, President of Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI), highlighted the significance of this collaborative effort during the MoU signing ceremony. He stated, "This partnership holds great promise for enriching the corporate sector of the city, harnessing the data and state-of-the-art technology prowess of Zong 4G, providing unwavering support to LCCI."

This collaboration underscores Zong 4G's unwavering commitment to spearheading and facilitating digital transformation for the industry

PTCL appoints Essa as president, CEO of U Microfinance Bank



F.P. Report

KARACHI: PTCL Group, the largest ICT services provider in Pakistan, is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Mohamed Essa Al Taheri as the new acting President

and CEO of U Microfinance Bank. The decision came after the former President and CEO, Mr. Kabeer Naqvi tendered his resignation and it was subsequently accepted by the Group.

President and Group CEO, PTCL & Ufone 4G, Hatem Bamatraf welcomed the new CEO aboard while he bid farewell to the outgoing CEO, expressing his heartfelt gratitude for years of dedicated service. In his role as Chairman, Board of Governors of U Microfinance Bank, Mr. Hatem Bamatraf conveyed his unwavering commit-

ment to provide the new CEO with steadfast support in order to sustain the Bank's growth trajectory.

Moreover, U Microfinance Bank, an investment of PTCL Group, enjoys strong backing from the Group as it has consistently demonstrated impressive financial strength and performance.

The new CEO has long been associated with U Microfinance Bank as a Member of its Board of Directors.

He brings significant experience from his previous role as the Group EVP for Financial Policies and

Systems at e& Group. He holds a Master's in International Business from the University of Wollongong, Dubai.

He has over 20 years of professional experience, including positions at HSBC Bank, Dubai Commercial Bank, and the Development Board of the Dubai Government.

PTCL Group believes that Mr. Essa Al Taheri will play an instrumental role in the bank's growth and progress, continuing with the remarkable and sustained digital transformation and innovation. The Group wishes him well.

Turkiye's investors shows keen interest in investments in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Pacaci said on Friday that Turkish investors have shown keen interest in making substantial investments in Pakistan, especially in mining, equipment manufacturing, paper products, pharmaceutical sector and special economic zones.

Mehmet Pacaci, the Ambassador of Türkiye said this in a meeting with Tahir Javed, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister/Minister of State

on investment at the Board of Investment (BOI), said a press release issued here.

During their talks, both parties emphasized the deep religious, cultural, political, economic and social ties between Pakistan and Turkey.

The meeting had fruitful discussions which highlighted the enduring and multifaceted relations that Pakistan and Turkey have enjoyed for a long time.

Ambassador Pacaci expressed Türkiye's keen interest in making substantial investments in Pakistan, particularly focusing on mining, appliance manufacturing, paper products, the pharmaceutical sector and the clusters of Special Economic Zones.

He emphasized the commitment of leading Turkish companies, including Lemak, Dolcer, Turkish Contractors Association, Arcelik, Zorlo, Alberic, and Pak Yetiram, which have already invested in Pakistan.

The Ambassador reaffirmed Türkiye's readiness for joint ventures in various investment sectors,

citing Pakistan's vast potential in these areas.

Ambassador Pacaci highlighted the extensive research conducted on Pakistan's investment landscape and expressed Türkiye's readiness to invest significantly.

He also mentioned the 46 Turkish contracting companies keen on investing in Pakistan, expressing a desire to increase their share in infrastructure investments and emphasising the potential for collaboration in the construction sector.

He also showed his keenness for road shows in three major cities of Türkiye.

Tahir Javed, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister/Minister of State on investment, hoped to enhance the Türkiye and Pakistan economic and trade cooperation to strengthen the bilateral ties.

SAPM/MoS echoed these sentiments, expressing Pakistan's openness to Turkish investment.

He emphasized the future potential areas for strengthening bilateral relations, particularly in business and investment.

He welcomed Türkiye's interest in investing and encouraged increased collaboration in various sectors, including infrastructure and construction, to bolster economic cooperation between the two nations.

However, he said that we need your help to bring new investments in the shape of new companies from Türkiye.

The Minister ensured that as you have already made your considerations in SIFC, in this regard there will be full support from the Minister's office.

Both parties expressed their eagerness to further engage in all areas of mutual interest, fostering a convergence of perspectives on regional and global concerns.

They expressed satisfaction with the current state of affairs and looked forward to deepening their collaboration in the future.

In closing, Ambassador Pacaci extended a warm invitation to SAPM/MoS to collaborate on Special Economic Zones, further enhancing the economic ties between the two nations.

Markets fall again and oil rises on ME, Fed fears

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets fell and oil prices extended gains Friday on worries that an expected ground invasion of Gaza by Israel will spark a wider conflict in the Middle East.

Risk aversion was compounded by Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell, who indicated a pause in interest rates at the bank's next meeting but left open the prospect of another hike later.

Traders are keeping a fearful eye on developments in the Middle East as Israel presses on with its bombing of Gaza after Hamas militants killed at least 1,400 people in Israel on October 7.

More than 3,700 Palestinians, mainly civilians, have been killed across Gaza in relentless bombardments, while an explosion at a hospital this week -- which each side has blamed the other for -- has ratcheted up tensions.

Iran has warned it could be drawn into the conflict if Israel embarks on a land offensive, fanning fears that the region could be embroiled in a wider conflict, with several observers saying such a scenario is becoming increasingly

likely.

In a sign that regional players were becoming involved, the Pentagon said a US Navy ship in the Red Sea on Thursday shot down missiles and drones that had been fired by Iran-backed Huthi rebels in Yemen, possibly at Israel.

The likelihood of a Middle East war has sent oil prices surging and both contracts extended the week's gains Friday, rising almost one percent in Asian trade.

"The risk premium in crude has shot up again," said Vandana Hari, of Vanda Insights.

"As long as the Israel-Hamas tensions run high, crude will remain susceptible to further spikes on signs of an escalation."

Meanwhile, traders are wrestling with the prospect that US interest rates will remain elevated for some time as the Fed battles to contain inflation.

On Thursday, Powell suggested decision-makers would not hike at their next meeting at the end of October but left the door open to more tightening down the line.

News that weekly jobless claims came in lower than expected, suggesting

the labour market was tighter than many predicted, dealt a blow to traders' confidence.

"Inflation is still too high, and a few months of good data are only the beginning of what it will take to build confidence that inflation is moving down sustainably toward our goal," Powell told a conference in New York.

Additional evidence of "persistently above-trend growth" or fresh signs of tightness in the labour market "could warrant further tightening of monetary policy".

His comments echoed those of his colleagues on the policy board in recent weeks, with a focus on incoming data.

The yield on the 10-year US Treasury note, seen as a proxy for US interest rates, rose above five percent for the first time since 2007.

That weighed on US markets, with all three main indexes losing between 0.8 and one percent.

And Asia followed suit, with Tokyo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, Taipei, Manila and Jakarta all in the red.

Sydney, Seoul and Wellington were all more than one percent lower.



In brief

Police bars fans from chanting 'Pakistan Zindabad'

BENGALURU (Web Desk): Netizens were left furious after a Pakistani cricket fan was prevented from chanting "Pakistan Zindabad" during the Australia match, being played at Bengaluru's M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on Friday. The video, which has been doing rounds on social media, shows a fan being asked by a policeman not to chant pro-Pakistani slogans, saying "bharat mata ki jai good but Pakistan Zindabad not good". The policeman backed off after the Pakistani fan refused to accept such an absurd restriction and forced the officer to repeat his instructions on camera. "[We] have come from Pakistan, what should we say if not Pakistan Zindabad," argued the Pakistani fan while questioning the policeman as to why he couldn't say Pakistan Zindabad as he's attending the match featuring the Men in Green. Previously, Pakistani cricketers were also subjected to inappropriate chants from fans at Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi stadium throughout the India match. Meanwhile, NDTV, quoting Bengaluru's City Police Commissioner B Dayanand, reported that "higher authorities" have instructed to prevent the fans from engaging in provocative acts. The video however, has drawn the ire of Pakistani cricket fans and netizens who have taken to social media to reprimand such restrictions that are contradictory to the spirit of the game. "Shocking and upsetting," Momin Saqib said on his X account while reacting to the viral video.

Djokovic to open 2024 at United Cup

SYDNEY (Agencies): World number one Novak Djokovic will open his 2024 season at the mixed teams United Cup in Australia, but injury-plagued Rafael Nadal was not on the Spain team announced Friday. Djokovic will spearhead Serbia at the tournament from December 29-January 7 in Sydney and Perth as he builds towards the defence of his Australian Open title. Nadal was part of the Spain team in 2023 before injuring his hip at the opening Grand Slam of the year. He has been out of action since and underwent surgery in June. Tennis Australia chief Craig Tiley said this month Nadal planned to make his return to Grand Slam tennis at the Australian Open, which follows the United Cup. Nadal responded on social media by thanking Tiley for his "confidence", without confirming if he would appear. There are ATP events in Brisbane, Adelaide and Auckland in early January that Nadal could also use to prepare for the Australian Open. Nine of the world's top 20 men and five of the top 10 women will feature at the United Cup, with defending champions the United States among the favourites, led by Jessica Pegula and Taylor Fritz. Poland, spearheaded by world number two and four-time Grand Slam winner Iga Swiatek, were named top seeds for the 18-nation event. Other big names to sign on include Stefanos Tsitsipas, Casper Ruud, Alexander Zverev, Maria Sakkari, and Caroline Garcia. "They are all set to play in a format designed to showcase both the men's and women's game and the unique equality in tennis," said tournament director Stephen Farrow. Countries will be drawn into six groups of three and compete in a round-robin format.

World Cup 2023

David Warner hits 163 as Australia beat Pakistan

BENGALURU (Agencies): David Warner's superb 163 inspired Australia to a 62-run victory over Pakistan as they breathed life back into their World Cup campaign. Warner shared a stand of 259 for the first wicket with Mitchell Marsh, who made 121, before Pakistan fought back.

Fast bowler Shaheen Afridi took 5-54 to help limit the Aussies to 367-9.

Pakistan had already chased a World Cup record total of 345 against Sri Lanka earlier in the tournament, but fell short of repeating the feat here.

In a World Cup in which there has been a dearth of close encounters, this match at least threatened to go to the wire before Pakistan's batting crumbled.

An opening stand of 134 from Shafique and Imam-ul-Haq provided a platform, only for both men to fall to the medium pace of Marcus Stoinis (2-40).

Australia skipper Pat Cummins redeemed himself for an earlier drop with a fine catch to get rid of counterpart Babar Azam (18) before Rizwan's dismissal, trapped plumb in front to the impressive Zampa, effectively signalled the end of the match as a contest. Warner and Marsh had earlier batted with the kind of zest hitherto absent from Australia's performances in the tournament thus far.

There were a couple of blemishes on Warner's knock as was dropped twice on 10 and 105, but he and Marsh made hay in favourable batting conditions. Australia's victory lifted them above England and up to fourth in the table, level on points with Pakistan but ahead of them on net run-rate.

Openers star but

Aussie batting doubts remain

Australia were bowled out for 199 and 177 in defeats to India and South Africa, and nervously chased down 210 against

Sri Lanka, in their opening three matches of what had been an underwhelming start to the tournament for the five-time winners. When Marsh deposited the first ball he faced in the match from Afridi back over his head into the stands for six, it showed an intent to break the shackles of those tame efforts.

Marsh's long levers allowed him to access areas down the ground and through the covers. His style dovetailed superbly with the pugnacious Warner, all waspish cuts and wristy flicks, as Pakistan's attack struggled to find consistent lengths. One six from Warner was especially eye-catching, as he hit the roof of the of the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium with an audacious paddled flick, down on on knee, off Haris Rauf. It was measured at 98 metres - the second-biggest six of the tournament.

The pair reached their hundreds in consecutive deliveries from Mohammad Nawaz - Warner off 85 balls and Marsh reaching the milestone at exactly a run a ball. Such a monumental first-wicket partnership - a run away from equalling Australia's highest-ever stand for any wicket at a World Cup - laid an incredible base for Australia.

Yet it was followed by a tepid effort from their middle-order batters, the minds of who seemed scrambled on how to best approach the task at the back end of the innings as they lost six wickets for 38 runs.

Stoinis (21) and Josh Inglis (13) were the only other players to make double figures as Glenn Maxwell (0), Steve Smith (7) and Marnus Labuschagne (8) floundered.

A total in excess of 400 beckoned for Australia but they fell well short of that and instead left question marks over the balance and form of their batting unit.

Pandya ruled out of India's clash with New Zealand

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya has been ruled out of India's ICC World Cup 2023 clash with New Zealand after suffering an injury in the win over Bangladesh, the BCCI said in a statement Friday.

Pandya twisted his ankle Thursday just three balls into his stint as the first change in the ninth over, after being hit for consecutive boundaries by Liton Das. Following prolonged on-field treatment, he tried running in to bowl but could only hobble towards the crease and eventually limped off the field.

Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) boss Jay Shah said Pandya would not fly to Dharamsala for Sunday's match with the

Kiwis. He would instead "join the team directly in Lucknow where India play England" for their next match on the following Sunday, Shah said in a statement.

Hardik Pandya's departure saw Kohli bowl for the first time in six years when he took charge for the rest of the over. India defeated Bangladesh by seven wickets with Virat Kohli making his 48th ODI century to close in on Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 hundreds in the format.

Chasing a modest 257, India comfortably raised 261 for the loss of three wickets and 51 balls to spare. Indian captain Rohit Sharma once again scripted a flying start

for his side in the run chase as he, alongside Shubman Gill, scored 88 runs for the first wicket stand.

Rohit, who majorly dominated the opening stand, fell just shy of his half-century as he perished after scoring a 40-ball 48 which featured seven boundaries and two sixes. Virat Kohli then joined Shubman Gill at the crease and together another crucial partnership for India, adding 44 runs to the total before the latter perished soon after amassing his half-century.

He remained a notable contributor to India's fourth victory in the ICC World Cup 2023 with a brilliant 53. His 55-ball knock included five boundaries and two boundaries.

11 matches decided in Futsal Championship

ISLAMABAD (APP): A total of 11 matches were decided on the opening day of the All Pakistan Inter Board Futsal Championship here at the Pakistan Sports Complex on Friday.

Dr. Ghulam Ali Malah, Executive Director, Inter Board Coordination Committee (IBCC) inaugurated the 3-day event.

Chairman, Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Rawalpindi, Muhammad Adnan Khan, Secretary, Inter-Board Coordination Committee,

Muhammad Buksh and others officials including Shamashad Ali, Muhammad Fahmeed, Malik Suhail, Raja Sarwar and Rana Abid were also present on the occasion.

In the matches played, Mardan beat Kohat by 2-1 goals, Swat beat Karachi BIE by 5-2 goals, Bannu defeated Peshawar by 3-0 goals, Mardan beat Karachi BIE by 2-0 goals, Kohat beat Swat by 3-1 goals, Quetta defeated Karachi SBTE by 2-0 goals, Islamabad beat Rawalpindi by 2-1 goals, Quetta defeat-

ed Faisalabad by 2-0 goals Islamabad beat Karachi SBTE by 6-0 goals, Quetta beat Rawalpindi by 5-2 goals, Karachi BIE defeated Bannu by 2-0 while Islamabad and Faisalabad match ended in a 3-3 draw.

Eleven teams from across the country were taking part in the championship and have been divided into two groups. Two teams from each group will qualify for the semifinals. The semifinals and final match will be played on October 22.

Messi should have own Ballon d'Or category, says Guardiola

LONDON (AFP): Pep Guardiola says Lionel Messi should have his own category at the Ballon d'Or but admitted the World Cup winner and Manchester City hotshot Erling Haaland would both be deserving winners of the prize.

Messi, who recently left Paris Saint-Germain for Inter Miami, is favourite to win the Ballon d'Or for a record-extending eighth time later this month after leading Argentina to World Cup glory last year.

Haaland could be his main rival after scoring 52 goals in 53 games to help City win the Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup last season. Guardiola knows the qualities of both players better than most, previously coaching Messi at Barcelona and currently managing Haaland with City.

"Always I said that the Ballon d'Or should be in two

sections, one for Messi, and after look for the other one, so Haaland should win, yes," Guardiola said on Friday. "We won the treble because he scored 50 million goals but of course Messi, if you tell me the worst season for Messi is the best for the rest of the players."

"Both deserve it, so what can I say?"

Guardiola added: "Egotistically, I would say I want Erling because he helped us to achieve what we achieved, I would love it, but I won't tell you it's unfair if Leo wins. "It's nice that many players for Man City will be there for the first time in many years and challenging for these trophies. That makes us so proud for our organisation."

The Ballon d'Or awards ceremony takes place in Paris on October 30. City are hoping to get back to winning ways against

Brighton on Saturday after losing their previous two league matches against Wolves and Arsenal. City midfielder Kalvin Phillips, who has struggled for game time under Guardiola, this week admitted he needs to play more at club level as he seeks to retain his place in the England squad ahead of Euro 2024.

That has increased speculation he could leave in January and Guardiola did not rule out the possibility. "The transfer window is over, now we are here together. When we need a game with transitions, Kalvin is perfect," he said. "When there is something you need to do, there are still one or two players who can do it better. That's the simple reason. "He will be here until winter. After, I don't know what will happen because nobody knows once the window is open."



BENGALURU: Australia used a review for Adam Zampa to get the wicket of Iftikhar Ahmed.

PCB added five players to men's central contracts list

PESHAWAR (APP): After a thorough review, Pakistan Cricket Board has decided to name five additional players in the men's central contracts list bringing the total number of players offered contracts to 30. The three-year contracts deal announced last month, will run from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2026.

The previous 25-man list of players was finalized by the Najam Sethi-led management committee but the new management committee under its chairman Zaka Ashraf has decided to review the list. The new inductions include Abrar Ahmed (Category C), Noman Ali (Category C), Tayyab Tahir (Category D), Aamir Jamal (Category D) and Arshad Iqbal (Category D).

Sarfraz Ahmed, former captain, was previously named in Category "D" but has been elevated to Category B. He is presently Pakistan's first-choice wicket-keeper in the red-ball format. He made his comeback to the Test side

in December last year and has amassed 367 runs across four matches at an average of 61.16. The 36-year-old was named player of the series for his three half-centuries and one century in four innings against New Zealand at home.

Abrar and Noman, placed in Category C, have been regular Pakistan's Test team members over the past year. Mystery spinner Abrar has picked up 38 wickets in six matches since making his debut against England in Multan while left-arm spinner Noman has taken 17 wickets in four games over the last 12 months.

Aamir (4 T20Is), Arshad (3 T20Is) and Tayyab (3 T20Is) slotted in Category D continue to remain in the plans of the national men's selection committee. Below is the updated list of players with categories who have been offered contracts:

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

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

Category C: Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Imad Wasim and Noman Ali

Category D: Aamir Jamal, Arshad Iqbal, Faheem Ashraf, Hasan Ali, Iftikhar Ahmed, Ihsanullah, Mohammad Haris, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Saud Shakeel, Shahnawaz Dahani, Shan Masood, Tayyab Tahir, Usama Mir and Zaman Khan

The contracts offered significantly increased monthly retainers, with a share of the ICC revenue incorporated into the overall monthly remuneration. The three-year tenure of the contracts will have its financial model locked for the three years but a list of players will be appraised after 12 months. The previous central contract cycle expired on 30 June and the new agreement was deemed effective from July 1, 2023.

Noor Salim wins 2nd Bank of Khyber Junior Badminton C'ship

PESHAWAR (APP): Promising Noor Salim and Muhammad Zaid Friday clinched the trophy of the 2nd Bank of Khyber Junior Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Badminton Championship Under-19 Girls and Boys after defeating their respective rivals in final played at Tariq Wadoor Indoor Badminton Hall.

Managing Director and CEO of Bank of Khyber, Mohammad Ali Gul Faraz and Mrs. Ali Gul Faraz, gave trophies and cash to the winning players in four different categories U-15, U17 and U19 Boys and Girls Open wherein more than 150 players took part from all across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Noor Saleem of Peshawar won the girls single trophy, Muhammad Zaid of Peshawar beat Taimur Khan of Bannu in a thrilling contest in the U19 boys singles and success-

fully defended their titles, while the U-17 trophy went to Fahad Ahmed of Bannu. Group Head Asif, Group Head SEVP Ehsan, Provincial Badminton Association President Zafar Ali Khan, Badminton National Champion Murad Ali, Provincial Badminton Association General Secretary Amjad Khan, Organizing Secretary Sadaqat Shah, and other personalities were present.

Bank of Khyber, Directorate of Sports KP in collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Badminton Association organized Junior Badminton Championship in which in the girls singles Noor Salim of Peshawar won the trophy by defeating Ambar Khan 21-15, 21-12 and 21-16 in straight sets final.

Muhammad Zaid of Peshawar defeated Taimur Khan of Bannu 21-19, 18-21, 21-19 and 23-21 in a thrilling final witnessed by

a capacity crowd present on this occasion.

In the U-17 final, Fahad Ahmed of Bannu defeated Shahid Ali of Swat by 21-18, 19-21 and 21-17, in the U-15 final, Najam Ul Saqib defeated Hammad Khan of Peshawar in straight sets, the score was 21-19, 23-21 and 21-18 while in women's doubles Ambar Khan and Noor Salim of Peshawar defeated Khakla Zaman and Tanzila Zaman by 21-15, 21-19 and 21-21.

Over 150 players from all over the province participated in the Championship. Chief guest Khyber Bank Managing Director CEO Muhammad Ali Gul Faraz said that the enthusiasm of young boys and girls in sports.

"I am very happy to see the enthusiasm because what we learn in sports is useful to be a good citizen in the society and at the same time live a healthy life," he said. He said the

Bank of Khyber always gave importance to sports and that is why it extended all out support to different games including squash, hockey, football and Martial Arts Games.

He announced that the said Championship would be organized every year like squash, football, hockey and other events so that good players could come up through competitions.

He also appreciated Secretary Organizing Committee Mian Sadaqat Shah and his team for organizing the event in befitting manners. At the end, Managing Director and CEO Bank of Khyber Muhammad Ali Gul Faraz and Mrs. Ali Gul Faraz, gave away trophies and cash to the winning players in four different categories U-15, U17 and U19 Boys and Girls Open wherein more than 150 players took part from all across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Bavuma thrilled his Tendulkar wish comes true

MUMBAI (AFP): Temba Bavuma said he would fulfil a cherished ambition on Saturday when he leads out South Africa in a World Cup match against England at the Wankhede Stadium, the home ground of his boyhood idol Sachin Tendulkar.

One of the Mumbai venue's most memorable moments came when it staged the 2011 World Cup final, with Tendulkar a member of the India side that defeated Sri Lanka to the delight of his adoring fans.

South Africa captain Bavuma, an admirer of the batting great, told a pre-match press conference on Friday: "I think for me, growing up, idolising a guy like Sachin Tendulkar, the Wankhede was a stadium you always heard about."

"So, to have that opportunity to be playing, that's another tick off my list as a cricketer."

By contrast, South Africa's Quinton de Kock, who has already made hundreds against Sri Lanka and Australia this World Cup, knows the Wankhede well from his time playing for the Mumbai Indians in the T20 Indian Premier League.

"The guys that have played here, JP Duminy, Quinton, they've spoken about how it can be a batter's paradise," said opening batsman



Bavuma.

"You get value for your shots and the ball seems to travel further...If it is your day, you can fill your boots. "And I guess just the atmosphere of it all, it being a full ground, can really be something to enjoy."

Both sides head into Saturday's match on the back of surprise losses with reigning champions England well beaten by Afghanistan and South Africa defeated by non-Test side the Netherlands.

Nevertheless, the 33-year-old Bavuma said: "I think it could be one hell of a game if you've got two teams of this calibre who play close

to their best."

"X-factor Stokes"

England star Ben Stokes is set to play his first match of the tournament after the star all-rounder missed the first three games with a hip injury. "A fully fit Ben Stokes obviously does strengthen the England team," said Bavuma.

"He is an X-factor player, he's the guy that can change the course of the game...There's a lot respect for him, we know what he can do."

South Africa were on course to make it three wins from three this World Cup when they reduced the Netherlands to 140-7 only for their opponents to finish on 245-8.

A target of 246 should still have been within range for the Proteas but they were dismissed for 207.

"We got them to 140-7 and then that's where the wheels fell off," said Bavuma.

"I think we were put under pressure in the death period. And I think how we've bowled within the death hasn't been at our best."

"And then I think from a batting point of view, probably our biggest misdemeanour as the batters is that we took that negative energy from the field."

"So, I think there's specific areas that we've identified that we want to be better at."



In brief

96,700 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 96,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 76,200 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 35,600 cusecs and 35,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1210.50 feet, which was 160.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 8,900 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 49,000, 46,000, 48,800 and 15,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 14,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 9,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Boy reunites with his family

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Police, Khanna Police Station team has reunited a missing boy with his parents on application from a citizen. According to the spokesman of Islamabad Police, he said the Khanna Police Station team has received an application from a citizen in which he stated that his son namely Muhammad Asim had been missing and could not be traced despite the family's intense efforts. He said that upon receiving the application Khanna Police teams used technical and human resources and successfully traced the missing boy and reunited him safely with his family. The spokesman said the parents appreciated the police team's efforts and thanked the Islamabad Capital Police for immediate assistance. Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP), Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan said that the safety of lives and property of the citizens is our prime responsibility and no stone would be returned to secure the federal capital.

Two bike lifter gangs busted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police in their ongoing operations against car and bike lifter gangs managed to bust two gangs and rounded up their five members besides recovering 15 motorcycles, and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Rawat police conducted a raid and rounded up two members of a dacoit and bike lifter gang including Irfanullah and Rehmatullah. Police also recovered 10 stolen motorcycles from their possession. The arrested accused are record-holder criminals and have been shifted to jail for identification parade. In another raid, Gungmandi police held three members of the Ismail gang namely Humayoun Ismail, ringleader, Sheikh Naveed and Babar Ali and recovered five stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process. Division Superintendents of Police appreciated the performance of police teams and directed them to continue operations against the car, bike lifters and other lawbreakers.

NA Speaker condemns genocide, massacre of Palestinians in Gaza

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaz Ashraf has said that genocide, massacre and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in Gaza and adjoining areas is condemnable and reprehensible.

He expressed these views during his visit to the Embassy of Palestine in Islamabad on Friday.

He said the world must not be a silent spectator in this darkest hour of human's history, urging it to come forward immediately and play its due role not only in stopping the

mayhem and barbarity of Zionist forces but in resolution of the Palestinian issue in accordance with the UN Security Council and OIC Resolutions.

During his meeting with Palestinian Ambassador to Pakistan Ahmed Jawad Rabei, the Speaker pledged unwavering support for Palestinian cause. The Speaker voiced his disapproval of the "double standards exhibited by champions of Human Rights regarding Israeli aggression.

Raja Pervaz Ashraf also expressed profound admi-

ration for the courage and sacrifices made by the Palestinian people, including children who are steadfastly resisting oppression with determination and an unwavering spirit.

The Palestinian Ambassador thanked the Speaker for visiting the Embassy of Palestine and extending unwavering support to the Palestine in these disturbing times. He said the sentiments of Pakistani people and its leadership has imparted bravery and courage to each Palestinian.

Citizens cooperation essential, says Secretary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Secretary for Power Division, Rashid Mahmood Langrial Friday said that government was working on an action plan to improve the energy supply to make the country free of load shedding and urged citizens' cooperation which was essential during nationwide drive against power theft.

In an exclusive talk with PTV news channel, he hailed the citizen of Mardan city which was recently declared as a load shedding free city with the huge cooperation of citizens, adding, the "Zero-Theft, Zero-Load-shedding" initiative in Mardan was a model for other

cities and region which had showcased the positive impact of targeted measures to combat power theft and ensure a reliable electricity supply.

The Secretary Power Division further mentioned that Mardan city had earned the status of a load-shedding-free city, adding, he praised the efforts of the police and PESCO officials in the campaign against electricity theft. The city, which faced significant power theft challenges, has successfully curbed power theft by 100 percent, he added.

Replying a question, he emphasizes that eliminating power theft is crucial

for ending load-shedding across the country, adding, the Ministry had established a central control room in the Power Division to monitor the ongoing campaign against power theft.

To another question, he replied that because of the electricity thief practices in past and those who refuse to pay bills, others have to pay higher bills, adding, until this is stopped, electricity prices will not come down. He once again appealed to the citizens of any city to immediately share information with the FIA team and inform them about persons involved in electricity theft.

Nadeem visits infectious diseases hospital

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan on Friday visited Infectious Diseases Hospital in Chak Shahzad.

The purpose of the visit was to take stock of the facilities and performance in the hospital. The Infectious Diseases Hospital consists of 250 beds. Dr. Nadeem took notice and expressed concern over the hospital not being functional for last two years.

The minister formed a three-member committee to make the hospital fully operational, which would be headed by Dr. Muhammad Salman, Chief Executive Officer, National Institute of Health.

The committee will formulate an integrated strategy to make the hospital fully functional. The minister directed the committee to submit its recommendations to him on urgent basis.

Later, Dr Nadeem Jan visited Regional Blood Centre. More than forty staff members were absent from the Regional Blood Centre. He took notice and instructed to issue explanation letters to the staff absent from duty.

The minister questioned as to why such a big safe blood donation center was non-functional, adding strict action would be taken against the responsible. The minister ordered an immediate investigation into the

non-functionality of the Regional Blood Center.

The minister said, "We are ensuring merit and transparency in the health sector," adding salaries of Infectious Diseases Hospital and Regional Blood Centre staff should be paid without delay.

He said that implementation of the reform agenda was necessary for improvement in the health sector.

He directed to the officers to pay attention to their assigned duties, adding strict action would be taken for negligence in performance of duties. The minister said efforts were being made to ensure the availability of the best medical facilities in the country.

Parents urged to embrace awareness-parenting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Child rights activist Bushra Iqbal on Friday called on parents to nurture their children well in order to prevent them from resorting to violence and secure a brighter future for them.

In an interview with PTV News, Iqbal highlighted the importance of quality time spent with children, both offline and online, in today's rapidly changing world.

She noted that children are facing a multitude of threats, and their emotional health is particularly vulnerable in the face of these challenges.

Iqbal expressed concern about the growing trend of children being neglected in favour of screen time, stressing the importance of physical activity and social interaction for children's mental health.

The activist also advised parents to use online safety tools to restrict their children's access to inappropriate content. She encouraged parents to keep their children busy with positive activities in order to prevent them from engaging in harmful behaviours.

Iqbal emphasized that parents play a pivotal role

in their children's lives and that they are responsible for their children's physical, psychological, social, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional well-being. She stressed that parents should look at their children in the best possible way if they want them to become valuable members of society.

"Parents should know that they are responsible for the upbringing of their children," said Iqbal urging parents to take their parenting responsibilities seriously and to make a concerted effort to nurture them into responsible individuals.

Police arrest 20 for possessing 144 bottles liquor, 13 kg charras

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Humdani conducted raids in different areas and netted 20 accused for possessing 144 bottles of liquor, 45 liters liquor, 13 kg drugs and other items. According to a police spokesman, Rattaamral police held an accused namely Banaras for having 2200 grams charras and Rab Nawaz for possessing 1050 grams charras.

Sadiqabad police rounded up Khair ul

Rehman on recovery of 1620 grams charras while Morgah police held Yasir and seized 1500 grams charras.

Safdar Wah, Waris Khan, Dhamial, Kalar Syedan, Gungmandi, City, Rattaamral, Bani, Cantt and Saddar Baroni police arrested Umar, Khalid, Shakeel, Adnan, Shehzad, Adil, Nadir Khan, Tanveer, Luqman, Saqib, Sohban, Mohsin, Ali and others and recovered over 6560 grams charras and 144 bottles with 45 liters liquor. The CPO said that strict action in accordance

with the law was being taken against the lawbreakers and operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers, aerial firing, illegal weapon holders and other lawbreakers would continue.

Police arrest 12 for possessing illegal weapons: Rawalpindi district police on the directives of the Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi conducted raids in different areas and netted 12 accused for possessing 12 pistols 30 bore, ammunition and other items.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaz Ashraf called on Palestinian Ambassador to Pakistan Mr. Ahmed Jawad Rabei. — APP Photo

Ashrafi re-designated as Special Representative to PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi has been re-designated as the 'Special Representative to the Prime Minister (SRPM)' on 'Religious Harmony and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East & Islamic Countries'.

Ashrafi, a prominent religious scholar and Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council has been serving as a bridge between the government and religious communities, both nationally and internationally. His re-designation to this crucial role underscores the trust and confidence the government places in his ability to foster relations with Islamic countries and promote religious coexistence within Pakistan.

Ashrafi, known for his deep knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence and his commitment to peaceful coexistence, has played a pivotal

role in engaging religious leaders and scholars from various sects and schools of thought. His efforts have led to significant strides in minimizing sectarian tensions and promoting religious tolerance in Pakistan.

Ashrafi as the SRPM actively participated in diplomatic efforts to strengthen Pakistan's ties with Middle Eastern and Islamic countries. He has been a key player in negotiations and dialogues aimed at resolving regional conflicts and promoting a peaceful resolution to ongoing issues.

His re-designation is seen as a testament to his effective diplomacy and mediation skills in the international arena. Ashrafi's extensive network of connections within the Middle East and Islamic world is expected to play a vital role in enhancing Pakistan's standing on the global stage.

The Special Representative's responsibilities include representing Pakistan at international forums and promoting the country's interests within the Islamic bloc.

Additionally, he will continue to work on fostering religious harmony within Pakistan and addressing issues related to interfaith relations.

This re-designation has received positive reactions from various quarters, including political leaders, religious scholars, and the international community, who recognize Ashrafi's valuable contributions to promoting peace and harmony.

Ashrafi's unwavering commitment to his role as the Special Representative is anticipated to further strengthen Pakistan's relations with Middle Eastern and Islamic countries and contribute to global peace and religious harmony.

Operation in full swing against money laundering

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Gujranwala Zone Sajid Akram Chaudhry on Friday raided against elements involved in illegal currency exchange and arrested two suspects in the operation.

He recovered domestic and foreign currency of 1 crore 31 lakh rupees, 15460-euro, 4 lakh Japanese yen, 5626 Malaysian ringgit, 1941 US dollars, 5745 Qatari riyals, 38520 Thai baht, 3690 British pounds, 53781 Saudi Riyals, 815 Canadian Dollars, 1000 UAE Dirhams and currency of other countries from the custody of accused.

According to the spokesperson of FIA, the arrested accused were doing currency exchange business without a license. Among the accused were Shahid Nadeem and Mohammad Azam who were arrested from Bano Bazar Sialkot. The accused could not satisfy the authorities regarding the recovered currency upon which the authorities registered a case against them and the further investigations were started.

Meanwhile, FIA KP zone in a continued crack down on the elements involved in the Hawala/Hundi's illegal business, arrested two accused in different operations. The action was Proceeded by the Commercial Banking Circle Peshawar upon a secret information that the accused were involved in the Hawala/Hundi and illegal currency exchange business. The accused include Wahdat Khan and Mazhar Alin were arrested from Chowk Yadgar Peshawar and the team recovered total of 9 lakh Pakistani rupees, 400 Saudi riyals and 7200 Afghanis from their possession.

‘Palestine’s situation aggravating extremely’

RAWALPINDI (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick on Friday said that the worst kind of genocide was being carried out in Palestine and the humanitarian situation in Gaza was aggravating extremely every day.

Talking to media on the occasion to express solidarity with the innocent Palestinians at Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce Industry (RCCI), she said that war crimes were being committed in Palestine and hospitals were bombarded with heavy weapons resulting deaths of children, women and innocent people which was sheer violations of human rights protocols.

Condemning the Israeli atrocities and silence of world leaders, she said "At this crucial moment, we stand with our people in solidarity, compassion, and hope. We understand the hardships and struggles they are facing we want to offer

our support and encouragement to our people."

Mushaal Mullick also condemned the unrelieved Israel's slaughters, oppression and siege of the Gaza Strip, resulting in a grave humanitarian tragedy.

She said that the people of Pakistan and Kashmir expressed their unwavering support for the people of Palestine. "We demand an immediate cessation of indiscriminate bombings, immediate lifting of siege in Gaza, and an adherence to International laws and Geneva conventions to ensure protection of civilians especially in conflict zones."

She also called upon the international community to acknowledge the critical human rights violations in Gaza and advocate for the establishment of an immediate Humanitarian Corridor to ensure essential medical and food supplies reach those in dire need in Gaza, emphasizing the importance of global intervention and collaboration in reaching an immedi-

ate ceasefire and resolution of the Palestine issue.

A resolution was also adopted unanimously for the condemnation of atrocities and human rights violations by Israel in Palestine. The participants demanded the world powers, UN and OIC to play their role in resolving the conflict, permanent peace and humanitarian aid for Palestine.

"In this difficult time, our Muslim brothers and sisters in Palestine are not alone," remarked RCCI President Saqib Rafiq. "We stand behind them in firm support for peace, justice, and a better future", he added.

Earlier, a walk was also carried out from Chamber House to the Gymkhana club. The rally participants including Chamber members, Trade Associations, women members and students from various institutes carrying placards, banners and Palestinian flags chanted vociferous slogans against Israel and in favor of Palestinian brethren.

Over 580 students receive degrees at 29th Convocation of NUST CEME

RAWALPINDI (APP): Over 580 undergraduate, MS and PhD students were conferred degrees at the 29th convocation of NUST College of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (CEME) held on Friday.

The degrees were awarded in the disciplines of Electrical, Mechanical, Computer and Software and Mechatronics Engineering, and Engineering Management. Saqib Ahmad, Country Managing Director, System Analysis Programme Development (SAP) attended the event as chief guest.

Rector NUST Engr Javed Mahmood Bukhari conferred the degrees upon the graduates.

Delivering his convocation address, the chief guest congratulated the graduating students and commended NUST College of EME and the university at large for maintaining quality standards in teaching and research.

He also lauded the college for its focus on research and development both at undergraduate and postgraduate level and for maintaining the accreditation of its Engineering programmes as per the standards of the Washington Accord.

Bestowing a few pieces of advice upon the graduates, the chief guest said, now that they had graduated, they needed to take their skills of enquiry into the real world brimming with unprecedented challenges.

He hoped that they would apply the knowledge and skills gained at their alma mater to bring a difference in the lives of the needy and deprived segments of the society. President's Gold Medal at the undergraduate level was awarded to Engr Saad Tariq in Electrical Engineering, Engr Daniyal Ziafat in Mechanical Engineering, Engr Fatima Mansoor in Computer and Software Engineering and Engr Rana Haris Javed in Mechatronics Engineering.

President's Gold Medal for best performance in post-graduate programmes was awarded to Engr Sammia Tariq in Electrical Engineering, and Engr Fahad ul Hassan Asif Mattoo and Engr Sidra Muquddas in Mechatronics Engineering.

Meanwhile, Best Teacher Award was conferred upon Dr. Hamid Jabbar, Best Community Service Award (Faculty) was awarded to Dr. Umar Shahbaz Khan and Best Community Service Award (Student) was awarded to Bilal Arif, DE-41 (Mts).

41 beggars netted outside mosques in federal capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a major crackdown on professional begging, the Islamabad Civil Defense arrested 41 alms seekers from outside mosques after Friday prayers in different areas of the federal capital.

The operation was carried out under the directions of the Deputy Commissioner Islamabad and the supervision of the Assistant Commissioner Secretariat and the Assistant Director of Civil Defense.

The teams of Civil Defense personnel were deployed in different areas of the city, including outside mosques, to arrest professional beggars.

A total of 28 beggars were arrested by the Civil Defense teams, while 13 beggars were arrested by the Assistant Commissioner City from Kohsar Market and Aabpara.

The beggars were transferred to the police station, while the minor children were sent to the Edhi Center.

The operation against beggars is ongoing in Islamabad under the supervision of Assistant Commissioners on a daily basis.

The crackdown on professional begging is aimed at curbing this social menace and providing relief to the citizens.

Uzbek team to visit Kabul

KABUL (TOLOnews): Uzbekistan delegation is expected to visit Afghanistan by end of this year to discuss the Qosh Tepa canal—a water canal launched in Afghanistan to channel water from the Amu River to other parts of the country. The governor of Surkhandarya region, Ulugbek Kosimov, was quoted in the report as saying that despite the canal being built from a point on Afghanistan's border with Tajikistan, it would have an impact on all countries of the river basin.

The Frontier Post

Rabi-us-Sanni 04, 1445 — Saturday, October 21, 2023

Traders raised concerned

KABUL (TOLOnews): An association of Afghan exporters and importers residing in China raised concerns about the imposition of restrictions by neighbor country on the transit of commodities. Head of association, Khan Agha Gulzad, said that traders have sustained millions of dollars in losses as their goods remained stranded in neighbor country. The restrictions will deteriorate the Afghan economy overtime and the goods are mainly from the individuals.

Climate change negatively impacting Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLOnews): The United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) is concerned about the negative impacts of climate change in Afghanistan.

The UNAMA Climate Change Officer said Afghanistan is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world and needs to work together in this field.

Officials of the Environmental Protection Agency called on the international community to resume suspended projects to mitigate the impacts of climate change in Afghanistan.

The head of UNAMA's Environmental Protection Division (UNAMA) told TOLOnews on a visit to Kandahar that Afghanistan is now facing a high threat of climate change issues.

Charity Watson said that it needs to work collaboratively to mitigate the negative

impacts of climate change in the country.

"We are looking very closely at this issue. Climate change resilience in Afghanistan cannot wait and we are exploring what are the possibilities for opening up the suspended climate financing mechanism, we cannot promise anything but we are looking at this issue closely," said Charity Watson, head of the Department of Environmental Protection of UNAMA.

Together, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials are calling on the international community to restart suspended projects to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change worth more than \$800 million in Afghanistan.

"The 32 projects being implemented in Afghanistan were worth nearly \$826 million and were in

the diversity of life, forests and fighting drought," said Muhibullah Bahar, representative of the National Environmental Protection Agency.

A number of citizens also called on the acting government to do more to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change in the country.

"We call on the international community and our friendly and neighboring countries, especially the United Nations, to cooperate in this regard," said Taqi Sadat, Bamyan resident.

"One of the main reasons for this is the lack of water and seedlings that we face," said Jawid Ahmad, a Kandahar resident.

According to environmental experts, repeated droughts, reduced rains and lower groundwater levels are the negative effects of climate change in the country.

Mental health issues plague Herat victims

HERAT (TOLOnews): Earthquakes in the province have left many residents with mental illness, doctors at the Afghanistan's Herat Provincial Hospital said.

More than 1,600 people suffering from mental health problems caused by the quake have been brought to Herat Regional Hospital over the past 10 days, according to the hospital's figures.

From that number of people, 400 patients were hospitalized.

Most of the people who visited the hospital are from quake-hit villages.

"Mental health patients are three times more than those with injuries. The psychological consequences of a natural calamity such as an earthquake or flood are far higher than the physical injury toll," said Qadim Mohammadi, a doctor at Herat Provincial Hospital.

"When I stand up, I fall back and rip my hair off. The doctors said stay here and take these medicines," said Mah Jabin, 20, who has been receiving treatment in the open air at the Afghanistan's Herat Provincial Hospital for two days.

Along with Mah-Jabin, dozens of other men and women are being treated in the hospital, and dozens more patients return to their homes every day after receiving medication and counseling.

"Our patient was at home during the earthquake. He was scared and when we brought him to the hospital, he was bedridden and he took medication, now he's a little better," said ?Noor Ali, a caretaker.

"A high percentage of our patients are under extreme stress, and even the majority of visitors come and say we are terrified of our homes and we are not going back there," said Mohammad Shafiq Amir, a psychiatrist in Afghanistan.

Over the past two weeks, dozens of powerful and mild earthquakes in Herat have caused people to flee their homes.

They are in difficult conditions under tents in parks and on the side of the roads.

6 pharmacies, grocery shops shut for selling expired items



L A S H K A R G A H (Pajhwok): The Public Health Department in southern Helmand province has shut six pharmacies and grocery stores for selling expired medicine and food items, an official said on Friday.

Maulvi Mohammad Qasim Riaz, deputy director of information and culture, told Pajhwok Afghan News a commission formed by the Public Health Department had monitored 60 pharmacies and wholesale stores on Thursday.

He said representatives of the provincial government, intelligence, police headquarter and municipality were part of the commission, which also included a public health law review team.

As a result of the monitoring process, the official

said, three pharmacies and as many foot stories were closed for selling expired items.

According to Riaz, about five tonnes of expired food items and medicine were set a light.

Local kitchens open to feed quake survivors



HERAT (Khaama Press): The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has announced the opening several local kitchens in Herat to provide hot meals for the earthquake survivors.

The organization announced that in Herat, 15 community kitchens have been established to empower women and alleviate hunger. They shared images and videos to showcase their efforts.

Since October 8th, these kitchens have provided hot meals to over 5,000 people

affected by the Herat earthquake.

The organization emphasizes that these aids are specifically for the earthquake survivors and have also created employment opportunities for many women alongside their relief efforts.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, the World Food Programme announced that it provides food assistance to the recent earthquake victims in Herat. However, according to this organization, \$19 million is required to ensure food security for a

hundred thousand affected individuals in Herat.

These community kitchens are a vital lifeline for the earthquake survivors, ensuring they receive nourishment during this challenging time.

In conjunction with other humanitarian organizations, the UNDP's efforts are critical to addressing the immediate needs of those impacted by the earthquake, underscoring the importance of continued support and funding to provide essential relief in Herat.

US sanctions cast pall over post-quake reconstruction in Afghanistan

HERAT (Xinhua): Living with six family members under the blankets in open ground, Mohammad, a resident displaced by devastating earthquakes in Afghanistan's Herat province, believed that the US freezing of Afghanistan's assets has undermined the local post-quake rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Afghanistan has been hit by the most destructive earthquakes in recent decades as tremors, some measuring a magnitude of 6.3, jolted the western Herat province since Oct. 7, leaving thousands of casualties.

"Even though the earthquake was over, we nearly lost the hope of life. We don't know whether we can continue our life or not," Mohammad, a 40-year-old villager in Herat, told Xinhua.

Thousands of houses

have also been damaged due to the tremors shaking several villages in Zindajan district of Herat as many areas turned to rubble, forcing the survivors to live in open ground amid increasingly cold weather.

Although the caravans and tents donated by donor nations and aid agencies have reached the quake-affected areas, the affected families need to rebuild their houses or build new shelters.

"The United States which has oppressed the people of Afghanistan for years froze our money and refused to release it. If the money were released, we could use it to rebuild our houses," Mohammad told Xinhua. "What America has done to us is with great injustice!"

Following the withdrawal of the US-led forces from the war-torn country,

Kabul's assets worth more than 9 billion US dollars were frozen by the United States as part of its sanctions on the new rulers of impoverished Afghanistan.

To further mount pressure on the Taliban-run administration, US President Joe Biden signed a decree in February last year allowing allocating 3.5 billion dollars from the frozen Afghan assets to the families of the 9/11 terror attack victims.

Echoing similar sentiment, Dawood, another local resident, opined that the US sanctions have worsened the already difficult plight for quake-hit families.

The hardship of quake survivors is palpable as they live in open ground as the weather is getting cold and the chilly winter is nearing. Each of them needs shelter to live in

ahead of snowfall.

"The United States has blocked the assets of Afghans and this has further added the suffering of the already suffered nation," Dawood, who lost five members of his family including his wife and four children, lamented.

"Definitely the sanctions have 100 percent negative impact," he said, adding that due to the measure the prices of bricks, cement, wood and other necessary building materials for rebuilding houses are rising, and far exceeding the affordability of Afghans.

Commenting on the US sanctions on post-quake reconstruction, Herat provincial government spokesman Nisar Ahmad Elias said, "America or anyone else imposing sanctions on Afghanistan will largely punish the ordinary Afghans."

Brain tumor surgery successfully performed at Dawood Hospital

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Defense of Afghanistan said on Friday that a neurosurgery team has successfully performed a brain tumor operation at the 400-bed Sardar Mohammad Dawood Khan Hospital in Afghan Capital City.

The operation was performed by a team of neurosurgeons led by Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sahibi, the Ministry of Defense of Afghanistan said.

According to the Ministry of Defense of Afghanistan, the patient's condition is well and satisfactory now.



Persistent closure of sports clubs sparks concern among women, girls

KABUL (Khaama Press): In Afghanistan, women and girls are banned from participating in sports and going to sports clubs, negatively affecting their physical and mental well-being.

Reports indicate that the Taliban administration has issued over 50 written orders and commands in the past two years, limiting women's freedom to work, study, engage in sports, or enjoy leisure activities.

Last year, the current regime issued a decree prohibiting the presence of girls and women in sports clubs, depriving thousands of girls for whom sports was a part of life from this activity.

One female coach at a sports club in Kabul, speaking to Khaama Press News Agency, said that in the past year, alongside financial difficulties and lack of financial independence, she has also experienced "isolation" from a mental perspective.

Ms Mursal Mohammadi, a coach at Kabul sports clubs for six years, told Khaama Press that sports, especially for women in Afghanistan, have numerous benefits, as she believes that exercising leads to the release of happiness hormones and makes individuals happier.

She adds that in the past, many women came to sports clubs for weight control and to address issues like back pain, knee pain, and joint problems that specialists recommended exercise for. She used to train many women.

According to her, the closure of sports clubs for women has not only harmed many women but has also created challenges for her, with the most significant being "financial difficulties" and improper mental conditions. This has led her to experience a state of "isolation and seclusion."

She, who is currently idle, emphasizes that she

eagerly awaits the club reopening day and night.

Ms Mohammadi, while pointing out that the closure of sports clubs for women has had significant adverse effects, adds: "Even though women did not have suitable mental conditions in the past, now, after the closure of sports clubs, I know women who are thinking of suicide due to economic hardship and unemployment."

Meanwhile, 26-year-old Karishma, who used to go to a Kabul sports club for weight control, says in an interview with Khaama Press that "after the arrival of the Taliban administration, sports clubs for women were closed, and not being able to go to the club for weight control has caused problems for me."

She adds that exercising requires skill, and in the absence of a gym and a coach, she cannot exercise regularly. Irregular exercises, which she has been doing for two months

without a coach's guidance, have exacerbated her problems.

Karishma emphasizes that the lack of access to women-only gyms, irregular exercise, and physical problems have also confronted her with mental issues.

The spokesperson for the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice of the Taliban declared the prohibition of women's presence in public baths, sports clubs, and public places last year through an oral order, stating that "people are disregarding gender segregation orders, and women do not have the necessary hijab or covering."

This is happening despite doctors and sports club trainers emphasizing the importance of reopening sports clubs for women, stating that regular exercise is a choice and a fundamental right that brings about physical and mental health for individuals.

‘Afghanistan aims to join China’s Belt and Road Initiative formally’

KABUL (Khaama Press): The acting minister of Industry and Commerce of the Taliban said that Afghanistan's caretaker administration intends to join China's "Belt and Road" initiative officially.

Nooruddin Azizi, the head of this ministry, said in an interview with Reuters that the Taliban administration wishes to formally become a part of the ambitious infrastructure

project "Belt and Road" initiated by Xi Jinping, the President of China.

Azizi mentioned that the Taliban administration plans to send a technical team to Beijing to discuss this objective. He stated, "We have requested China to allow us to be a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Belt and Road Initiative, and today we are discussing technical matters."

He also highlighted that China invests worldwide and should invest in Afghanistan because, in his opinion, Afghanistan is more prepared for investment than ever before.

Azizi stated, "We have everything they need, such as lithium, copper, and iron. Afghanistan is now more ready for investment than ever." In a recent development, China hosted a Belt and Road Summit, extending

invitations to representatives from the Taliban administration. Leading the delegation on behalf of the current administration was the head of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce for the Taliban.

This summit gathered representatives from 140 countries worldwide, signifying the global interest and engagement surrounding the Belt and Road Initiative.

Afghan saffron yield to surpass 23 tons this year, says Ministry



KABUL (Agencies): Officials in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock say that Afghanistan's saffron yield will exceed 23 tons this year.

"The Ministry of Agriculture pays attention to all agricultural products throughout the country, but saffron, which has the best quality in the world, has

received serious attention. I can say that this year the yield of saffron will exceed 23 tons," Misbahuddin Mustain, the spokesman of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, said.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce said that it has stepped up efforts to market saffron and has directed commer-

cial attaches to increase efforts to market saffron.

According to officials in the ministry, China, India and Turkey are the countries where Afghan saffron has been well marketed.

"We have expanded the marketing process for all domestic products and we are trying to get the country's saffron to the

European markets in addition to the countries in the region," Akhundzada Abdulsalam Javad, the spokesman of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, said.

Economic experts also consider the growth of saffron in Afghanistan important and say that the Ministry of Agriculture should increase efforts in this area.

"Afghanistan's saffron is one of the most important and international popular agricultural products of the country. It is hoped that the government will focus on it because it can be a good alternative to poppy," Lal Zazi, an economic expert, said.

Members of the Afghanistan National Saffron Production Union say that although there has been a decrease in saffron cultivation compared to 2019, the cultivation and export of saffron has been moving in a positive direction since two years ago.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi in a group photo with a delegation Rhodes Trust, United Kingdom at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Secy Economic Affairs Division calls on KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan was called on by Federal Secretary for Economic Affairs Division Dr. Kazim Niaz and a representative of the Asian Development Bank for Pakistan here on Friday. Various matters related to foreign funded projects being executed in province specially in the Newly Merged Districts came under discussion. Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and Additional Chief Secretary Imtiaz Hussain Shah were also present on the occasion.

It was agreed that special steps would be taken to accelerate pace of work on the ongoing foreign funded projects in the province to ensure their completion in the stipulated time frame. It was decided that the caretaker Chief Minister will hold monthly progress review meetings in order to speed up work on these projects whereas, the Chief Secretary will make arrangement for funding gap of these projects so that these projects are executed without any interruption.

Similarly, Additional Chief Secretary was directed to take necessary steps to remove the bottlenecks hindering the smooth execution of the projects. However, issues that could not be resolved at the level of additional chief secretary, will be taken up at higher level. It was also agreed to identify new development projects to be executed under foreign funding in the newly merged tribal districts. The chief minister directed the authorities concerned to identify such development projects that could benefit the maximum population.

SC to take up pleas seeking timely elections on 23rd

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan Friday will hear pleas for elections to be held within 90 days on October 23 (Monday).

The development was notified a day after Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa hinted at the Supreme Court's plan to hear petitions seeking timely conduct of polls in the country after the caretaker government took over in August. The petitions will be heard by a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faiz Isa and consisting of Justice Athar Minullah and Justice Aminuddin Khan.

The pleas have been filed by the Supreme Court Bar Association, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and others to ensure that polls in the country are conducted in a timely manner. The PTI has welcomed the apex court's decision to form a bench to hear petitions

seeking timely conduct of polls. "The series of serious deviations from the constitution and gross violation of the fundamental rights of the citizens is having a very negative impact on the relationship between the state and the citizens," the party's spokesperson said in a statement issued by its central media department.

The PTI maintained that the Constitution is, in all respects, the basis of the relationship between the sovereign, the state and the citizens as well as the guarantor of the survival, security and development of the country. "The Supreme Court has given a very detailed interpretation of the constitutional requirement of elections in 90 days on the request of former speaker Punjab assembly in its decision of April 4, 2023," the statement read.

The party said it hoped that the SC's three-member bench, headed by the chief justice, will complete the

hearing in a swift manner in view of the fragility of time and will ensure respect for the purpose of the Constitution regarding the holding of elections in 90 days. A day earlier, CJF Isa had indicated that the apex court may take up the pleas calling for timely elections and challenging the decision to try civilians in military courts in the coming days.

His remarks came during the discussion about adjournment of a case related to Pak Arab Refinery's employees when the lawyers for the petitioners asked the top judge to adjourn the hearing for 15 days. "Cases seeking timely general elections and trial of civilians in military courts will be fixed soon. Difficult cases are about to come in the Supreme Court and it will be tough to schedule other cases [during this period]," the chief justice remarked.

Maritime sector holds enormous potential for economy: Naval Chief

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf said that Pakistan's maritime zones have large deposits of natural resources which can enormously contribute to strengthen Pakistan's economy. He addressed the participants of 25th National Security Workshop at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad.

Chief of the Naval Staff said that Pakistan Navy besides providing impregnable defence of Pakistan's maritime frontiers also contributes towards development of maritime sector.

However, in order to exploit full maritime potential of Pakistan, private sector needs to invest in maritime related industries and can enormously benefit from it.

Naval Chief highlighted that we need to increase Pakistan's flag carriers particularly in the private sector, which will save significant foreign exchange presently being paid to foreign shipping companies as freight charges. While highlighting the challenge of marine pollution, he said that it is a clear and present danger for Pakistan and needs to be addressed on urgent basis.

Earlier, the participants were briefed on Pakistan Navy challenges and responses including PN contributions towards development of Maritime Sector. The workshop participants led by Director General Institute of Strategic Studies & Research Analysis (ISSRA) Major General Raza Aizad, comprised of parliamentarians, politicians, bureaucrats, armed forces officers as well as representatives from academia and business community. The participants highly appreciated PN efforts and proposed valuable suggestions to the Naval Chief.

JCP approves nomination of Justice Irfan as SC judge

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) on Friday unanimously approved the nomination of Justice Irfan Saadat Khan, Acting Chief Justice of Sindh High Court, as a judge of the Supreme Court. "A meeting of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan ('Commission') was convened to consider the nomination of Justice Irfan Saadat Khan," a press release said.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa stated that Justice Irfan Saadat Khan met the stipulated requirement as he was knowledgeable, well-experienced and versatile, had an upright character, and was also the most senior Judge among the chief justices and judges of all the high courts.

All the JPC members present in the meeting unanimously approved the nomination, which was also endorsed in writing by the Law Minister, who was abroad. The nomination of Justice Irfan Saadat Khan by the Commission will be sent to the Parliamentary Committee. The other item on the agenda of the meeting was to determine the criteria for appointment of high court judges. The CJF had written to the JCP members and had sought their views.

Copies of the suggestions that were received were provided to the members, who sought time to consider the same. It was decided to extend the date for receiving of submissions till October 27, which will be considered in the next meeting of the Commission.

PTI's Sher Afzal booked

ISLAMABAD (INP): Following a brawl with a police constable in the parking of the Supreme Court, a case was registered against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman's lawyer Sher Afzal Marwat. On Thursday, a video showing Marwat's scuffle with a man in the parking of the SC emerged. The case was registered on the complaint of constable Javed Humayun at the Secretariat police station in the federal capital.

The police constable in his FIR stated that Sher Afzal Marwat physically assaulted him in the SC's parking and issued dire threats. The PTI chairman's lawyer also tried to run a vehicle over him, the FIR stated. This is not the first time that Marwat is booked in a brawl case. Earlier, PTI Chairman Imran Khan's lawyer Sher Afzal Khan Marwat and PML-N Senator Dr Afnan Ullah Khan were involved in a brawl on a television show. The lawyer and senator were having a heated argument that ended up using abusive language when all of a sudden Marwat attacked the senator.

Pak to work with China on GB- Xinjiang economic linkages: PM

URUMQI (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday said Pakistan aimed to utilize the position of China's Xinjiang province as an "important node" of the economic corridor between the two countries. In this regard, he said, Pakistan would jointly work with China to identify the respective strengths of Gilgit Baltistan and Xinjiang.

Addressing the students and faculty at Xinjiang University, he said "the two neighbouring regions had the potential to build synergies for improving the livelihoods of their people." PM Kakar flew to Xinjiang's capital Urumqi Thursday evening from Beijing where he participated in the Third Belt and Road Forum and met the Chinese leadership and other foreign dignitaries. The prime minister said as per the consensus reached in Beijing during his visit, a land border at Sost, Khunjerab would be converted into an all-weather border. "We would like to upgrade the customs and other logistics services to facilitate trade and the movement of people, he said.

PM Kakar termed Gwadar a key component of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and proposed to deepen economic cooperation by effectively using the sister-city relationship with China's Kashgar and Karamay. "We seek to learn from Xinjiang's success in agricultural modernization and aim to set up a joint agricultural demonstration zone to introduce modern farming techniques and practices in Pakistan," he said.

He said Pakistan desired linkages with the industries of Xinjiang and Pakistan, particularly the Gilgit-Baltistan region with a focus on cooperation in solar ener-

gy. He emphasized collaboration between the two regions in areas of culture, agriculture, tourism, education and joint research. Pakistan, he said, would like more of its students to study in China. He invited tourists from Xinjiang and other parts of China to visit Pakistan and mentioned that recently a 15-member group of Chinese tour operators visited Pakistan and returned via Sost Khunjerab border. The prime minister said Xinjiang was known for its rich diversity in culture and hospitality, adding that the region had a special place in the hearts of Pakistanis for the neighbourly linkages.

Xinjiang, he said, was not only a channel of trade but a vital bridge connecting the two nations, Kakar said the unique Pak-China relationship was rooted in bilateral trust, shared aspirations and invaluable warmth nurtured by successive generations. "Pakistan views its ties with China as a longstanding strategic partnership," he said. He mentioned that as CPEC entered its new phase, it helped in developing Pakistan's infrastructure and improved the lives of its citizens. "My visit to China is essential in chalking out a new road map and a new vision based on economic, people-to-people bonds, sustainable development, peace and stability and academic and technical exchanges.

He expressed Pakistan's principled position on Xinjiang and unequivocal support to China on matters related to its core position. Kakar also spoke about the situation in the Middle East and called for efforts to stop the acts of barbarism against the people of Palestine. The prime minister on the occasion interacted with Pakistani and Chinese students and expressed high

hopes for them to act as a bridge of friendship and brotherhood between their countries in the years to come. He also visited the History Museum at Xinjiang University where he was briefed about the history of the 99-year-old university.

PM emphasises enhanced trade, cultural ties between Xinjiang, neighboring Pakistani regions: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday emphasized the need for deepening trade, connectivity and cultural ties between Xinjiang and neighbouring regions of Pakistan.

The prime minister said this in a meeting with Li Yifei, Deputy Party Secretary of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China and the Party Secretary of Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC).

Appreciating warm sentiments of the Chinese people for Pakistan, Prime Minister Kakar thanked the CPC leadership for its firm support for Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and economic development.

Recalling his recent meetings with the Chinese leadership in Beijing, the prime minister highlighted that Pakistan and China were iron brothers, trusted partners and reliable friends. He noted the cultural and historical linkages between Xinjiang and Gilgit-Baltistan and underscored the importance of Xinjiang as the starting point of CPEC. Commending XPCC's strong institutional linkages with Pakistan and its role in the peace and development of Xinjiang, the prime minister invited XPCC to explore business and investment opportunities in Pakistan in industrial development, tourism, agriculture and minerals and mining sectors.

Pakistan desirous of promoting cooperation with Britain in media sector: Solangi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi said on Friday that Pakistan was desirous to promote cooperation with Britain in the field of media.

During a meeting with the Political Counsellor of the British High Commission Miss Zoe Ware, the discussion was held on Pak-UK relations, hate speech, misinformation, elimination of disinformation, promotion of cooperation in media sectors and the Safe Digital Environment Programme of UNDP. The minister said that Pakistan highly valued its relations with Britain. He expressed the hope that UNDP's Safe Digital

Environment programme will help counter misinformation and hateful narratives.

The project, he added will further improve the knowledge, capacity and skills of key government agencies and officials in identifying false and hateful narratives in the online space. The minister said that misinformation, disinformation and fake news was a problem of the whole world which should be controlled. The biggest challenge on social media was fake news, he opined.

He said that help would be taken from the UK's Modern Media Curriculum for providing training to journalists and Information Service Academy will play an important role in this regard. He said that aware-

ness sessions on hate speech and misinformation would be organized at the ICA.

Cooperation between Pakistan and Britain in the fields of film and drama was also discussed in the meeting. "Film and drama play an important role in highlighting the culture and positive identity of any country," Murtaza Solangi remarked. The minister while informing the British Political Consul about the activities related to the elections in the country, said

Elections will be held on time and the Election Commission of Pakistan would announce the date of polls. The British Political Consul assured her full support for the development of bilateral relations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

Pakistan, China jointly call for ceasefire

(Continued from Page 1)

The Chinese side reiterated its support for Pakistan in safeguarding its sovereignty, national independence and territorial integrity, in pursuing a development path of economic stability suited to Pakistan's national conditions, in fighting terrorism, and in playing a bigger role in regional and international affairs.

The Pakistani side warmly congratulated the Chinese side on its successful organization of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. The Chinese side commended Pakistan's consistent support for and participation in Belt and Road cooperation. The two sides recognized that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) "is a strong driver of world economic growth, provides a platform for international economic cooperation, opens up space for common development around the globe, and has become a widely welcomed international public good as well as an important practice in building a community with a shared future for mankind".

Both sides agreed to work more closely together on high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, and usher in a bright future of peace, development and win-win cooperation. The two sides recognized that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a pioneering project of the BRI, had yielded fruitful outcomes in the 10 years since its inception, and had now entered a new stage of high-quality development.

They reaffirmed the resolve to jointly build a growth corridor, a livelihood-enhancing corridor, an innovation corridor, a green corridor and an open corridor, and continue to build CPEC into an exemplary project of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. Recognizing the significance of Gwadar Port as an important node in cross-regional connectivity, the two sides agreed to speed up development of the Port and its auxiliary projects.

The two sides reviewed with satisfaction the progress of the desalination plant, the New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA), the Pak-China Friendship Hospital and other projects.

They reiterated their resolve to make Gwadar a high-quality port, a regional trade hub and a connectivity node. Recognizing that the ML-1 upgrade is an important project under the CPEC framework and is of great significance to Pakistan's social and economic development, the two sides agreed to carry out the common understanding of the leaders of the two countries to implement the project at an early date.

They reviewed with satisfaction the important progress made in the preliminary work of the Karakoram Highway (Raikot-Thakot section) realignment project and agreed to fast track its implementation. The two sides affirmed their resolve to further move forward to launch preparatory work for D.I. Khan-Zhob Road Project to build momentum towards enhancing connectivity and socio-economic development of Pakistan, under CPEC.

The Chinese side appreciated the efforts of the Pakistani side to vigorously develop Photovoltaic and other renewable energy projects, which are in alignment with the green, low carbon and environmentally friendly development of the energy sector. Both sides encouraged Chinese companies to further participate in the development of such projects in line with normal commercial principles to achieve win-win outcomes.

The two sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in the mining industry, including in the fields of geological survey, joint research on geology and minerals, training of talent, and planning of mining industrial parks. They recognized that agricultural cooperation between the two countries is rich in potential, and that sound progress has been made in crop breeding and pest control projects especially under the framework of CPEC. The two sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in areas such as crop cultivation, prevention and control of animal and plant diseases, agricultural mechanization, exchange of agricultural technology, and trade in agricultural products.

The two sides agreed to strengthen exchanges and cooperation under the framework of the CPEC Joint Working Group on Information Technology Industry, jointly improve the construction and management of digital infrastructure.

The other areas include advance cooperation in cutting-edge technologies and the capacity building for information technology service, and promote high-quality development of the digital economy. Both sides reviewed with satisfaction the positive results achieved under the CPEC Working Group on Socio-Economic Cooperation. The Pakistani side appreciated China's assistance for Pakistan's post-flood reconstruction and recovery.

China will continue to support Pakistan in improving people's livelihood and post-disaster reconstruction, with priority to implementing effective livelihood assistance projects, to deliver social and economic benefits, especially to the most affected and vulnerable people, in line with the concept of 'shared prosperity'. The Chinese side expressed its willingness to support Pakistan in expanding exports to China under the framework of the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement, and will help Pakistan improve its export capacity through experience sharing, special studies, expert exchanges and personnel training.

The Pakistani side welcomed more Chinese companies to invest in Pakistan and informed about the recent initiatives for improving investment climate, initiatives and creation of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). The Chinese side appreciated Pakistan's efforts to facilitate Chinese investments and businesses in Pakistan.

The two sides acknowledged the recent momentum for increase in business exchanges between the two countries and further resolved to facilitate B2B exchanges. Both sides agreed to make efforts to enhance the level of bilateral people-to-people exchanges and facilitation. The two sides noted

the signing of the protocols on the export of heated beef and dried chili from Pakistan to China, the obtaining of Pakistani fresh cherries' quarantine access to the Chinese market, and the agreement reached on the export access of Pakistani dairy products and animal hides to China this year.

China welcomed more high-quality Pakistani products and more qualified Pakistani enterprises to enter the Chinese market. The two sides believed that the Khunjerab pass plays an important role in promoting bilateral trade and people-to-people exchanges. The two sides announced that the Khunjerab pass will function all year round, and agreed to step up the infrastructure construction and management of the Khunjerab pass and improve its passage conditions.

The two sides expressed satisfaction with the progress of cooperation on Currency Swap Agreement and Renminbi settlement and clearing, and agreed to further strengthen financial and banking cooperation. The Pakistani side thanked China's valuable support for its financial sector. The two sides expressed their strong resolve to strengthen their longstanding space cooperation through deepening exchange programmes, resource mobilization and innovation to drive signal advancements in space science, technology and space application.

Both sides were satisfied with the cooperation documents on International Lunar Research Station signed by the space authorities and agreed to advance progress in exploring outer space to propel both nations to take lead in the cutting edge space missions, ushering in an era of scientific breakthrough and unprecedented discoveries for the betterment of humanity and advancement of our civilizations. The Pakistani side briefed the Chinese side on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The Chinese side reiterated that Kashmir is a long-standing dispute left from history that should be properly and peacefully resolved in accordance with the UN

Charter, relevant UN Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements.

The two sides condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The Chinese side recognized Pakistan's contributions and sacrifices in combating terrorism. The two sides agreed to further enhance counter-terrorism cooperation to promote world peace and security. The Pakistani side reiterated its commitment to ensuring the safety and security of all Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan, and to hold accountable the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks targeting Chinese personnel. The Chinese side appreciated the great efforts taken by the Pakistani side in this regard. Both sides expressed complete satisfaction over ongoing bilateral security cooperation and agreed to strengthen it further.

The two sides noted with satisfaction the enhanced cultural cooperation in the ongoing Year of China-Pakistan Tourism exchanges. They particularly commended the success of joint Gandhara Art Exhibition held at the Palace Museum and welcomed the conversion of the event into a touring exhibition in different parts of China. The Pakistani side welcomed the inclusion of Pakistan in the list of countries approved for outbound group tourism by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China. The two sides agreed to continue to strengthen the exchanges between the tourism sector of the two countries. They expressed satisfaction with the close cooperation, trust and communication between the armed forces of the two countries. Underscoring that stronger strategic defence and security cooperation between China and Pakistan is an important factor of peace and stability in the region, the two sides agreed to maintain high-level mil-to-mil visits and exchanges and deepen cooperation in areas of training, joint exercises and military technology.

The Pakistani side expressed strong support for Chinese leadership's vision of openness, regional connectivity,

economic integration and willingness to share technology. Pakistan would continue to support the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative put forward by the Chinese side, and highly commended China's efforts to safeguard the rights of developing countries for sustainable development.

The above-mentioned initiatives call on the international community to attach importance to the issue of development and revitalize the global partnership for development. The two sides stressed the need to pursue the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and emphasize respect for the diversity in world civilizations and uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations.

They agreed to further enhance cooperation within the framework of the above-mentioned initiatives and jointly promote development, security and cultural prosperity to contribute to building a community with a shared future for mankind. The two sides agreed to strengthen communication and coordination on the issue of Afghanistan and jointly uphold regional peace and stability.

The international community needs to act with greater urgency, step up input into the Palestinian question, facilitate the early resumption of peace talks between Palestine and Israel, and find a way to bring about enduring peace. Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar thanked the leadership and people of China for the warm hospitality accorded to him and his delegation, and invited President Xi Jinping to visit Pakistan at an early date on behalf of the government and people of Pakistan. The two sides agreed to maintain communication on that through diplomatic channels. During the visit, the two sides signed 20 agreements and MoUs, covering cooperation on the BRI, infrastructure, mining, industry, green and low-carbon development, health, space cooperation, digital economy, development cooperation and export of agricultural products to China.