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Bodies pile up in central Gaza as Israel steps up strikes

DEIR ELBALAH, Palestinian Territories (AFP/APP): Scores of people rushed to Deir el-Balah hospital to identify bodies on Sunday after Israel stepped up its air strikes on Gaza, as the territory's Hamas rulers said 4,651 people have now been killed since the start of the war.

Authorities said Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, had suffered most from one of the most intense nights of shelling since Israel started its bombardment in response to Hamas' cross-border attacks on October 7.

More than 260 people died in 24 hours, according to the health ministry toll, which said 1,873 of those killed in the past fortnight were children.

Israel began bombarding the tiny enclave after Hamas militants stormed over the border on October 7, killing at least 1,400 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapping more than 200 in the deadliest attack in Israel's history.

At the hospital morgue in Deir el-Balah, bodies were everywhere including that of Mohammad Judeh and his three-year-old daughter Misk, who were placed on the same table, their faces uncovered.

Judeh's cousin Wael Wafi said the girl was hugging her father when their bodies were pulled from the debris.

"All the Judeh family, including my aunt, were killed in the bombardment," said Wafi. "Two buildings were destroyed and came down on them."

Some family members had taken refuge in the building after escaping shelling in northern Gaza, he added.

"My cousin was sleeping in his house with his daughter in his arms. He was a man with no record, nothing to do with the resistance," said Wafi.

Another woman in the morgue nearly collapsed after lifting the sheets lying over bodies to discover her

daughter and other members of her family.

Their names -- Layan, Hani and Joane -- were written on their legs. A relative later led the distraught woman away. In the southern town of Khan Yunis, one strike on the Rio cafe killed 13 people.

The cafe was on the ground floor of a building housing people who had fled Israel's bombardment of northern Gaza.

Israel has issued daily warnings for people to leave the north.

"I heard an explosion and then I saw dust, flames and debris flying. One minute later they struck again," said Naji Shurrah, who lives opposite the cafe.

Israel said Saturday it was stepping up its raids and has massed tens of thousands of troops around Gaza for a widely expected ground invasion.

It says its daily raids have already killed many leaders and military commanders of the Palestinian

Islamist group that has ruled Gaza since 2007.

"From today, we are increasing the strikes and minimising the danger," an Israeli military spokesman said late Saturday. "We will increase the attacks and therefore I call on Gaza City residents to continue moving south for their safety."

Israel has repeatedly urged Gaza's 1.1 million residents of the north to move south ahead of any ground operation.

As strikes pummeled the strip, the Hamas government also hit out at the lack of aid, despite the arrival of 37 trucks on Saturday and Sunday. It said there were now 1.4 million displaced people within the enclave.

"The aid that arrived in Gaza is not enough for one day. We call on the international community to pressure the Israeli government to bring in thousands of trucks," Hamas said in a statement.



HYDERABAD: Women hold banners and placards during a rally against Israeli aggression in Palestine.

Children stage rally for Palestinian

PESHAWAR (INP): In Peshawar, the innocent children of Peshawar also protested and came out on the streets for solidarity with the people of Palestine here on Sunday.

A large number of children protesting in front of the Peshawar Press Club carried symbolic coffins, expressing solidarity with the people of Palestine. The children participating in the protest were chanting slogans against Israel's brutality by killing innocent Palestinian.

They demanded the Muslim Ummah to support the Palestinian people and demand for effective action against Israel. They also criticized the America government for supporting Israel's brutalities by killing innocent Palestinian including minors, teenagers and women. "Let us be allowed, we will fight for Palestinian children," the participants of the protest rally said.

They demanded of the Muslim Ummah to break their silent over the brutalities of the Israeli forces. "If a Muslim is the brother of another Muslim, then why can't we do their help," the protestors questioned.

Palestinian crisis: Pak calls for resuscitate two-state solution

NEW YORK (INP): At the United Nations, Pakistan has stressed the need to resuscitate the two-State solution of Palestinian crisis for durable peace in the region, says in media reports.

Speaking in a debate on the contributions of regional mechanisms for peace and security in the Security Council, Pakistan's Ambassador to the world body, Munir Akram said the two-state solution is the only option for a durable peace in the Holy Land.

He expressed the hope that after the Security Council's failure, the General Assembly will take action and demand an immediate ceasefire; full, unhindered, and sustainable humanitarian access to the suffering people in Gaza, and ensure that they are not displaced within or outside Gaza.

Speaking about the Security Council's shortcomings, Munir Akram said these arise mainly due to the veto power of the five permanent members.

He said the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility to promote world peace, has failed to "stop the slaughter in Gaza", as it also failed in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Pakistani envoy said the Security Council's failures can be addressed by making it more representative and democratic, by enlarging the voice of the majority of small and medium sized states, and more accountable through the democratic method of periodic elections.

Controversy stirs as Hamas claims Israel declined to take 2 hostages

GAZA (INP): Hamas claimed that the group had wanted to release two more hostages on humanitarian grounds but that Israel declined to receive them.

Israel described it as "propaganda". Abu Ubaida, spokesman for Hamas' armed wing, said it informed Qatar of the group's intention to release the two additional people on Friday, the same day it freed Americans Judith Tai Ranaan and her daughter Natalie.

In a later statement, Abu Ubaida said Hamas was ready to free the two people on Sunday "using the same procedures" involved in the release of Judith and Natalie.

The Palestinian group captured around 210 people during its deadly assault in southern Israel on October 7. Qatar, which helped mediate Friday's release, had no immediate comment.

Hamas' armed wing, the Izz el-Deen al-Qassam

Brigades, has released two U.S. hostages from Gaza — a mother and her daughter — "for humanitarian reasons" in response to Qatari mediation efforts in the war with Israel, its spokesman Abu Ubaida said on Friday.

Hamas says it took about 200 hostages during a deadly Oct. 7 rampage carried out from the Gaza Strip on communities and military bases in southern Israel, part of the biggest attack on the country since the 1973

Arab-Israeli war.

Hamas said 50 more are held by other armed groups in the enclave. It said more than 20 hostages have been killed by Israeli air strikes, but has not given any further details.

Abu Ubaida said they released the citizens "for humanitarian reasons, and to prove to the American people and the world that the claims made by (President Joe) Biden and his fascist administration are false and baseless."

Govt filed petition in Supreme Court

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The federal government has filed a miscellaneous petition in the Supreme Court, informing the apex court about the commencement of the civilians' trial in military courts on Sunday.

The federal government's plea told the court that as many as 102 people had been arrested on the charge of being involved in May 9 and 10 events.

"The trial has been started in military courts to provide justice to the arrested persons. The trial is being conducted keeping in view

the interest of the detainees," the petition said. "He who is not found guilty in the trial by military courts shall be acquitted. The trial in military courts will be subject to the decision of the case pending in the Supreme Court," it added.

It is to be noted here that a five-member larger bench of the Supreme Court will take up about a dozen petitions challenging the trials of civilians in military courts on today (Monday).

Following the May 9 violence, the National

Assembly had passed a resolution demanding that the rioters be tried under the Army Act. Days later, the army had revealed that military proceedings against "102 miscreants" were underway.

Led by Justice Ijazul Ahsan, the bench includes Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Navgi and Justice Ayesha Malik.

According to the cause list issued by the apex court, the hearing is scheduled to begin at 11:30am on October 23.

Upcoming general elections: Election Commission enlists one million officers to perform duty

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has accelerated the preparations for the upcoming general elections and plans to enlist nearly one million individuals to fill essential roles for the elections.

According to preliminary estimates, "There will be approximately 700,000 polling staff members, and the count may increase to around 900,000 to 1 million when including security personnel.

The final number will be confirmed once the Election Schedule is announced," the ECP sources told on Sunday.

A list of presiding officers, assistant presiding officers and polling staff

has been compiled, with a total of 10,7361 officers set to be deployed nationwide.

In Punjab, approximately 54,706 presiding officers, 310,968 assistant presiding officers, and 160,445 polling staff will be assigned election duties. In the province, a sum total of 526,123 officers will be appointed.

In Sindh, 20,315 presiding officers, 162,523 assistant presiding officers and 81,262 polling staff will be appointed, bringing the total number of officers in the province to 264,100.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 16,525 presiding officers, 100,085 assistant presiding officers and 50,045 polling staff will be appointed,

making a combined total of 166,655 officers.

In Balochistan, a combined number of 50,491 officers will be designated, including 5,266 presiding officers, 30,150 assistant presiding officers and 15,075 polling staff.

Citizens must register themselves as voters by Oct 25: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has asked all eligible voters to get them registered by October 25 (Wednesday) as the process for registration of new voters, correction of their particulars and transfer of votes will close on the day.

According to the ECP official, the facilitation desks operated by the Election Commission in

both Islamabad and its district-level offices are actively engaged in accomplishing this assignment.

He urged people to register or rectify discrepancies in the voter lists to ensure their alignment with their Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) data by October 25, 2023.

The Election Commission invoked the Elections Act, 2017 to freeze the voter lists on July 20, 2023. In order to simplify the process for the public, the lists were then unfrozen from September 28 to October 25, 2023, allowing all eligible individuals to either register, withdraw or rectify their information.

Nine accused approach SC

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Nine accused of the May 9 incident have approached the Supreme Court in a case against the trial of civilians in military courts for becoming party in the case.

The petitioners prayed for the Supreme Court to make them a party in the case because they are the aggrieved party of military courts and issue an order to the military authority to complete the trial soon.

The petitioners took the plea in their applications that the case of the military courts is pending with the Supreme Court while after the May 9 incident, the accused are in the custody of the military authorities.

However, the behaviour of military authorities during detention is unexpectedly good and we have complete faith in justice from military authority.

Shehbaz and Hamza meet Nawaz Sharif

LAHORE (NNI): Former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif and former Punjab chief minister Hamza Shehbaz held a meeting with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supreme Nawaz Sharif on Sunday.

On the occasion, the PML-N top brass discussed the matters in line with the country's political situation at Jati Umra residence.

The meeting between Shehbaz Sharif and Nawaz Sharif lasted one hour.

Moreover, Azam Nazeer

Tarar briefed the PML-N supreme on the legal cases against the latter.

Earlier on Saturday, PML-N senior leader Saad Rafique asserted that the supporters of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had proven to be politically awakened.

Speaking at a gathering held at Lahore's Minar-e-Pakistan, Rafique stated, "Individuals hailing from various regions of the country, including Balochistan, Gilgit Baltistan, Sindh,

Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, are experiencing this reawakening."

Former Punjab chief minister Hamza Shehbaz said on Saturday that PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif is a ray of hope for 240 million people in the country.

In his special message ahead of the public gathering of the PML-N, Hamza Shehbaz said: "The PML-N workers and masses from the grassroots level will welcome Nawaz Sharif with great verve."

Ashrafi calls for global support for Palestine, unity among Muslims

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi unequivocally expressed support for Palestine and called on the global community to acknowledge the rights of the Palestinian people.

He, addressing a recent conference organized to express solidarity with Palestinian people under the auspicious of Pakistan Ulema Council here, raised questions about the alleged military aggression in Syria and Lebanon and said Pakistan stood with Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, in case of any aggression from Israel.

Ashrafi hinted that if this war continued, it would not be confined to Egypt and Lebanon, it would ultimately engulf the entire world.

He called on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to provide a roadmap for the Palestinian cause urging

everyone to break their silence, warning that "if Palestinian children are targeted today, it may be children from other regions tomorrow." With the Presidency of the OIC now in the hands of Saudi Arabia, he expressed hope that it would take concrete steps to support Palestine.

He mentioned that Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir reiterated Pakistan's position in the Corps Commander Conference the other day, reemphasizing their unwavering support for Palestine. Highlighting the enduring blockade of Gaza, he said it had been a prison for sixteen years raising questions about the incident on October 7, which he attributed to the denial of Palestinian due rights.

Ashrafi called for international human rights organizations to investigate the hospital attack in Gaza, stressing that the suffering of Muslim children

remained unseen. He emphasized that children were children, regardless of their origins expressing concerns over America's intention to cover up this disastrous incident.

He acknowledged improved relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran and Syria and Arab nations. He reaffirmed the commitment to maintaining unity within the Ummah, rejecting any sectarian division. "We will not allow anyone to divide the Muslim Ummah based on the Shia-Sunni divide," he stated. He emphasized the importance of global unity among Muslims and discouraged any division, highlighting the need to stand up against imperialism and extremist groups that aimed to divide and weaken the Muslim Ummah.

Ashrafi warned that colonial powers sought to establish extremist organizations to disrupt the unity of Islamic countries, refer-

encing bomb blasts and terrorist attacks as part of this conspiracy.

He shared insights into past attempts to incite religious tensions in Pakistan, noting that the national security institutions and scholars had worked together to thwart such nefarious designs.

In his closing remarks, Ashrafi called for a boycott of Israeli products and expressed that Muslim nations should come together to protest the violence against Muslims in various regions including Kashmir, Palestine, and other parts of the world.

Palestinian Deputy Head of Mission Nader K. Alturk, expressed heartfelt gratitude towards Ashrafi and the people of Pakistan for their unwavering support for the Palestinian cause.

Drawing attention to the ongoing crisis, he said at this moment, Israel was committing genocide in

Gaza, underscoring the urgency of the situation.

He pointed out that the powerhouses of the world were targeting Gaza, affecting the lives of children, women, and the elderly. He lamented that Israel continued to wage a relentless war on Gaza.

Speaking of the devastation brought by Israeli aggression, Alturk highlighted the impact on hospitals, schools, and homes in Gaza.

He reiterated the desire for peace, security, and stability as the fundamental request of the Palestinian people. He raised a significant comparison, noting that the entire world was focused on Ukraine after the Russian attack, but Palestine's plight remained unnoticed by the global community.

Alturk lamented the lack of global response to the Israeli invasion and occupation, which had been ongoing since 1948, con-

trasting it with the recent global attention on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

He emphasized that the Palestinian issue was a double standard in the international community's conscience. He conveyed the urgent need for international support and solidarity to address the ongoing crisis in Palestine.

Syrian Ambassador Dr. Ramez Alraee claimed that Israel had launched the air strikes on their airports including Damascus and Aleppo causing damages to the installations, infrastructure and as well as human casualties.

Condemning the Israeli aggression in the strongest terms, he said it was continuously violating the international law and the United Nations resolutions. He said Israel was posing serious threat to Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Iran and other countries. He said schools, hospitals, houses, and even the United

Nations related buildings were being attacked by Israel in Palestine.

Dr. Ramez urged the United Nations to make Israel accountable in the light of its relevant resolutions particularly 242, 338 and 497 to restore peace and tranquility in the region.

Council of Islamic Ideology Chairman, Dr. Qibla Ayaz said these were very difficult days not only for Palestine and Egypt but for all the civilized nations on earth.

He mentioned that the United Nations had been failure in performing its constitutional obligation to stop the Israeli aggression against the innocent people of Palestine and others. He urged the international human rights watchdogs to let the Palestinian people to live their lives with peace and prosperity on their land.

Dr. Qibla highlighted that the current situation

was totally against the rules of the United Nations as in its resolutions there was no room for genocide, ethnic cleansing, madness, crime against humanity, and massacre which Israel was committing with the support of United States in Palestine.

He condemned the statement of United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken for supporting Israel through thick and thin claiming himself a Jew. He further termed Blinken's statement against the diplomatic norms.

The conference was attended by a number of religious scholars from all schools of thought, people from all walks of life and members of foreign missions in a bid to express unity with Palestine and its people.

The conference was concluded with prayers seeking peace in Palestine and unity in all ranks of Muslim Ummah on the globe.



KARACHI: Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori and others offering dua in memory of Palestinians martyred in Israeli attacks at Governor House. —APP Photo

Baqar directs for implementation of Rs 32000 wage

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd.) Maqbool Baqar has directed the Secretary of Labour Department to implement Rs 32000 the minimum labour wage and directed the Deputy Commissioner of District Korangi for action against tanker mafia within two hours.

He issued these directives while chairing a meeting of the Sindh Labour Department and a 29-member delegation of Piler led by its Executive Director Karamat Ali at the Chief Minister House here on Sunday.

The delegation of Piler discussed labour issues with the chief minister. The delegation told him that the welfare of the workers had been affected due to the continuous transfers and postings in the labor department. On that the Caretaker Chief Minister directed the labour department from making unnecessary appointments and transfers. He was informed that 25000 minimum wage was still in effect. The delegation said that the minimum wage was announced to be Rs 32000, which has not yet been implemented.

The chief minister directed the Secretary Labour to implement the minimum wage Rs 32,000 through the circulation of the Cabinet. He was informed that the women were discriminated in industries and they were either laid-off or fired at age 45. The Caretaker CM was also informed that the female workers were paid less than male workers. The chief

minister directed the Labor Secretary to end the discrimination against women and submit a report. He further said that he himself would pay surprise visits to private industrial areas to review the implementation.

On the occasion, the Secretary Labour complained of shortage of officers in the Labour Department. Baqar directed the Sindh Public Service Commission (SPSC) to speed up the recruitment process in the Labour Department. It is pertinent to mention here that the Labour Department had already sent a request to the SPSC for the appointments a year ago. It was informed that only a few factories were registered with SESSI.

The caretaker chief minister directed SESSI to reconcile the records of registration of factories with EOBI. He directed the Secretary Labour to activate labour directorate to obtain data of industrial and domestic workers. The CM directed the Labour Department to submit a report on the death of two children due to fire in the factory warehouse on August 17. He also directed to prepare a concept paper for family welfare to end child labour. 'I want the children to be safe from labour', he said. The CM directed to present proposals for further improvement labour laws.

It was informed that there was no water supply in the labour colony area the site while the Worker Welfare Board had paid Rs160 mil-

lion to the Water Board.

The CM directed to solve the problem immediately by talking to the water boarder. He also directed for resolving the problems of polio workers. The land of the labour colony earmarked for the workers of the steel mills was being encroached, the CM was informed. On that, the chief minister issued directives to the Revenue Department to vacate the land of Steel Mills Labour Colony.

The caretaker CM telephoned Managing Director of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board during the ongoing meeting and directed him to immediately remove garbage from Great Pura Cemetery. He also called the DC Keamari during the meeting while taking notice of 18 persons death due to spread of sewage in Keamari, and directed him to present a report of the incident in a factory.

The caretaker chief minister directed the Workers Welfare Board that the grant of workers should not be stopped under any circumstances. He also issued directives to ensure inspection of all factories. He further said that the inspection should be included a thorough examination of working conditions in the factory, harassment of women, payment of wages, sanitation and minimum wages. On the occasion, the CM was informed that the Labour Department had completed the inspection of 1500 factories regarding safety.

Naqvi affirms completing uplift projects by Jan 31

LAHORE (PPI): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi Sunday emphasized that all political leaders, including former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, have been providing security in accordance with police standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Talking to media persons, he pointed out that Zaman Park was not overlooked in the past. 'Jammers and adequate security were provided by the provincial government in Zaman Park', he added.

Naqvi also expressed his gratitude for the role of journalists and the media, acknowledging their crucial work. He promised to provide journalists with meaningful support and to be receptive to their needs.

Naqvi also stated that he

seeks the goodwill and blessings of the journalistic community as he undertakes his responsibilities. To another question, he said teachers have been released across Punjab.

However, he affirmed that no one will be allowed to close educational institutions. CM Naqvi added that it was inappropriate to involve students in protests. He stressed that shutting down schools across Punjab and using children for such purposes was untenable.

Addressing the concern of privatization in the education sector, he categorically denied rumors of schools charging fees from Rs 5 or 50 to 50 thousand rupees, declaring them false.

On the developmental front, Mohsin Naqvi

affirmed his commitment to completing development projects in a timely manner, particularly highlighting the construction and repair of 100 hospitals across Punjab by January 31.

He also underscored the improvement efforts underway in 750 police stations and added that special attention is being given to development projects.

'Steps are being taken to provide health facilities to the people,' he said adding that work is in progress on various parts of the General Hospital building. The entire team of LDA is on the Ravi bridge in order to complete the project within time-frame. Punjab Chief Minister also visited the Akbar Chowk flyovers project, the bridge on one side of

the road has been completed.

Naqvi inspected the flyover and went to the bridge on foot and then drove himself to the top of the bridge.

He inspected the construction works of the entire project from the constructed bridge. He issued directive to complete the construction and rehabilitation of College Road as soon as possible. Asphalt work on the bridge should be completed as soon as possible, he said adding that complete the second side of the flyovers as soon as possible.

The flyovers will be opened for traffic by mid-November, he remarked. On the occasion, Commissioner Lahore Muhammad Ali Randhawa gave a briefing about the ongoing progress on the project.

Punjab reports 204 new cases

LAHORE (APP): Punjab is still in the grip of dengue fever, with 204 new cases reported on Sunday.

According to the latest data from the Health Department, a total of 7,827 dengue cases were reported across 36 districts in Punjab this year.

Leading the unfortunate tally is Lahore, reporting a staggering 3,212 cases, followed closely by Rawalpindi with 2,055, Multan with 814, Faisalabad with 335 and Gujranwala with 548 cases. The situation still continues, with Lahore reporting an additional 94 new cases, Rawalpindi with 42, Multan with 15, Gujranwala with 25, Faisalabad with 9 while Sheikhupura and Rahim Yar Khan each recorded 4 new cases. Kasur, Khanewal and Vehari reported 2 cases each during the period. Chakwal, Sahiwal, Bahawalnagar, Nankana Sahib, Bahawalpur, Lodharan, Rajanpur and Bhakkar reported one case each during 24 hours.

Currently, 144 patients are receiving treatment in hospitals across Punjab, with 68 of them in hospitals in Lahore district. Punjab Health Secretary Ali Jaan Khan issued a compelling plea for citizens to maintain clean and dry surroundings as a preventive measure against dengue. He urged cooperation with health department teams which are working tirelessly to combat the outbreak.

SIFC urged to focus on saline water agriculture

KARACHI (NND): Saline water irrigation in Thar and other desert areas where salt water lakes are present can turn our deserts into grain basket and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) should divert its sharp focus to this area, said Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Altaf Shakoore here Sunday.

He said that many countries in the world successfully use saline water to grow crops with salt-tolerant seed varieties. He said as per media reports in Pakistan a wheat research institute had successfully produced a salt-tolerant wheat seed, but for the reasons known to policymakers this ambitious project was silently put on the back burner instead of practical implication. It is also said that the Sindh government had imported salt-tolerant seed varieties of different crops in the past, but then nobody knew about their fate.

He said in the Thar

Desert there is Shakoore Lake, besides many other small salt water lakes in Achro Thar whose water could be used in saline water agriculture. These areas have very hot weather which could also produce huge solar energy, thus meeting all needs of salt water farming on a sustainable local basis.

All that is needed is just proper government focus, and needed investment preferably from the private sector. He said here comes the role of the SIFC to invite interested investors to this untapped lucrative business of saline water farming in Pakistan.

He said the previous research about developing saline water resistant seeds in Pakistan should be unfrozen and agricultural universities and institutions in Pakistan should be asked to develop new seed varieties of wheat, paddy, olive and other crops in Pakistan

to utilize our barren desert and coastal areas for farming where seawater or saline water lakes are present.

He asked the governments of Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan and other concerned quarters to play their due role in promoting saline water farming, adding; however, the main role should be played by the SIFC to explore and tap this highly lucrative agricultural sector. He said the saline water lakes could also be used for fisheries and their water after desalination with the help of solar energy could also be used for human consumption and other purposes.

He said if the SIFC divert its attention to this field we can use our vast coastline and deserts for making the country self-sufficient in food. This would not only bring down very high food inflation in the country but also provide much needed food security to the nation.

KE staffers 'abducted, tortured by PMT mafia

KARACHI (NNI): K-Electric (KE) staffers have been 'abducted and tortured by PMT mafia' in Karachi's Surjani Town area during on anti-power theft operation on Sunday.

The K-Electric (KE) spokesperson said that staffers were abducted by 'PMT mafia' at gunpoint in the Surjani Town Sector 1/10 area who reached there to cut illegal power connections.

The mafia members including Balach, Sabir and their accomplices tortured the KE staffers. The power company condemned the incident and said that a First Information Report (FIR) was lodged against the accused.

In September, unidentified

fired assailants opened fire at K-Electric staffers during an anti-power theft drive in the Surjani Town area of Karachi.

The KE spokesperson said in a statement that the staffers were busy removing kundas (illegal electricity connections) in Surjani Town's Sector 10/1 when unidentified assailants opened fire at them.

All staffers remained unhurt in the gun attack due to timely precautionary steps. The spokesperson said that the kunda mafia was involved in stealing more than 30,000 units of electricity.

The company had lodged a First Investigation Report (FIR) at the concerned police station and nominated nine

persons.

A Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) union councillor was also shot dead during a brawl over Kunda (illegal electricity connections) in Sector 4C of Karachi's Surjani Town last month.

The deceased identified as Mohammad Habib was a ward councillor of JI, JI Karachi President Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman said that Habib had gone for a meeting after he was informed of an illegal electricity connection.

He was gunned down as soon as he left the meeting, he alleged. Rehman further said that the Kunda mafia had the backing of the PPP. The JI Karachi chief demanded IG Police to take notice and arrest the culprits and their handlers.

15 pickpockets arrested from Minar-e-Pakistan

LAHORE (PPI): Police claimed to have busted a gang of pickpockets by arresting its 15 members from Minar-e-Pakistan during the PML-N rally.

According to Chung Organised Crime Unit, the arrested pickpockets told the police that they belonged to Sindh and came to Minar-e-Pakistan to pickpocket attendees of the rally. Police said the gang was comprised of 40 to 45 pickpockets.

The outlaws pickpocketed citizens in rallies and crowded places, Chung DSP Farooq Asghar Awan said, adding they are history-sheeters and involved in dozens of theft incidents.

Further investigation is under way. The accused were arrested with the help of professional skills, modern technology and public relations, the DSP said.

The accused will be punished with the help of prosecution partnership. Further operations will continue against the criminal elements, he said. A certificate of appreciation from DIG Organized Crime Unit Lahore was given to the DSP and his team.

Four robbers arrested after encounters with police

KARACHI (PPI): Four robbers were arrested and weapons and looted valuables were seized from them after encounters with the police in different areas of the City.

In Korangi Awami Colony, a robber was tracked down after a shootout with the police. His accomplice escaped. Police have started his search. Police were informed that two robbers were hiding in the area and planning to loot valuables from the citizens.

PREQUALIFICATION NOTICE FOR USC PURE DRINKING WATER

Utility Stores Corporation of Pakistan is going to introduce its "Own Brand Mineral Water" For this purpose USCP is in need of packing material with all its accessories. Detail attached Firms/ Manufacturers/ Vendors/ Suppliers are invited to participate in the pre-qualification process through Frame Work Agreement as per Procurement Rule. (Single Stage One Envelope). The Firms/ Manufacturers/ Vendors/ Suppliers duly registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Department with company profile can apply for prequalification. The prequalified firms will supply these items placed at Annex-A at USCP Zonal Office, Peshawar situated at Plot # 39-B, USCP Building, Phase -V, Hayatabad, Peshawar. List of items can also be obtained from the address given below and from the Zonal office of USCP.

Sealed bids must reach to USCP Zonal Office Peshawar Plot # 39-B, USCP Building, Phase -V Hayatabad, Peshawar, on or before 08-11-2023, before 1000 hours, which will be opened on the same day at 1030 hours in the presence of the bidders who wish to attend. In case of opening of bids falls on local/ International holiday, the date of bid closing/ opening shall be the next working day on the same time and venue. The bidders are required to give their best and final prices every item separately (inclusive of all applicable taxes) as no negotiation with respect to scope of work and pricing is allowed. (Minimum quoted quantity should be at least 50%) Bids not complying with the requirements shall be rejected being non responsive. Alternate/conditional/ incomplete proposals shall be considered non-responsive. Taxes will be deducted as per applicable Government Rules NTN and Sales Tax Registration Certificates must be provided with the Bid

Bids which are incomplete/ not sealed/ not signed/ not stamped/ late or submitted by other than specified mode will be rejected. The contract will be awarded to the most advantageous bid on item wise lowest bid. (As per PPRA Rules)

Complete Terms and Conditions are contained in the Prequalification documents, which can be downloaded from PPRA Website www.ppra.org.pk and USCP website www.usc.org.pk and can also be collected free of cost from USCP (Plot # 39-B, USCP Building, Phase -V, Hayatabad, Peshawar). A separate/ mandatory Demand Draft/ Pay Order for Rs.5,000/- (Non-Refundable) in favor of USCP on account of tender fee must be attached at the time of submitting bid/offer.

BID SECURITY

The bidder is required to submit bid security @2% of the estimated cost (Refundable) in shape of DD/ Pay Order in favour of USCP and the same will be released upon signing of the contract with the successful bidder.

An affidavit on Legal Stamp Paper worth Rs.100/- to the effect that the bidder has not been blacklisted by any Government/ Semi Government/ Autonomous Organization and there is no litigation pending adjudication in any Court of Law.

The Firms/ Manufacturers/ Vendors/ Suppliers already working with USCP have to apply as fresh. For information and queries please contact on: 091-5812707 or 091-9217727.

Zonal Manager (Peshawar)

PID(P) 397/23

Utility Stores Corporation of Pakistan

Office: Plot# 39-B, USCP Building, Phase-V, Hayatabad, Peshawar

PH: 091-9217727

Begum Nusrat Bhutto- Strong and Fearless

Mustajab Nazir

Like Amanda Lovelace said, 'they wanted us weak but forced us to be strong'. These are strong words which describe the characteristics of the Bhutto family. Whether it's a dictator or opposition, they tried their best to drag down this well-known family. Begum Nusrat Bhutto the wife of the great leader of Pakistan, Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was born on March 23, 1929 in the city of Iran called Isfahan.

The lineage of Begum Nusrat Bhutto traced back to Sultan Salahuddin Ayubi, the conqueror of Jerusalem and strong hero in the history of Islam.

Begum Bhutto's father was a great and successful businessman. Begum Bhutto and Shaheed Bhutto met in Karachi and they got married.

When Shaheed Bhutto separated his ways from Ayub Khan after the Tashkent incident. After that, Shaheed Bhutto founded his own political party and Begum Bhutto supported her beloved husband until her last breath.

After the foundation of the Pakistan People's Party, the first democratic political party, the Bhutto family struggled a lot. The political issues disturbed their family life, too. In 1977, the elected govt of Shaheed Bhutto was dismissed by dictator Zia and Shaheed Bhutto was arrested and was accused in a murder case.

This incident created chaos in Pakistan. But Begum Bhutto and her eldest and strong daughter Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, who was just 24 at that time became the only strong support of each other and their family. Obviously, her siblings were way too young. Shaheed Murtaza Bhutto was 23,

Bibi Sanam Bhutto was 20, and Shaheed Shahnawaz Bhutto was 19.

General Zia imposed martial law in the country. He became ruthless and his dark soul turned the life of Begum Nusrat Bhutto upside down. He imposed baton charge and Begum Nusrat Bhutto got a severe head injury. But due to his devilish nature he didn't care enough and after 2 years in 1979, the judiciary of Pakistan hanged Shaheed Bhutto. They murdered him. His murder created many problems in this country, a devil leading the country.

In 1982, Begum Bhutto developed cancer and she was rushed to the foreign hospital for treatment. All her life she struggled a lot but didn't lose hope, she was always optimistic. She stayed strong for this country, for her people, for her family. In July 1985, her youngest son

Shahnawaz Bhutto was assassinated in Nice, France. He was poisoned. Losing her husband and then losing her son, Begum Bhutto stayed strong.

But after the murder of her other son Mir Murtaza Bhutto in 1996, she couldn't cope with the trials of life. She started to develop Alzheimer's. When Mohtarma Shaheed Benazir Bhutto was murdered in Rawalpindi on December 27, 2007, she didn't know that her eldest daughter, her strong daughter who was her big support in every tragedy and trials of life, is murdered.

Begum Nusrat Bhutto took her last breath on October 23, 2011 in Dubai. Her life is the lesson for every women. Strong women are like Begum Nusrat Bhutto. In the world there are very few people who are brave enough to fight for the rights of other people, the Bhutto family is one of them.

Crackdown against overcharging drivers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Zafarullah Khan Umarzai, Special Assistant to the Caretaker Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Transport and Housing has issued clear directives for transport officials to take immediate action against those overcharging the passengers.

He directed the officials to pay daily visits to different bus terminals, coaching stands and take immediate stern action against drivers who overcharge passengers, ensuring that the benefits of reduced petroleum prices are passed on to the general population.

In alignment with the

caretaker provincial government's special instructions and the guidance of the Special Assistant for Transport, the Provincial Transport Authority and Regional Transport Authority have launched an extensive operation in collaboration with the district administration.

They have initiated visits to locations such as T-road and others, commencing legal proceedings against those found overcharging passengers.

The Motor Vehicle Examiner in Peshawar, along with Traffic Inspection Staff (TIS), has been promptly addressing this issue by issuing challans to several drivers who have been

overcharging passengers.

Authorities are now instructed to perform daily inspections at transport bases and bus terminals, scrutinizing fare collection from passengers. Drivers engaged in overcharging will face route permit suspension, and vehicle owners will be subjected to fines.

Emphasizing the caretaker provincial government's commitment to extending the benefits of reduced fuel prices to the public, Zafarullah Khan Umarzai stressed that there should be no leniency in dealing with those who charge excessive fares; they must be met with strong measures.



PESHAWAR: A group photo of Islahi Committee Mosa Zai after taking oath during a ceremony. — F.P. photo

Govt to focus on technical, experimental education

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker Minister for Sports, Youth Affairs, Science and Information Technology Dr. Najibullah Khan Marwat Sunday said that teachers of scientific subjects should focus on technical and experimental education away from traditions.

Through this way, the students can enlighten the name of the country and the nation in science and technology, he added. Without the hard work of teachers in educational institutions, students cannot play a significant role in learning science and technology which is essential for students to acquire in today's era.

In the current race of technology, it is imperative to give special attention to science and information technology education, he said. He said science and technology education has become the backbone of the

economic stability and development of the country.

The Caretaker Provincial Minister expressed these views while addressing the ceremony of a two-day capacity building training workshop for teachers and lecturers of different educational institutions of science subjects at Roots Millennium School Peshawar.

The event was attended by Secretary Science, Information Technology Zakaullah Khattak, Director General Sajjad Hussain Shah, School Principal Tehmina Khalid, workshop participants, teachers and students in large numbers.

Addressing the ceremony as a special guest, Caretaker Minister Dr. Najibullah Khan Marwat said that teaching is a great and important field which can make any country stand in the ranks of developed countries.

"If teachers can't deliver education to their students

in real and true sense, and their no vision and spirit of purpose in teaching, then there will be no transformation of students and both money and time will be wasted," Dr. Najeeb Ullah Khan said.

He said that teachers who teach science subjects have a greater responsibility than other teachers to use all their skills in teaching their subjects to students properly, it is very important to pay special attention to theory as well as practical.

Dr. Najibullah Marwat said that the Directorate of Science and Information Technology Khyber is starting some kind of IT skills, entrepreneurship and other important training programs very soon. He further said that the government is giving technical training to the teachers. By which the students will surely get the results along with increasing the capacity of the teachers.

PDMA prepares winter contingency planning

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Disasters Management Authority is preparing a winter contingency plan, Director General Planning PDMA, Jannat Gul Afridi said here on Sunday.

The purpose of preparing a comprehensive strategy is to reduce the risk of disasters and provide timely response, the Director General told media men.

District administration, provincial line departments,

federal departments, golf program, humanitarian partners are being included in the plan, DG PDMA said. Planning is being done to deal with the possible threats of snowfall, rains, landslides and other natural calamities in winter and to reduce the losses, he said.

PDMA is providing funds and relief materials to all district administrations, DGP PDMA Jannat Gul Afridi informed.

The responsibilities of all institutions including PDMA have increased more than before, Jannat Gul Afridi said.

Hazara and Malakand divisions are more sensitive to winter hazards and special attention will be given to them, said Director General PDMA. Winter contingency plans to be completed by mid-November, said Jannat Gul Afridi.

Passport deptt removes technical barriers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Passport and Immigration department while taking strict note of the recent passport crisis in the country has removed some technical hurdles and started the reprinting process.

Federal Interior Minister Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti and Director General Passport and Immigration Mustafa Kamal Qazi started the printing process by clearing some technical hurdles for which DG Passport has allocated additional machinery to speed up the printing process.

According to the details, the pending passports had reached one million due to non-start of printing of recent passports in the country and the main reason for this was non-availability of lamination paper.

In view of the orders of the Home Minister and DG Passports, DG Passport has not only allocated additional machinery to speed up the printing of passports, but also deployed additional personnel to ensure timely delivery of passports.

He said that he is well aware of the need to improve the printing of passports and solve the problems of the people in the current situation, due to which the Department of Passport and Immigration apologizes for the problems faced by the people due to these unexpected situations.

Six alleged facilitators arrested

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Police had arrested six alleged facilitators of proclaimed offenders and recovered arms during raids against outlaw citadel in the premises of Badabhir police station, on Sunday.

Superintendent of Police Sadder Sub Division Abdus Salam ordered crackdown against criminals in the premises while Deputy Superintendent of Police Zia Ullah Khan deployed teams under Nasir Farid Khattak Station House Officer Badabhir police station.

The alleged facilitators were identified as Hashim, Munir, Latif, Fazal Aminn and Aishag while the culprits confessed their crimes during interrogation.

Preparation under way for elections

PESHAWAR (APP): The meeting related to General Elections under the Chairmanship of Commissioner Peshawar Division Muhammad Zubair held here on Sunday.

DCs, DPOs and Election Commission officials of all five districts of Peshawar Division participated in the meeting. Commissioner Muhammad Zubair's orders to arrange administrative and security plans for general elections.

Highly sensitive, sensitive and normal polling stations should be determined in Peshawar Division, Commissioner Muhammad Zubair told the meeting.



PESHAWAR: Employees of Lady Reading Hospital holds placards and chanting slogans during a protest in favour of their rights. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

KMU conducted 3rd centralized admission test

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar organized the third Centralized Admission Test (KMU-CAT) on Sunday for admissions in various undergraduate disciplines like Pharm D, DPT, BS Nursing, and BS Allied Health Sciences in 9 centers of the province.

A total of 16679 candidates participated in the said test. The result of the test will be declared within two to three days which can be seen on the official website of KMU (<http://cat.kmu.edu.pk>).

According to the details, the said test was conducted for those candidates who could not appear in the first and 2nd test for any reason.

In the recent test, 5531 students participated in three centers of Peshawar including Islamia Collegiate School, Government Higher Secondary School No.1 Peshawar city and Shekh Taimur Academic Ground Peshawar Zoo Gate, 863 in KMU-IHS Abbottabad Hazara Campus, 2796 in Iqra University Swat, 2322 students participated in BISE Mardan Ground, 1117 in KMU-IMS Kohat, 14 in

Parachinar Kuram, and 73 students were participated in KMU IHS Islamabad Campus.

It is worth mentioning that the participation of 16679 candidates in this third test is not only an expression of confidence in KMU, but it is also expected to further improve the merit and quality of Allied Health Sciences.

It is also a matter of fact that health is a comprehensive system in which doctors as well as various departments like pharmacy, physiotherapy, nursing, and allied health sciences are of primary role and importance.

Training sets stage for tobacco control in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Blue Veins organized a two-day capacity-strengthen workshop for the members of the Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control to combat the pervasive challenge of tobacco use in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control is a robust combination of civil society organizations, NGOs, trade bodies, medical professionals, online social groups, and tobacco control advocates, established to lead proactive anti-tobacco measures and advocacy for sustainable tobacco control in the province.

Focusing on strengthening the role of Alliance, according to Blue Veins the workshop served to equip the tobacco control advocates with essential skills and knowledge on effective media effectively and organizing public campaigns.

The participants of the training appreciating the efforts of collective movement-building, renewed their commitments to advance broader outreach to support effective multi-sectoral tobacco control interventions and actions utilizing the gained skills.

"This is a movement for health, for our environment, and for our future generations," said Qamar Naseem, Program Manager at Blue Veins.

"Through the 'Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control,' we aim to create a sustainable support system that will resonate through the actions of its empowered advocates. Our recent workshop is just the beginning; we envision a ripple effect of these efforts spreading across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa."

"As we face the tobacco epidemic in our region, initiatives like the 'Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control' are a ray of hope. By bringing together diverse sectors of society, we are not just advocating for health; we are safeguarding the future of our communities," said Ajmal Shah, Coordinator of the Tobacco Control Cell KP Health Department.

Dr. Waseem from SDPI and trainer of the workshop said, "combatting tobacco epidemic is not just a medical concern but a societal challenge."

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Operation against thieves continued

PESHAWAR (APP): Grand operation continued against electricity thieves and defaulters in Qazi village of Yakatoot Peshawar on Sunday.

Actions were taken against electricity thieves and defaulters in different areas along with police and staff, Khalid Khan SDO Sethi Town told media men. He said 32 direct coils were removed in the operation against electricity thieves, SDO Khalid said.

He said 3 shunts and tempered meters were removed in the operation, SDO Sethi Town and Rs. 700,000 cash was recovered from electricity defaulters with 12 meters were removed from defaulters worth lakhs of rupees during the operation, SDO Sethi Town Khalid Khan said.

He disclosed that FIR has been sent against 2 persons for involvement in stealing electricity and selling electricity to other houses and one alleged accused was arrested on the spot and sent to the Police Station Sethi Town Peshawar.

Letters have been sent to the Police Station for an FIR against the accused, SDO Sethi Town informed.

Two drug peddlers arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): The officials of the Excise Police Intelligence Bureau conducted a successful operation by arresting two drug peddlers for allegedly supplying drugs to students of educational Institutions.

According to details given by the spokesman of the Excise Police during the search, 1200 grams of hashish was recovered from the accused who were smuggling drugs from Peshawar to Charsada.

The operation was carried out on Motorway Road towards H-Gol Chowk wherein two accused Shah Malik son of Qaiser Khan and Asghar Khan son of Zareen Khan, who were released from Nowshera, were arrested on the spot, Excise spokesman said.

A case has been registered in Excise Police Station Peshawar Region for further investigation and legal action, Spokesman Excise said.

Encroachment mars 3 historical gardens of Mughal era

PESHAWAR (APP): Three historical gardens, which were established during Mughal era in the heart of Peshawar City, have been marred by an encroachment and plastic pollution.

Wazir Bagh, Shalimar Gardens and Jinnah Park (old Canning park) where seasonal flowers and Guli Dawoodi were blossom in the past, were losing its greenery owing to encroachment, dirt, environmental and plastic pollution besides changing weather patterns and required upkeeping to restore its original grandeur.

A visitor could be disappointed to see the scattered plastic, garbages and dirt pollution at Wazir Bagh that was once known for lush greenery with abundance of flowers and pipal trees besides Guli Dawoodi attracted tourists in abundance.

The days were gone now when joy of small kids was

boundless while seeing colourful butterflies hovering over flowers and dense pipal trees in Wazir Bagh where greenery has started dying due to improper upkeeping, encroachment and increased urbanization.

"Chasing butterflies and hide and seek of small children among the thickly grown pipal trees used to be a great fun and laughter but all these charms wore off as the time passed by and today this historic garden was giving barely a deserted look" said Qaisar Khan (65), a resident of Wapda Town.

"It was heartening that Wazir Bagh had lost its pipal trees that were so thick that one would get the impression of night even during broad daylight with children playing around their parents," he said.

Wazirbagh is located at Yakatooth in South of Peshawar City on vast land and was a source of recre-

ation for Peshawarties over centuries.

The oldest garden used to be comfortable place for senior citizens while sitting under the cold shade of pipal trees in soothing environment coupled with chirping of birds and exchanged views of their life experiences and day to day happenings.

He said Wazir Bagh was used for morning exercises by Peshawarties due to its awesome walking tracks, lush green lawns and became a unique source of recreation and picnic spot.

"Today, it is disappointing to see missing chirping birds, colourful butterflies and ladybirds due to vanishing of the canopy pipal trees at Wazir Bagh due to lackluster approach of the local communities, past government, deforestation and improper up keeping."

"Since my childhood, I used to visit this historic park along with my father

for exercise on its beautiful tracks snaking through its thickly grown tall pipal trees with people sitting around in sprawled lawns in its pleasant environment," Riaz Khan, a retired PST teacher told APP.

Recalling his past memories, he said, tourists were highly impressed by its sprawled lawns, fountains, pods, apricots, peaches, pomegranates trees and colourful flowers.

He said Shinwaris, Afridis, Mohmands, Shalmani, Bangash, Bajauris and Khattaks besides domestic and foreign tourists used to come here in droves to spend sometime in a relaxed environment under its shady trees.

It was also a great source of study for students of nearby Government Superior Science College due to its conducive environment and for sports athletes.

"I came to my favorite garden after 30 years where

I was disappointed to see the pathetic condition of its two vast lawns, fountains' pool, dying greeny and withered pipal trees at Wazir Bagh," he said.

He urged the KP government to take cogent measures for its complete rehabilitation, planting of pipal trees and impose complete ban on free movement of people inside the historic garden.

He said fixation of entry fee would help check free movement of people besides closing of its football ground to help protect its greenery from further degradation.

Wazir Bagh garden was constructed in 19th century when Prince Shah Mahmood Durrani sent his forces under the command of Sardar Fateh Muhammad Khan Barkzai alias Wazir against his cousin Shah Shuja, who was the ruler of Peshawar.

In 1810, Sardar Fateh

Muhammed had toppled Shah Shuja rule and laid the foundation of Wazir Bagh garden. It has a Royal Durrani graveyard in its South and Tomb of Beejo Bibi, a Mistress of Shah Taimur son of Emperor Ahmad Shah Abdali nearby, which are attracting tourists.

Peshawar is one of the oldest city of South Asia having about 3,000 years old civilization where international merchants of the subcontinent, Afghanistan and Central Asia had stayed in its ancient Qissa Khwani bazaar at nights and swapped tales of love, culture, art & architecture, music and each others' traditions.

They also visited nearby Wazir Bagh, Jinnah Park and Shahi Bagh gardens before their departure to Afghanistan and onward Central Asian Republics through historic Khyber Pass.

British diplomat Sir

Alexander Burnes had special love for Wazir Bagh by visiting it in 1832 and rested here. He was highly impressed by its breathtaking natural beauty and lush green lawns.

The area of Jinnah Park garden has been restricted due to ill planned construction of BRT where greeny started dying with no flowers. The encoument land of Wazir Bagh, Jinnah Park and Shalimar gardens needs to be retrieved for provision of better environment to Peshawarties.

City Government authorities said under 'New Peshawar Old Charm' project, refurbishment of Wazir Bagh garden was completed.

Under the project, its walking tracks and lawns were improved and a special corner for women and a cafeteria established.

Four main enclosures of Wazir Bagh including pavilion, lawns, crisscrossing pavement and foun-

tains' pool refurbished.

He said funland and Parda Bagh at Shalimar Gardens on about 176 kanal land at historic Shahi Bagh garden removed.

Slip roads were built to ensure smooth flow of traffic on roads leading to Wazir Bagh and Shahi Bagh gardens for facilitation of tourists besides revival of centuries-old traditions of Qehwa Khanas (tea rooms) at ancient Qissa Khwani bazaar and installation of heritage plaques and photos in main squares.

Similarly, problems of illegally installed billboards, debris buildings' materials, encroachment, redundant poles, iron structures, rusted vehicles, dysfunctional streetlights, missing lane cat eyes, jumbled up wires of various utilities and poor civic conditions in the vicinity of Wazir Bagh and Shahi Bagh gardens were addressed.



In brief

Wanted criminal held

KOHAT (APP): The Kohat Police Sunday arrested a wanted criminal in the case of murder and attempted murder, a Police spokesman said here. According to details, Kohat Police conducted an operation carried out by SHO Cantt Police Station Islamuddin Khan and his police team. The arrested accused went into hiding after the murder and attempted murder. The arrested accused was taken into custody during the raid. The arrested accused Irshad has been transferred to Cantt Police Station and has been detained.

Two killed in accident

PIR MAHAL (INP): Two people were killed and two others injured when an over speeding car turned turtle on M-3 in Pir Mahal, Rescue 1122 said on Sunday. According to details, the accident took place near 88 Mor, where a Multan bound car coming from Lahore over turned. As a result of accident, two people were killed on the spot while two others sustained injuries. The bodies and injured were shifted to Tehsil Headquarter (THQ) Hospital where the injured were shifted to DHQ Hospital due to critical condition.

One killed, three injured

CHASHMA (INP): A man died and three others sustained serious injuries in a collision between a van and a truck on MM Road in Chashma area. A speeding van collided with a truck coming from the opposite direction. As a result, a passenger was killed and three others were seriously injured. After receiving information about the accident, a rescue team reached the spot, shifted the dead body and the injured to hospital where the injured people are being given medical aid. Police reached the spot and inspected the accident site and started legal proceedings.

Man killed by daughter, wife

SADIQABAD (INP): A woman along with her daughter killed her husband in Awami Colony of Sadiqabad on Sunday. Police arrested the accused. According to details, the incident took place city police station jurisdiction where Pir Bux 50, raped his real daughter. In reaction to the rape, daughter and wife of Pir Bux killed him. The body was shifted to hospital for postmortem. The police arrested the murderer women and after registering a case against them started investigation.

Man kills wife

SHIKARPUR (INP): A man along with his brother killed his wife over property dispute and fled the scene, police said on Sunday. According to details, the incident took place in Shikarpur where accused in assistance of brother killed his wife, stated to be mother of two children. Police said that the incident was outcome of property dispute and body was shifted to hospital for post-mortem. The police after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest the culprits.

Passenger arrested

MULTAN (INP): ASF in a raid at Multan International Airport and arrested a passenger for carrying 115,780 UAE dirhams to Dubai. The passenger Muhammad Boota was scheduled to fly to Dubai via Fly Dubai ZF-340. ASF said that Muhammad Boota had been arrested and handed over to the Customs officials.

FC inaugurates science laboratories

F.P. Report

KHYBER: Frontier Corps (FC) North, in a commendable initiative to bolster the academic prospects of students, inaugurated three cutting-edge science laboratories at Tirah Education Complex.

The event was marked by a simple yet significant ceremony held at the school premises. Tirah Education Complex, established in 2019, had been facing challenges in providing students with the necessary resources for academic excellence. The absence of science laboratories and a well-equipped library had been hindering students' progress in their scientific studies.

To address this critical need, Frontier Corps North

undertook the construction of state-of-the-art laboratories dedicated to Biology, Physics and Chemistry, each equipped with all the requisite facilities to facilitate hands-on learning and experimentation.

Additionally, already set up library is stocked with a substantial quantity of books to nurture the students' intellectual growth.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by the presence of Frontier Corps North officials, who took the opportunity to engage with the students on the vital topic of "The Role of Youth in Nation Building and Peace in the Area." The students, brimming with joy and optimism, expressed their gratitude for the new facilities, emphasizing the positive

impact it would have on their academic journey.

Furthermore, in a bid to promote holistic development, Frontier Corps North also provided essential sports gear to the school. This endeavor aims to channelize the students' energies in a positive direction, fostering not only academic excellence but also physical well-being and overall personal growth.

The teaching staff at Tirah Education Complex commended the Security Forces for their remarkable efforts in advancing education in the Khyber district. They acknowledged these significant steps as a testament to the commitment of Frontier Corps North towards the betterment of education in the area.

Farmers stage sit-in against low price offered by traders

JACOBABAD (PPI): The rice farmers of Garhi Khairo on Sunday staged a protest sit-in against paddy price being offered to them by traders.

Long queues of vehicles being witnessed at the border area between Sindh and Balochistan due to road-block by protesting farmers. Protesting farmers leaders have said that the government of Sindh has fixed paddy price at 4,500 per maund but traders offering them and purchasing rice at 2200 to 2300 rupees per maund.

The price offered by traders even could not meet the farmers production

expenditure, protesters said. Rice prices experienced a record hike of nearly 90 percent in the last year due to the devastating floods that erased nearly 1.9 million tons or 80 percent of the expected crop production in Sindh alone.

Rice is the second biggest staple with an annual consumption of more than 3.7 million tons. In addition to the devastating floods, the record rise in the cost of production at both the farm and miller levels was also a major contributor to the price rise.

Paddy prices have declined sharply across Punjab losing nearly Rs.

1,500 per maund in the case of the Basmati 1509 variety during a month after new crops from the South also started to arrive in the markets.

Prices in grain markets across several districts of Punjab have declined from Rs. 5,300 per maund to nearly Rs. 3,800 per maund as Pakistan is set to reap the second-biggest rice production of 9 million tons in history due to increase in cultivated area.

Recent crackdown on smuggling to Iran and Afghanistan is also a major factor due to which prices may not go up before the start of next month.

Eight involved in drug trafficking arrested

WAH CANTT (APP): Eight people involved in drug trafficking were arrested during a crackdown by police against the narcotics-selling mafia on Sunday in Wah Cantt.

According to Wah Cantt police, as many as eight drug traffickers working for intercity drug-selling rackets were arrested and narcotics were recovered from their possession, during a crackdown launched by

local police against the narcotics-selling mafia.

ASP Kainat Azhar Khan has said that during the ongoing crackdown against the drug mafia, Wah Saddar Police arrested eight drug dealers and recovered over 5 kilograms of hashish from their possession.

She said that 2.2-kilogram hashish was recovered from Basharat, 1.56-kilogram was recovered from Babar, 1.52-kilogram

was recovered from Umer, 0.7-kilogram was recovered from Usama, 0.51-kilogram was recovered from Amjad, 0.71-kilogram was recovered from Khalid, 0.6-kilogram was recovered from Shakeel and 0.60-kilogram hashish was recovered from Adnan.

She said that separate cases were registered under the Control of Narcotics Substance Act 1997 and launched further investigations.

FESCO imposes Rs.397.7m fine in 44 days

FAISALABAD (INP): The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) during the ongoing special anti-power theft drive, held 3109 power pilferers in last one and half month besides imposing a fine of over Rs.397.7 million for stealing electricity in various areas of the company.

Spokesman Tahir Sheikh said here on Sunday that over 8,579 million detection units were charged. A sum of over Rs.217.8 million was also recovered from the defaulters.

He said that 2996 cases were registered against power theft in various police stations whereas the police also arrested 2476 pilferers so far. Tahir Sheikh further said that the FESCO teams detected

electricity theft at 1021 points in Faisalabad district and imposed a fine of Rs.129.4 million on them under the head of 2,775 million detection units.

In Jhang district, the FESCO teams caught 309 electricity thieves and imposed a fine of Rs.47.8 million under 1143,000 detection units.

Similarly, 324 cases of electricity theft were detected in Bhakkar district and the company fined them Rs.42.6 million under 836,000 detection units.

The spokesman further said that 348 electricity thieves were caught from Chinot district and they were imposed a fine of Rs.39.6 million under 1064,000 detection units.

In Khushab district, 102

consumers were found involved in electricity theft and they were fined Rs.16 million for 334,000 detection units.

The FESCO teams also caught 376 power pilferers from Mianwali and they were fined with Rs.38.7 million for 845,000 detection units.

In Sargodha district, 349 cases of electricity theft were detected. Hence, a fine of Rs.38.7 million was imposed on the electricity thieves under 845,000 detection units.

FESCO teams also caught 244 electricity thieves from Toba Tek Singh district. The company imposed a fine of Rs.31.2 million for 624,000 detection units, the spokesman added.

Directive to expedite efforts for dengue eradication

FAISALABAD (APP): Divisional Commissioner Madam Silwat Saad has directed the deputy commissioners of all four districts of the division to expedite their efforts for complete eradication of dengue.

Chairing a meeting on Sunday, she reviewed dengue surveillance activities and directed the surveillance teams to improve their efforts. She said that anti-dengue teams should be seen active in the field. The teams should avoid fake activities and ensure complete surveillance of hotspots including tyre shops, graveyards and parks, she added.

She also directed to submit dengue progress reports to the commissioner office so that further steps would be taken to eliminate

dengue from the division.

Deputy commissioners of all four districts including Faisalabad, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh and Chinot joined the meeting through video link and briefed the divisional commissioner about arrangements for controlling dengue.

Scholarships paid to seven students on Punjab ombudsman's orders

Educational scholarships worth Rs.291,000 were paid to seven students on the orders of the Punjab ombudsman.

A spokesman for the local administration said here on Sunday that seven students had submitted their grievances before the Ombudsman Punjab, contending that payment of their educational scholarships

under "Zewar-e-

Taleem Programme" had been stopped without any reason.

After hearing, the complaints, Punjab Ombudsman Major (Retired) Azam Suleman directed Additional Director Grievance Redressal Cell, Punjab Human Capital Investment Project, Punjab Social Protection Authority, Additional Program Director, Program Monitoring & Implementation Unit, School Education Department and Deputy Director Coordination to immediately resolve the issue.

Therefore, on the direction of the Punjab Ombudsman, grievances of the students were redressed by paying their educational scholarships worth Rs.291,000, the spokesman added.



GILGIT: VC Karakoram International University Attaullah Shah cutting a ribbon to inaugurate Laboratory for Natural Product Research in Department of Chemistry KIU.

Tourist resort inaugurated in Orakzai

ORAKZAI (INP): Corps Commander Peshawar Lieutenant General Hassan Azhar Hayat has inaugurated the newly built tourist resort at Orakzai in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The area of Orakzai District is a paradise like area, at a distance of two and half hours from Kalaya Kohat.

Special arrangements have been taken for the provision of best facilities in this area to national and foreign tourists like other parts of province.

The steps taken by the Pakistan Army and the Provincial government to upgrade the tourism sector will prove beneficial for the generation of employment opportunities for locals.

The locals greatly admired the Pakistan Army for taking prolific steps for the well-being of the people. The Pakistan Army and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government have taken a number of steps to promote tourism in Orakzai district, including the launch of a paragliding club on August 14, 2023.

Drug dealer arrested

MARDAN (INP): Mardan Police has arrested a drug dealer and recovered ice during an operation, the police spokesperson said on Sunday.

On the orders of DPO Mardan Najibur Rahman against drugs, especially ice, police station Lond Khor under the supervision of DSP President Circle Gul Wali Khan successfully arrested the accused Abdul Malik son of Muqdar Sukna Khat in Omarabad.

The police recovered 58 grams of ice from the accused.

The spokesperson said that the police are committed to cracking down on drug dealers and smugglers, and that they will continue to carry out operations against them.

He also urged the public to cooperate with the police by reporting any suspicious activity.

Two killed, 15 injured

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Two including a woman and a minor girl died and 15 others were injured when a bus carrying wedding party overturned in Minchinabad on Sunday, rescue sources said.

According to details, the accident took place on main Highway near Akbar Chowk of Bahawalpur where bus with wedding guest onboard turned turtle while attempting to save a motorcyclist.

As a result of accident, a woman and a minor girl were killed on the spot while 15 others injured.

The injured were shifted to Tehsil Headquarter Hospital where condition of three wounded people was stated to be critical.

Citizen rescued

LARKANA (INP): The Larkana police during an operation near Otha Chowk rescued a citizen who was abducted some one month earlier. A citizen identified as Farhan Tinu, hailing from Nazir Mohallah was kidnapped by armed abductors.

IFC goes operational at Hattar SEZ

HARIPUR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) inaugurated an Industrial Facilitation Centre (IFC) at Hattar Special Economic Zone to facilitate industrialists and investors in resolution of their problems.

The IFC was inaugurated by the KP Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Dr Aamir Abdullah, the other day, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

Besides, the Chief

Executive Officer (CEO) KP-EZDMC Javed Iqbal Khattak, members Board of Director (BoD) and officials of the company, a large number of industrialists and local investors were also present on the occasion.

The purpose of the establishment of the centre is the facilitation of industrialists in getting, electricity and gas connections, water supply, company registration, opening of bank accounts and provision of other services.

Talking to this scribe, the

KP-EZDMC Javed Iqbal Khattak said that the centre has been established in a new building constructed by the company from its own resources.

He said that similar facilitation centres have been established in all other industrial zones of the province to provide guidance to industrialists and facilitate them in resolution of their problems.

The CEO further said that the company is constructing all infrastructure of the Hattar Special Economic Zone from its own resources.

Man shot dead by brothers over property dispute

MANSEHRA (INP): At man was shot dead by his brothers and father over property dispute in village Mera Amjad Ali of Mansehra on Sunday.

According to details, culprits Muhammad Nazir, his sons Muhammad Asif, Muhammad Faizan and Muhammad Saeed sprayed bullets at Khalid Hameed engaged in sowing wheat crop.

As a result of firing, Khalid Hameed was killed on the spot and culprits fled

the scene of crime.

Police arrested Najam-unisa, mother of the assailants and after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest culprits.

Robbers steal Rs1.4mln cash, 18 tola jewelry from house

Robbers stole millions of rupees cash and several tola of gold and silver jewelry from a house located at Khandheri Forest College road on Saturday-Sunday midnight.

According to details, the robbers late night barged into residence of Zeeshan Abbasi in Shinkiri police station jurisdiction.

The robbers took away Rs14,00,000 cash, six tola gold and 12 silver jewelry from the house.

Police said that it found a piece of jewelry which was dropped from fleeing robbers, it has taken the finger prints from said jewelry piece and culprits would be traced and arrested soon.

Secy, Traffic Incharge conduct joint inspection

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Secretary Regional Transport Authority (RTA) Khalid Qayyum and Traffic Incharge Izzat Khan Gandapur along with RTA staff conducted a joint inspection of passenger vehicles at New Bannu-Chungi.

The inspection team checked the route permits and fitness certificates of the vehicles following the directions of the provincial government.

During the inspection, the teams imposed fine of Rs 20,500 on various vehicles which found overloaded, illegally using the LPG and overcharging the

passengers. The extra fares were collected from the transporters and returned to the passengers.

The RTA Secretary said that the inspection of passenger vehicles on the roads would be enhanced to facilitate the common people. He said that it would not only help implementing the government orders but also helpful to ensure regular monitoring of overcharging, overloading, fitness of vehicles and other violations.

Man shot dead in DI Khan: A man was shot dead while he was riding a motorcycle here in the lim-

its of Saddar police station.

According to police, Abdul Rehman Bettani son of Sardar Bettani, a resident of Sana-Garden reported the Saddar Police that his cousin Zubair Bettani son of Nawaz Bettani was going to Sana-Garden on a motorcycle when two unknown assailants riding another motorcycle shot him dead. After committing the crime, the assailants escaped from the scene. He said that they had no enmity with anyone.

Later, the Rescue 1122 team shifted the body to DHQ hospital Dera Ismail Khan.

Oath taking ceremony held

SIALKOT (APP): An oath-taking ceremony of the "Al-Raziq Trust" Sialkot, a charitable organization established for public welfare, was held at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI).

Vice President (VP) Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Amer Majeed Sheikh and Chairman AirSial Fazal Jilani participated in the swearing-in ceremony as the special guests.

Vice President SCCI Amer Majeed Sheikh, presenting the note of thanks,

said, "The main objectives of the trust are to encourage women to participate in business activities, provide them with business skills and support them in finding jobs, provide blood and treatment facilities for children suffering from thalassaemia and important welfare and social objectives like promotion of education."

He appeal to the business community of Sialkot and all philanthropists to fully cooperate with individuals and institutions who have dedicated their lives to service to humanity.

Al Raziq Trust Chairperson Amina Ahmed said that she was very happy because of her dream being realized. She said that several MoUs were also signed with business organizations, hospitals and welfare organizations for smooth implementation of the objectives.

The event was also attended by Secretary General "Al Raziq Trust" Khadija, Co-Founder Khawaja Abdul Moeed, President Usman Ghaman, Director Noman Ali, Abu Bakar Amjad, Ammar Ahmed, Aizaz Murad and Saima.

House looted; Woman hurt

FAISALABAD (APP): Ten dacoits looted a house in the area of Mamonkanjan police station. A police spokesman said here on Sunday that 10 bandits stormed into the house of Nadeem Sandheela in Chak No.494-GB and took the inmates hostage at gunpoint.

They looted 4-tola golden ornaments worth Rs.1 million, Rs.300,000 in

cash, a gun and other items and fled by hurling threats of dire consequences if the alarm was raised.

Receiving information, the area police headed by DSP Tandiawanwala Masood Nazir reached the spot and traced the whereabouts of a dacoit to Chak No.512-GB.

The police arrested an accused and started investigations for the arrest of his

accomplices, the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, robbers shot at and injured a woman, Ayesha Bibi, when she put up resistance during a robbery bid near Heaven Pepsi Cola on Canal Road. The injured woman was shifted to hospital while the Madina Town police started investigations after registering a case, the spokesman added.



Argentines to vote, seeking escape from economic shambles

BUENOS AIRES (AFP/APP): Argentines head to the polls on Sunday in a presidential election dominated by fury over decades of economic decline and record inflation that has propelled political outsider Javier Milei to the front of the race.

Once one of the richest countries in the world, Argentina has stagnated in recent decades, unable to escape cycles of fiscal crises marked by debt, financial mismanagement, and inflation which now stands at 140 percent year-on-year.

With 40 percent of the population living in poverty and a middle-class brought to its knees, many voters are keen to see the back of the traditional parties they see as the architects of their misery. "It's total uncertainty -- you never know if your rent will go up, (or) prices in the supermarket. It's madness," said university student Valentín Figarra, 20. "One wants to grow... but this generation is falling behind, it's sad."

Milei, a libertarian economist who formed his party Libertad Avanza (Freedom Advances) only in 2021, blindsided most experts and pollsters when he surged to the front of the election race, winning a primary with 30 percent of votes.

The self-described "anarcho-capitalist" with disheveled hair and a rock-star persona has lured voters with his diatribes on television and social media -- where he vows to "dynamite" the central bank and ditch the peso for the US dollar.

He has run his campaign on TikTok and YouTube and showed up at live rallies with an actual powered-up chainsaw vowing to slash public spending by 15 percent.

Political science student Agustín Baletti, 22, said he will be voting for Milei because past governments have "left young people without hope."

"Everything is already broken. Milei isn't going to break anything."

While Milei has topped opinion polls, these have not proved reliable in the past, and analysts say anything can happen between the three frontrunners out of five total candidates.

Charismatic Economy Minister Sergio Massa represents the ruling center-left Peronist coalition, a populist movement heavy on state intervention and welfare programs that has dominated Argentine politics for decades but has grown deeply unpopular. Having overseen the country's recent economic pains, he has been an easy punching bag for his rivals.

To woo voters, Massa has gone on a pre-election spending spree, slashing income tax for much of the population in a move analysts say will only make the country's fragile financial situation worse.

To counter Milei, his government has taken pains to explain to voters what a loss of key subsidies that keep public transport and electricity, among others, dirt cheap, will mean.

The other frontrunner is the stern and tough-talking Patricia Bullrich, a

former security minister who has also vowed radical change from the over-spending, money-printing Peronists and their strict currency controls.

Bullrich served in the government of former president Mauricio Macri (2015-2019), a pro-market, non-Peronist who failed in his promise to contain spending and took out a record \$44 billion loan with the International Monetary Fund, which has bailed Argentina out 22 times despite several massive defaults.

Irene Landa, 70, a psychoanalyst said she believes Bullrich is the "most coherent" of the lot.

"Milei, to me, it would be like giving a revolver to a monkey," Landa said. "But I think people are so fed up, so tired, that they believe in what he says."

Voters are fed up with "politicians who have been highly corrupt, highly incompetent, who have never paid attention to something we learn in high school, that you shouldn't spend more than you earn," said Buenos Aires-based economist Andrés Borenstein.

Argentina's 35.8 million registered voters will be able to cast their ballots from 8am local time (1100 GMT) to 6pm (2100 GMT).

Preliminary results are expected on Sunday evening.

To avoid a runoff election on November 19, a candidate needs to win 45 percent of the vote Sunday, or 40 percent with a difference of 10 points or more over the nearest rival.

Populist right on course to sweep Swiss polls

GENEVA (AFP/APP): Switzerland's right-wing populists look set to sweep Sunday's general elections following a campaign fuelled by anti-mass migration rhetoric and pledges to combat "woke madness".

Polling stations are only open for a few hours on Sunday morning as the vast majority of Swiss voters post their ballots in the four weeks leading up to election day.

A first results projection, giving percentages only, is expected at around 4:00pm (1400 GMT).

The wealthy European country of 8.8 million people is voting for all 200 seats in the National Council lower house of parliament and all 46 in the Council of States upper chamber. The Council of States, which represents the cantons that make up Switzerland, is dominated by the centre-right The Centre and the right-wing party called FDP.The Liberals. Elections, by majority vote, rarely change the balance.

In the lower house, where proportional representation is used, the right-wing populist Swiss People's Party (SVP) is on course to consolidate its position as the biggest political force.

Meanwhile the Greens are expected to cede ground back to the Social Democrats, according to the opinion polls.

The Swiss elections come as terror attacks return to Europe, first in France and then in Brussels.

Sean Muller, a professor at Lausanne University's Institute of Political Studies, said that while most people will have already voted, he did not think the thus-far

undecideds would have their vote swayed by recent events "because as a neutral country, we still consider ourselves safe from terrorism", he told AFP.

The SVP -- which is strongly anti-EU -- fiercely defends Switzerland's long-standing military neutrality but feels this principle has been tested too far in recent months.

Switzerland is not in the European Union but has matched the EU's economic sanctions on Russia following Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

That said, the SVP's election campaign has focused on its favourite theme: the fight against "mass immigration" and saying no to a Switzerland of 10 million people. The Federal Commission Against Racism accused the SVP of running a "xenophobic" campaign on social media by spotlighting criminal cases perpetrated by foreigners. It's "New normal?" social media adverts plunged into a world of bloodied knives, hooded criminals, fists, bruised faces and frightened women.

It has also launched war on "woke madness".

"Drag queens, antifas and climate activists are all going to vote! At the polls, they could ruin Switzerland and our society. We won't let them!" the SVP youth wing said in a final push for votes.

Even though Switzerland remains one of the world's richest countries, with unemployment running at around two percent and a very high GDP per capita, the SVP's message continues to strike a chord.

The party has topped every

National Council election since 1999, though its support has gone up and down.

"It's true that four years ago, our vote went down," SVP leader Marco Chiesa told AFP.

Although "we are still the first party, we want to get 100,000 voters back, to get closer to 30 percent" -- something no Swiss party has ever achieved under the proportional representation system.

On the other side of the National Council's hemicycle in the Federal Palace in Bern, the Greens and the Green Liberals are thought unlikely to hold their 2019 gains.

Though climate change remains a major issue in Switzerland -- where Alpine glaciers are retreating at an exceptional rate -- the environmentalist movement seems to have lost momentum during the Covid-19 pandemic. The cost of living has also stolen the limelight from climate change, with inflation and surging health insurance costs hitting people's pockets.

The Social Democrats hope to make gains on these issues, and are calling for reforms that would index health insurance contributions to income. However, most voters will tend towards apathy -- general election turnout is typically around 45 percent. The 246 newly elected parliamentarians will choose the seven members of the government on December 13.

The seats are shared out 2-2-2-1 among the four main parties.

The Federal Council government is Switzerland's collective head of state and its decisions are taken by consensus.

Hurricane Norma hits Mexico coast, then weakens to tropical storm

CABO SAN LUCAS (AFP/APP): Hurricane Norma slammed into Mexico's northwestern coast Saturday afternoon, bringing heavy rain and the threat of flash floods, but was downgraded to a tropical storm by evening, authorities said.

The storm came ashore about 25 kilometers (15 miles) northwest of the resort city of Cabo San Lucas on the Baja California coast, gradually weakening as it approached land.

Norma was moving

northeast at 9 kph, packing winds of up to 110 kph, the National Hurricane Center (NHC) reported at 0000 GMT.

Norma was expected to bring rainfall of up to 45 centimeters (18 inches), producing "flash and urban flooding, along with mudslides in areas of higher terrain," the NHC said.

"Heavy rains and flash flooding to continue through the weekend," it said.

"Life-threatening surf and rip current conditions" would affect the coast of

southwestern and west-central Mexico and Baja California Sur for the next couple of days.

Fueled by warm Pacific waters, Norma had intensified to a Category 3 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale, and was still a Category 1 when making landfall, before weakening.

Hotel employees in Cabo San Lucas urged guests to stay indoors until authorities give the all-clear, Gustavo Matamoros, a hotel worker, told AFP.

Local authorities say about 60,000 tourists are staying in the area, most of them international visitors.

Footage from Milenio TV showed flooded streets as Norma arrived. No casualties have been reported by authorities.

Norma should continue to weaken as it moves across the Baja California Peninsula toward the west coast of Mexico on Sunday.

Two people died last week when Hurricane Lidia struck the western states of Jalisco and Nayarit.

Niger's deposed president is with family and doing well

NIAMEY (AFP/APP): Niger's ousted president Mohamed Bazoum is with his family and is doing well, a relative told AFP Sunday, after claims by the country's new military rulers this week that he had tried to escape.

"He is at the presidential residence (in Niamey) with his wife and son and is doing well," the family member said, adding that he was allowed to make one phone call.

The source added that his doctor was able to see him and "bring him food".

On Thursday, the military regime which overthrew the democratically elected Bazoum on July 26 said they had foiled an attempt by him to escape their custody.

The escape plan, the regime's spokesman said, had involved Bazoum get-



ting to a hideout on the outskirts of the capital Niamey before flying out on helicopters "belonging to a foreign power" towards Nigeria. The regime added that "the main actors and some of the accomplices" were arrested.

A lawyer's collective representing Bazoum rejected the "fabricated accusations" and said Bazoum was being "held

incommunicado".

French President Emmanuel Macron expressed Friday his "concern over the uncertain situation" and called "for his immediate release and that of his wife and son".

Since he was toppled by the military in July, Bazoum has refused to resign and has been held at his residence in the heart of the presidential palace

along with his wife and son. Last month, Bazoum's lawyers said he had filed a legal case with a court of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) against those who deposed him, and appealing for the restoration of constitutional order.

ECOWAS has warned that it could intervene militarily in Niger if diplomatic efforts to return Bazoum to power fail.

Former colonial power and ally to the deposed president in the fight against jihadist groups attacking Niger, France agreed with the military rulers demands to withdraw its 1,500 troops by December 31.

France earlier pulled out troops from Mali and Burkina Faso, which have undergone coups in the past two years amid.

Drought in Brazil's Amazon reveals ancient engravings

MANAUS (AFP/APP): An extreme drought in parts of the Amazon has led to a dramatic drop in river water levels, exposing dozens of usually submerged rock formations with carvings of human forms that may date back some 2,000 years.

Livia Ribeiro, a long-time resident of the Amazon's largest city, Manaus, said she heard about the rock engravings from friends and wanted to check them out.

"I thought it was a lie ... I had never seen this. I've lived in Manaus for 27 years," said Ribeiro, an administrator, after viewing the dazzling relics.

The rock carvings are not usually visible because they are covered by the waters of the Negro River, whose flow recorded its

lowest level in 121 years last week. The surfacing of the engravings on the riverbank have delighted scientists and the general public alike but also raised unsettling questions.

"We come, we look at (the engravings) and we think they are beautiful. But at the same time, it is worrying... I also think about whether this river will exist in 50 or 100 years," Ribeiro said.

Drought in Brazil's Amazon has drastically reduced river levels in recent weeks, affecting a region that depends on a maze of waterways for transportation and supplies.

The Brazilian government has sent emergency aid to the area, where normally bustling riverbanks are dry, littered with strand-

ed boats.

According to experts, the dry season has worsened this year due to El Nino, an irregular climate pattern over the Pacific Ocean that disrupts normal weather, adding to the effect of climate change.

The engravings comprise an archaeological site of "great relevance," said Jaime Oliveira of the Brazilian Institute of Historical Heritage (Iphan).

They are at a site known as Praia das Lajes and were first seen in 2010, during another period of drought not as severe as the current one. The rock carvings appear against a backdrop of dense jungle, with the low brownish waters of the Negro River flowing nearby. Most of the engravings

Air quality in Indian capital continues to be very poor

NEW DELHI (Xinhua/APP): The air quality in the Indian capital territory continued to be very poor on Sunday, officials said.

According to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR), an institute monitoring air pollution, the overall Air Quality Index (AQI) of Delhi was recorded at 302 on Sunday. The air quality is very poor and prominent pollutants are PM 2.5 and PM 10. Experts say PM 2.5, fine particles that are 2.5 microns or less in diameter, can travel deep into the respiratory tract, reaching the lungs and entering the bloodstream. Health officials say very poor air quality causes respiratory illness on prolonged exposure.

"Unhappily it is now reappearing with the worsening of the drought," Carneiro said. "Having our rivers back (flooded) and keeping the engravings submerged will help preserve them, even more than our work."

2 dead, 2 missing in Philippine tanker fire

MANILA (Xinhua/APP): A fire broke out on a motor tanker while anchored off Batangas province, south of Manila, on Sunday, killing two people, officials said. The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) initially reported that one died from the blaze that razed the vessel Motor Tanker Sea Horse at around 9 a.m. local time. The fire raged for two hours before firefighters extinguished it.

Joselito Sinocruz, the manager of Port of Batangas, said in an updated report that two died and two others were still missing from the accident. Sinocruz told a radio interview that two bodies were found inside the vessel and seven people were on the vessel when it caught fire. The tanker was not carrying any oil when the incident happened, he added.

Bear attacks in Japan increase at unprecedented pace

TOKYO (Xinhua/APP): Japan is seeing the number of people attacked by bears in fiscal 2023 increase at an unprecedented pace, local media reported Sunday.

A total of 109 people were hurt, two fatally, between April and September, mostly in the northern part of Japan's main island Honshu, Kyodo News said, citing the environment ministry's preliminary data released in early October.

The number marks the highest for the same period since fiscal 2007 when such monthly statistics became available, the report said.

Attacks have been reported in 15 of Japan's 47 prefectures during the six-

month period from April, with around 70 percent of cases in northeastern Japan, according to the data.

By prefecture, Akita had the most victims, with 28 people, followed by Iwate and Fukushima with 27 and 13 people, respectively, Kyodo News reported.

Meanwhile, this year is seeing a poor nut season, forcing bears to venture to greater areas, including near human habitats, to seek food as they prepare for hibernation, it added.

The current record for the highest number of people wounded by the animals, which include Asian black bears and Ussuri brown bears, is 158 in fiscal 2020.

Meloni's first anniversary as Italy PM marred by economy, family split

ROME (Reuters): Weak economic growth and high interest on the country's huge debt are the main problems facing Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni after her first year in power, an anniversary marked by an abrupt announcement she was leaving her long-time partner.

Meloni's coalition, the first led by a woman in Italy's history, was sworn in a year ago after a sweeping election victory and will soon cruise past the 14-month average postwar term life for Italian governments.

It was seen on taking power as the country's most right-wing since wartime dictator Benito Mussolini, as Meloni's Brothers of Italy party traces its roots to the post-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI).

Yet Meloni, 46, set about quelling foreign concerns of possible extrem-

ism, forging good ties with allies by adopting a strongly pro-Western, EU-friendly stance and pledging staunch support to Ukraine in its war with Russia.

At home she pleased her rightist grassroots through measures to defend the traditional family, protect Italy's cultural heritage and try to stem migrant arrivals. "We have worked tirelessly to repay the trust and to demonstrate with facts that it was possible to build a different Italy," she said in a video message this week.

However, an economic rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic has ground to a halt, with gross domestic product contracting by 0.4% in the second quarter, and analysts forecast Italian growth will be among the lowest in the euro zone next year.

That makes it harder for Meloni to keep her tax-cut-

ting promises and makes Italy's debt, equal to 140% of national output, vulnerable to market sell-offs.

"The economy is probably the toughest subject. The government has low margins in which to operate," said Valentina Meliciani, an economics professor at LUISS university in Rome.

Last week Meloni weathered the first of several reviews on Italy's debt when S&P Global Ratings confirmed the country's BBB rating with a stable outlook. However, the prevailing view among analysts is that the rating agencies will worsen Rome's outlook while avoiding outright downgrades. Meloni also has personal problems to deal with. She announced on Friday she was separating from her long-time partner, TV presenter Andrea Giambruno, after he repeatedly sparked outrage for sexist comments made on and off-air. This month the government approved a 2024 budget with around 24 billion euros (\$25.3 billion) of tax cuts and increased spending, despite a public debt that is proportionally the second highest in the euro zone after Greece's.

including millions, "Oops!...I Did it Again" and "In the Zone", combined with spectacular world tours. A highly public breakdown in which she shaved her head and was filmed attacking a paparazzi's car led to her father, Jamie Spears, taking legal control over her life. It meant he controlled her finances, career decisions and even whether she could see her children or marry -- which Spears described as tantamount to "abuse".

Her fans organised a campaign -- #FreeBritney -- aided by media investigations that finally led a court to remove her father as guardian in September 2021. She apparently no longer speaks to her family. Her life has hardly been smooth sailing since then -- her marriage to model Sam Asghari ended in August after just 14 months. But Spears at least looks set to add a number one bestselling book to her list of artistic accomplishments.

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Arrival of Masiha or remedy of a blunder?

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif landed in Islamabad on Sunday after ending his four years-long self-exile in London. The three-time Prime Minister and Patron Inchief of the PML-N marked his arrival with a historic political gathering at Minar-Pakistan Lahore. In the first go, the PML-N supremo addressed his thousands of supporters who reached Lahore from across the country to welcome and celebrate his arrival. Nawaz told his supporters that he had served the country with loyalty whenever he was given a chance. He had resolved the issues of Pakistan and never hesitated from any sacrifice. He regretted the false cases against him, PML-N president Shehbaz Sharif, the party's vice president his daughter Maryam Nawaz and other party leaders. The former Prime Minister compared the current prices of common commodities, oil, wheat, sugar, fertilizers, gas, electricity bills and dollar exchange rate during his tenure in 2017 and vowed to bring those affluent days back once again. Mr Sharif termed good relations with neighbours vital for development and urged for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute through peaceful means.

The PML-N Supremo has made a landmark public comeback, after being written off from the political scene of the Country for a second time. Almost everything had changed for him over the past four years when he left the prison and emergency ward under tight security to get treatment from abroad, which was altogether different to yesterday's massive protocol, high security and thousands of crowds waiting impatiently to hear his speech. The court was kind enough to grant him protective bail to appear at the next hearing instead of letting him go to resume his journey from where he departed abroad. Interestingly, the change of government not only altered the living conditions, political scenario and rules of the game but the law also transformed itself according to the needs of the accused or petitioners, the same affects the mood of the adjudicators.

As for politics, Mr Sharif has been convicted on two counts of corruption and is due to complete his 14-year term imprisonment in jail. The PML-N legal team has already filed appeals against his conviction and is currently hopeful of getting bail for the former Prime Minister after he surrenders before the court on Tuesday. Seemingly, all legal hurdles would be removed before the ECP announces dates for the election and PML-N Supremo would be ready to lead his party election campaign which could pave the way for his fourth term premiership. Realistically, all that is possible in today's Pakistan, where courts and adjudicators issue and turn verdicts under the theory of necessity, and establishment solely decides the interest and fate of the nation. Historically, such unconstitutional conduct has brought the country to such a catastrophic situation, that national institutions are compelled to take remedy of their policies by untying the knot they fixed just years ago.

History has taken a new turn, by repeating itself after a pause of almost five years. The 240 million-strong nation is still in search of a Masiha/savior, who could steer the country out of crises, rescue the dwindling economy and cure the chronic economic ailments of the country. Multiple strategies have been applied in the past together with multiple use of 58(2)B, and the launch of Project Imran to put the nation on the right track that leads toward political stability and economic growth, but all those experiments proved to be no less than disasters. In an apolitical mode, this nation witnessed the inauguration of Project Tareen which will bring istikam and sustainability in the long term while the return of Mr. Sharif seems to be a short-term measure to resolve the immediate economic glitch of the country. Interestingly, once most-rated political group, the PTI and its top leader have met the same fate this time which the PML-N supremo went through before the previous election.

The current scenario is not only interesting but thought-provoking for all leaders, political groups, institutions as well as the public. This country belongs to 240 million Pakistanis, all are equally loyal, equally partiotic, possess equal right to vote and have the freedom of electing a leader of their choice after a due period. Hence, the public mandate must be respected at all costs and no one has the right to derail a democratically elected government through illegal means including judicial activism or military dictatorships. Pakistan's survival lies in the continuity of democracy, which will not only bring political stability but stimulate economic revival as well.

Cairo-Summit and failed Arab diplomacy

Leaders and top officials from more than a dozen countries have gathered in the Egyptian capital, for a conference to discuss ways to de-escalate the Israel-Hamas war amid growing risk of a wider spillover in the Middle East. The conference was attended by representatives from countries including Jordan, France, Germany, Russia, China, the UK, the US, Qatar, South Africa, the EU and the United Nations. Israel did participate while its absolute backer, the United States of America appointed a low-level official to mark participation. The UN Secretary-General particularly attended the session and issued an appeal for an immediate ceasefire to give a chance to peace, and diplomacy to seek an ultimate solution to the dispute.

Currently, a relentless bombing campaign underway in Gaza against innocent civilians along with targeted special operations on Hamas potential hideouts, arms stores, and residential complexes in a territory that is entirely cut off by the rest of the world through infamous Israeli border wall, comprehensive mechanism of fencing, barriers and barricades installed by the Israeli military. Amid such a high level of bombardment and shelling, the Israeli rogue regime turned Gaza into an unliveable place by turning off the supply of essential commodities including food, water, fuel, electricity, medicines etc creating famine-like situation in Palestine. This situation has prompted worldwide condemnation of Israeli inhumane atrocities while hundreds of thousands of people came to streets in support of Palestinians in Arab nations. The Arab leaders fear a public uprising against the ruling elites on the issue of Palestine and are compelled to carry out flimsy activities such as conferences, shuttle diplomacy and press releases to show off their affiliation with Palestine. Meanwhile, the Egyptian leader also fears mass exodus of Palestinians into their land, which instigated him to arrange such a gathering that failed in assembling any important player at this point.

In fact, political and military weakness together with disunity of Arab leaders has encouraged the Jewish state to bring such ruination in Palestine and abstain from global efforts for ceasefire and peace. If Arab nations deploy their forces on Israeli borders and send a clear ultimatum to Tel Aviv. The war would stop in no time and the Palestine issue would be resolved in days not years.

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North Africa and the scramble for ‘new oil’

Hafed Al-Ghwel

As technology becomes increasingly central to our lives and economies, the demand for rare earth elements and other critical mineral resources — essential raw materials that underpin the global transition to the low-carbon economies of the future — has grown exponentially. These critical minerals are the lifeline of technologies ranging from semiconductors, flash memory and fiber optics to electric vehicle batteries and smartphones. As a result, competition for these assets is reshaping the geopolitical and socioeconomic landscape, far offsetting the conventional hegemony of oil, and laying out the contours of the next global resource scramble.

To meet goals laid out in the Paris Agreement, it is believed that 80 percent of confirmed fossil fuel supplies will need to stay in the ground. Yet, as we transition from these traditional energy sources to more sustainable alternatives, such as solar, wind, and geothermal energy, the demand for certain minerals and metals is set to balloon, which will likely transform Africa into a battleground for competing hegemonies seeking to monopolize the lifeblood of future economies. By 2050, we could need close to 3 billion tons of metals such as lithium, cobalt and vanadium, which are useful in storing energy. Minerals such as manganese and graphite, which are essential for these new technologies, are found in abundance on the African continent, in addition to copper and other materials like indium, selenium and neodymium that are used in the manufacture of wind turbines and solar panels.

For optimists, such conditions could set Africa up for success as the world speeds up the move toward eco-friendly energy solutions. It will not be a new phenomenon, either, since the continent's large deposits of gold, silver and other metals remain a well-spring of raw materials that fuel current manufacturing processes across the globe. The extraction and export of these materials continues to play a significant role in Africa's economic lifeline, driving exports, earning revenue, and contributing largely to gross domestic product. To date, minerals and fossil fuels made up over a third of all exports for most African countries. Moreover, a striking 42 out of 54 African countries depend heavily on these resources, with minerals providing a significant amount of revenue, foreign currency and jobs.

Yet, despite holding such abundant natural wealth, Africa remains disadvantaged on a global scale and struggles to fully capitalize on its resources. This is mostly because, while its abundance is phenomenal, Africa still lacks the capacity and technology to develop these raw materials into more valuable finished products. This has limited the continent's opportunities to grow economically and to carve a more substantial place for itself in global supply chains. However, the global thirst for climate-friendly technologies and the will to transition away from energy sources that contribute to climate change presents a golden opportunity.

The continent could tap into its near limitless potential and become a focal point in the manufacture of everything from solar panels to batteries for electric vehicles. The growth of these clean energy industries carries a promise of industrial and employment expansion, which will then go on to secure unprecedented levels of socioeconomic development and prosperity. Countries well-endowed with these vital minerals could attract substantial investments not only in the extraction of these resources, but also in

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advanced sectors that rely on them. Africa's natural wealth, therefore, offers an opportunity to play a lead role in driving investments, and spearheading domestic and regional industrial evolution and growth. To harness this opportunity fully, African countries need to beef up their manufacturing prowess, ramp up production, and encourage exports by bolstering domestic and cross-border collaborations and supply chain linkages.

Simply put, the African continent is increasingly indispensable, and the supply-chain risks stemming from the monopolization of these resources by a few countries such as China and Russia pose a significant threat of disruption to the global semiconductor and electric vehicle markets. China currently commands the lion's share of the global market for critical minerals — extracting 60 percent and processing about 80 percent of them — in addition to investing billions in Africa to fuel its ambitious

Digital China strategy. Beijing's practices occasionally raise eyebrows for capitalizing on soaring demand, political leverage, governance challenges, and exploiting cheap labor. Russia is not far behind, its footprints evident in deploying thousands of Wagner Group mercenaries to guard mineral resources.

Even the US, a mostly distant "partner" of the continent, cannot escape the surge of interest and attention in Africa, given that its countries have the minerals that will power the modern world. Recognizing Africa, specifically North Africa, as a crucial strategic partner can help Western economies in mitigating their dependencies on a sin-

Western multinationals in the 1970s and 1980s offer valuable lessons for today's context. By establishing manufacturing hubs and R&D centers in ASEAN countries, they kick-started the growth of these economies. Fostering a similar approach by encouraging multinationals to invest in Africa can yield the twofold benefit of growing the local economies while reducing dependency on Eastern powerhouses. For instance, Google, Microsoft and IBM have already begun making inroads by opening R&D labs in various African countries. Intrinsic in this strategic equation is the clear message that critical minerals have not merely evolved as the new oil but also as crucial geopolitical pivot points. The traditional oil-driven geopolitics is giving way rapidly to geostrategic competition over these prized resources.

Thus, the international spotlight on Africa's potential is not just a reflection of its burgeoning promise but also a smoking gun pointing to the heightening political and economic dynamics shaping the world. Major global and regional forces are fortifying their footprints in Africa, staking claims in strategic areas, increasing their soft power, and going all-in to compete for influence and projects. The Maghreb countries are not immune to these global dynamics and, in many ways, are in the thick of the action. In aiming to act as the continental gateway, they will continually find themselves assuming center stage in an escalating global scramble for Africa's future riches.

Increasingly, foreign powers, from China, Russia and the Gulf states, see Morocco and its Saharan neighbors as a strategic playground between the West and Africa, making these nations increasingly important players in these geopolitical and economic games. Just as Morocco and others vie to be Africa's portal, the broader North Africa region itself could also become a highly contested ground, especially if its countries endeavor to facilitate Africa's rise on the world stage. To be the conduits for Africa's potential should be seen not just as an opportunity, but also as a great responsibility.

Africa is no longer on the sidelines of the global scheme but rather the center of the attention. No longer does the old tag, "the forgotten continent," hold. Instead, it is being sought after with such intensity that this renewed attention threatens to outweigh the continent's capacity to absorb and utilize it effectively. This is where the Maghreb's strategic geographical advantage can be harnessed by leveraging the subregion as an entry point, intermediary market, and a channel for investment and technology transfer, opening up unexplored opportunities.

Ambitious but strategic planning, investment, and collaboration could steer these countries to become the custodians of the African resource map while serving their significant role in clean energy transformations across the globe.

The far-seeing efforts by

The ‘no-limits’ partnership between Russia and China

Dr. Diana Galeeva

This week, Chinese President Xi Jinping met Russian President Vladimir Putin during the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. Xi said the two leaders had met “42 times in the past 10 years” and “developed a good working relationship and a deep friendship.”

The latest meeting represented a continuation of the “no-limits” partnership between the countries that was launched in February 2022 with proclamations of “no limits to Sino-Russian cooperation... no forbidden zones.”

If we analyze recent talks and priorities, what are the key elements and drivers of the bilateral relations and what provisional conclusions can we reach about the evolution of this “no-limits” partnership, almost 18 months after it began?

The participation of the Russian leader at this week's forum indicates Moscow's strong support for cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure-development project, while for China it marks the evolution of Russia as a key partner for international cooperation.

This “deep friendship” has been developed over many years, with its legal basis established in the Treaty on Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation. It was signed in 2001 and remains the key basis for Russia-China trade and economic collaboration.

News service Russia Briefing cites China's General Administration of Customs as stating that trade turnover between the countries reached a record level of \$190.27 billion in 2022, an increase of 29.3 percent. Meanwhile, Reuters reported that Chinese customs data showed that in August this year, the value of Chinese imports of Russian goods increased by 3 percent to \$11.5 billion, reversing a decline of 8 percent in July. This demonstrates the positive dynamics of economic collaborations.

As for investments, according to the Russian Ministry of Economic Development, as of September this year China and Russia were working together on 79 large-scale projects worth a total \$170 billion.

Russia also occupies a key position in the Chinese oil market. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said during the fifth Russian-Chinese Energy Business Forum at the end of 2022, that Russia had supplied more than 15 billion cubic meters of gas through the Power of Siberia gas pipeline. This year Russia expects supply volume to reach 22 billion cubic meters.

“We plan to bring the Power of Siberia gas pipeline to its design capacity of 38 billion cubic meters by 2025,” Novak said, demonstrating the crucial role energy plays in the “no-limits” partnership.

In another example of the ongoing engagements and real progress in cooperation in the energy sector, Russia's United Oil- and Gas-Chemical Co. and China's Xuan Yuan Industrial Development last week agreed to build a transhipment oil complex near a railway bridge connecting the Russian town of Nizhnelenskoye with Tongjiang in China.

This reflects the hopes of the Chinese for the further development of the China-Mongolia-Russia natural gas pipeline, along with the successful Great Tea Way cross-border tourism collaboration, and the China-Mongolia-Russia economic corridor as a road toward high-quality interconnected development. Although these are distinct projects, taken together they reflect the interconnected and practical dimensions of the “no-limits” partnership on a bilateral level.

There have also been broader results of the partnership at the international level. As noted by Xi, the recently announced historic expansion of the membership of BRICS — a grouping of the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, in which both countries play a vital role — demonstrates the growing confidence of developing countries in pursuing a multipolar world. This is a vision of which Russia, in particular, is a strong proponent.

China is also supporting Russia as the latter prepares to host the BRICS Summit in Kazan next year. Further, Beijing has expressed readiness to work with Moscow within the UN, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the G20 and other multilateral frameworks to address nontraditional security threats such as food security, energy security, the stability of global industry and supply chains.

This, of course, comes at a time when Russia's presence on the world stage is beset by tensions over the war in Ukraine, and relations between China and the US in the South Pacific are uncertain at best. The collaborations are having concrete outcomes, too. Russia and China recently signed a contract for the supply of grain worth about \$25.7 billion, for example. According to the leader of the New Land Grain Corridor Initiative, Karen Hovsepian, the deal involves the supply of 70 million tons of grain, legumes and oilseed over a period of 12 years. He noted that the initiative will contribute to the normalization of export structures within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. This might serve as another indicator of how essential the “no-limits” partnership is for both parties in terms of providing export and import opportunities.

Finally, the relationship affects the response of both countries to political developments including, most pressingly, the current situation in the Middle East. Both countries have hardened their positions on Gaza as the Israel-Hamas conflict results in wider geopolitical strains. For example, the Chinese foreign minister said last weekend that Israel's bombing campaign had gone “beyond the scope of self-defense” and that it “should stop collective punishment of the people of Gaza.” Meanwhile, Putin expressed concern that an intensified siege of Gaza by Israel might resemble the encircling of Leningrad by German troops during the Second World War. China has historically backed the Palestinian cause, as did the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Meanwhile, US President Joe Biden made a dramatic wartime visit to Israel, and his country was the sole vote against a UN Security Council resolution that called for a pause in hostilities to allow humanitarian access to Gaza. This sharp distinction reflects the push by Russia and China toward multipolarity, facilitated by their “no-limits” partnership. While Western states generally show their support for Israel, clear backing of the Palestinians is both rhetorically powerful and an indicator of potential future alignments over international conflicts.

Summing up, it might be too early to evaluate the results of the declared “no-limits” partnership, since it is not only relatively recent in its conception but was launched at a time of geopolitical tumult. However, there are some clear dynamics emerging on the bilateral and international levels. At the bilateral level, the partnership primarily relies on economic interests and infrastructure cooperation. Internationally, the partnership promotes and allows for the alignment of objectives within multilateral frameworks, with the two countries broadly adopting similar stances on international events, conflicts and other developments.

Many issues remain to be negotiated, though. Vital differences remain within the domestic discourses in Russia and China about collaborations in Eurasian connectivity, China's stake in the Arctic region, and its contrasting perspectives on the historical importance of Russia's Far East.

Despite these complexities, however, both countries consider the “no-limits” partnership a win-win move within the current geopolitical context, both in terms of what it projects and in its realization. They will most probably seek further integration and cooperation in future, given that so far it has been proven to bring many benefits on the bilateral and international levels.

Demonizing and dehumanizing in war legitimizes atrocities

Language matters. It matters even more in times of war and conflict. After all, violent confrontations are always accompanied by widespread use of the most inflammable rhetoric, much of it focusing on demonizing and dehumanizing the other. Some cynically employ this language to rally support at home and abroad; for others, it is the only mode of communication they are familiar with.

Those who claim that words do not kill ignore the fact that they might not do so directly, but they create the conditions and the environment for atrocities of the worst kind to take place, including genocide. The Nazis referred to Jews as subhuman, as rats and vermin; the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia described their enemies as “worms,” claiming that their disappearance was “no loss”; and in Rwanda, Hutu propaganda repeatedly described the Tutsi minority as “cockroaches” or “snakes,” with calls to “exterminate the cockroaches.” And we all know how these cases ended.

This practice of dehumanization is not only about humiliating and demeaning a group of people, but also part of a process that seeks to legitimize violence against them. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has witnessed this practice throughout the years, with the language growing in intensity with each new outbreak of hostilities. For too long Israelis and Palestinians have ceased considering each other as human beings, let alone as people with equal rights, including the right to life.

Dehumanizing and demonizing have been defined as “the denial of full humanness to others.” It denies a person’s humanity, partly or completely, renouncing the very same characteristics that make us unique as humans and different from any other form of existence in nature,

including applying morality or judgment, and even denies those it demonizes as having the special attributes most associate with human nature, for instance having a wide range of feelings.

References to Israelis and Palestinians, respectively, as evil and as animals are common among many other degrading descriptions, but since the Hamas atrocity of Oct. 7 such language has grown much more extreme, to the

The mass murder of innocent civilians, including babies, women and the elderly by both sides, and the taking of so many Israelis hostage, would not be possible if each side saw their enemies as mere humans like themselves, with fundamental rights like themselves. This has been the case throughout the conflict when it comes to civilian deaths. Israel’s response in Gaza, which has claimed the lives of thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands, involves characterizing the Palestinians of Gaza as mere collateral damage in its war with Hamas. It can be argued with much justification that Israel has never considered the Palestinians as equal human beings; from the Nakba to the occupation and blockade, the lives of ordinary Palestinians were no more than a footnote in the project of establishing the state of Israel as free and secure.

extent of not differentiating between Hamas and Islamic Jihad for their part, and the vast majority of ordinary Palestinians in Gaza who are simply trying to survive, trapped as they are between Hamas’ oppressive regime and the harsh Israeli blockade. Consequently, they are considered to be a legitimate target despite being civilians caught between a rock and a hard place.

History has taught us time and again that humans are capable of terrible atrocities, and hence civilization has developed means and mechanisms to inhibit, if not eliminate, aggression.

Demonizing and dehumanizing fly in the face of acceptable norms of social behavior, such as those codified in documents like the UN Charter, the

Yossi Mekelberg

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the four Geneva conventions. These treaties were supposed to create a global consensus on how human beings should treat other human beings, even in times of war and conflict.

However, if you do not regard those who you are in conflict with as human beings, you convince yourself that these treaties are not applicable to your ene-

justification that Israel has never considered the Palestinians as equal human beings; from the Nakba to the occupation and blockade, the lives of ordinary Palestinians were no more than a footnote in the project of establishing the state of Israel as free and secure.

A particularly mindless member of the Knesset, Ariel Kallner, has responded to the Hamas killings by calling for a second Nakba, and an even more extreme

one at that: “Right now,” he said, “one goal: Nakba. A Nakba that will overshadow the Nakba of 1948.” Anger over Hamas’ massacre of the innocents is understandable, but this call to commit an atrocity even worse than that of 1948 in which his country played a central and crucial role, is an incitement to mass killing and displacement. The original sin here is never acknowledging the human suffering of the Palestinians, never refraining from inflicting suffering on them, and never recognizing their collective rights.

For peace to ever become a reality in this part of the world, the pendulum must swing from dehumanization to rehumanization. But this very notion scares those who harbor maximalist objectives in this con-

mies. We see this in the current round of hostilities between Israel and Hamas, which is the worst outbreak to date, as all inhibitions have gone missing.

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Sinem Cengiz

finding their way into diplomatic circles. As a result, we are witnessing an intense flurry of diplomatic efforts by regional actors, with Türkiye being one of the leaders, as these nations are deeply concerned about the conflict spilling over into Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Syria.

Looking at last week’s diplomacy traffic between Türkiye and several countries, it is evident that the path to ending the conflict relies on regional actors taking the lead in de-escalating tensions, rather than global actors such as the US, which has thrown its heavy support behind the right-wing aggression in Israel, or Russia, which is glad that attention has been diverted away from the war in Ukraine. China, a long-time supporter of Palestine, faces a dilemma in taking a clear stance due to its growing ties with Israel.

Amid all this, Middle Eastern states are, as usual, left to deal with the situation on their own. The ongoing conflict’s repercussions are being felt far afield, raising fears that it may lead to a larger war involving

Palestinians in the West Bank, Jordan, Egypt (which shares a border with Gaza) and Lebanon’s Hezbollah. And Türkiye wants the war in Gaza to end as soon as possible before it spreads to the region and it is forced to intervene.

On Wednesday, on the invitation of Saudi Arabia, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held an urgent meeting in Jeddah to discuss the rapidly deteriorating situation in Gaza. On the sidelines of this meeting, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan held separate meetings with his Saudi and Kuwaiti counterparts. In the OIC meeting, Fidan emphasized three key points: the need for a new mechanism for peace in Gaza; the unification of the Muslim world; and an immediate supply of water, electricity and aid to Gazans.

Before his trip to Saudi Arabia, Fidan had meetings in Lebanon with both political and military officials. And before that, he visited Egypt. Lebanon and Egypt are crucially situated on the doorstep of the ongoing conflict. Fidan’s visits likely aimed to convey Türkiye’s readiness to help in preventing the conflict

from spilling over. As the Israeli army continues its attacks on the Gaza Strip, neighboring Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan have increased their security measures. It has been reported that, due to the possibility of conflict with Israel, Lebanon’s Middle East Airlines is keeping some of its aircraft in Türkiye. Fidan also called for the Palestinian factions to release the hostages, which is one of the key issues that regional countries have been focusing on.

This dramatic new wave of violence erupted following a prolonged period of regional-led de-escalation and reconciliation efforts. In the current climate, the top priority of the Middle Eastern states is to end the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza. However, this war once again makes it clear that, without a tangible solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the region’s countries will not be able to achieve real security. That is why their efforts should ultimately aim to change the outcome of this conflict, for the betterment of the Palestinian people and the people of the region generally.

Another matter regarding NATO enlargement that has been equally disappointing over the past 100 days regards Sweden’s entry into the alliance. Soon after Russia’s large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Finland and Sweden jettisoned a long-standing policy of remaining outside military alliances and both applied to join NATO. Finland joined in April, but Sweden’s bid stalled over Turkish concerns regarding the status and role of the PKK terrorist organization in the country.

At the summit in Lithuania, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was praised for finally giving the green light to Sweden’s entry into the alliance. Because the Turkish parliament was in recess at the time, it could not vote to approve Sweden’s entry. Now, 100 days on from the summit, the Turkish parliament still has not voted on ratifying Sweden’s membership of NATO. This is another issue that needs to be resolved before the summit next year.

On a positive note, one area that NATO has made progress on since June is increasing its support for Ukraine. Arming and supporting Ukraine was a top issue in Vilnius. For the first part of the war, the US was the largest source of aid to Ukraine. This has recently changed. According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy’s Ukraine aid tracker, total European commitments are now more than double those of the US. After totaling all forms of aid, including military, economic, humanitarian and refugee support, 20 European countries have given more to Ukraine than the US as a percentage of gross domestic product. A lot of new European commitments have been made since the summit in June.

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NATO needs results if 75th anniversary summit is to be a success

Luke Coffey

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in the Balkans have traditionally spilled over into the rest of Europe.

Thankfully, NATO acted quickly. The alliance immediately increased the strength of its peacekeeping force with a deployment of hundreds of British troops based out of Cyprus. Soon after, Serbia withdrew its forces from the border with Kosovo. However, ongoing tensions between Belgrade and Pristina remain a concern for the alliance. The way things are going, the future role of NATO in the Balkans will likely be on the agenda at the next summit.

As NATO prepares for its 75th birthday next year, the alliance needs to show its people that it remains as relevant today as it was during the time of its

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Last month, Serbia conducted a large-scale military mobilization along its border with Kosovo. Amid simmering tensions since the beginning of the year, Serbia deployed, in the words of the White House, an “unprecedented” number of troops along its southern border. This was alarming for NATO because it maintains a peacekeeping force in Kosovo and security issues

founding during the Cold War. Russia’s actions in Ukraine make it easier to explain why NATO remains important today, but the alliance still has a lot of hard work ahead of it.

NATO needs to double down on finding a consensus regarding Ukraine’s potential membership, it needs to finalize Sweden’s entry into the alliance, and it must maintain current levels of military support for Ukraine for the foreseeable future. Overall, the past 100 days have not been encouraging. However, if these issues can be addressed over the next several months, it is still possible to lay the groundwork to make the 75th anniversary summit in Washington a success.

After 600 days of Ukraine war, EU considers long-term strategy

As the conflict in Ukraine this week passed the 600th day of a grinding war of attrition, a potentially significant new dynamic is emerging that could change the course of the Ukrainian war effort. The steadfast support of the US for Kyiv appears to be potentially at risk as a result of the political dysfunction in Washington. This might create a critical gap that only Europe and its allies, including Japan, can try to fill, at least partially.

The Biden administration and much of the EU remain closely aligned on Ukraine. Yet, there are growing concerns about Washington’s ability to continue to help finance Kyiv’s war effort in the coming months because of a recent deal struck to avert a shutdown of the US federal government. This month, even President Joe

Biden admitted that amid the gridlock in Washington it “does worry me” that US support for Ukraine might be derailed.

This legislative drama would, of course, be only a foreshock of the political earthquake in Washington that would follow the 2024 presidential election if a Republican skeptic of the war in Ukraine takes office. This will especially be the case if former President Donald Trump emerges victorious, given his apparent regard for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his disdain for Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Therefore, the current financial shenanigans in Washington might only be a foretaste of what is to come. It is in this context that Europe is thinking about how it might step up to the plate to ensure Ukraine can continue its

fight from 2025, should the war still be in progress.

There are real limits on the ability of the EU and other European partners, such as the UK, to fill the massive shoes of the US. For instance, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has warned that the bloc would not be able to completely fill any funding gap created by a US withdrawal of financial support.

The potential for such a significant change is set in the context of a “war of attrition” between Russia and Ukraine that continues apace; Kyiv’s 2023 counteroffensive has achieved some territorial gains but the frontlines have remained stable for much of the year.

The conflict has already resulted in more than 20,000 civilian casualties, more than 5 million people are internally displaced, and more than 6 million

have left the country. Meanwhile, more than 17.5 million people require humanitarian assistance.

Certainly, Ukraine has recaptured more than 50 percent of previously occupied territory but Russia still holds around 20 percent of the country. As both sides now dig in for the cold winter months ahead, breakthroughs might become increasingly difficult. Meanwhile, the number of military casualties has reached an estimated 500,000.

So it looks increasingly likely that the war will continue into 2024, and potentially much longer. It is against this backdrop that there is renewed thinking about how Europe can best contribute to the resilience of Ukraine in the medium-to-longer term, including military assistance, security guarantees, and economic

Andrew Hammond

support, such as access to the EU’s single market.

The starting point for this continuing commitment is the unprecedented support that Europe has already provided for Ukraine. The EU and its member states have delivered economic assistance of more than €euro;76 billion (\$80.4 billion), which is more than the US.

However, as experts from organizations such as the European Council on Foreign Relations have asserted, even more funding will be required to support Ukraine in a long war that continues for years to come. The council advocates for the urgent acceleration of European military assistance, which would necessitate a step change in Europe’s defense-industrial capabilities, and the admission of Ukraine not only to

the EU but also NATO.

As part of this future commitment, key EU leaders could also remind Ukraine that during the Cold War, the Western alliance did not recognize Soviet control of the three Baltic states. Ultimately, these countries emerged free and democratic when the Cold War ended. So there are potential parallels with those parts of Ukraine that currently remain occupied by pro-Moscow forces, and these could be strengthened with generous Western security guarantees for Kyiv.

Beyond the war, too, important commitments could be made to reconstruction. The rebuilding of Ukraine will resemble that of Western Europe after the Second World War, Eastern Europe after the Cold War, and the Western Balkans after the breakup of Yugoslavia. It will cost

hundreds of billions of euros and be the most ambitious post-war reconstruction effort in the 21st century so far.

These commitments are likely to be very expensive, and the European Council on Foreign Relations notes that there must also be upside opportunities for Europe to boost its longer-term military production capacities, enhance its geopolitical profile, and make the EU more fit for purpose for the decades ahead by reconsidering its institutions and policies to accommodate a potentially significantly larger membership than the current 27 states.

Moreover, there could be significant wider benefits should Ukraine continue to successfully contest a long war with Russia, including the diminished threat posed by Moscow to future European and global secu-

rity, thanks to the protection of economies and trade routes.

Putin has shown that further destabilization of the established international order is a core element of his ambition. This would be fueled if he were perceived to have won in Ukraine, and might set a dangerous precedent that encouraged other states with similar extraterritorial ambitions, including some in Asia.

Taking all of this together, significant incentives therefore exist for Europe to plan carefully for scenarios in which US support for Ukraine diminishes before or after the 2024 US presidential election. While it is possible Biden will win a second term, even that might not guarantee continuing strong support from Washington against a backdrop of political dysfunction there that might yet get worse.



‘PEDO a major source of income for province’

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Adviser for Planning & Development, Energy & Power and Mineral Development Dr. Syed Sarfaraz Ali Shah has said that the energy sector in the province is very important. The subsidiary of Energy & Power Department, Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO) is a profitable organization of the province.

It is a major source of annual income of billions of rupees. Under the supervision of PEDO, work is currently underway on 42

energy projects of transmission lines including hydro and solar power.

After the completion of these projects, these will be proved to be a game changer for the stability and development of the economy of the province in future.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Transmission and Grid Company (KPT&GC) has been established for the first time in order to improve the electricity system in the province and to enable the delivery of its own electricity. The higher forums will be contacted soon to recover the arrears pending against federal

government.

He expressed these views while presiding over the review meeting organized on the occasion of visit to PEDO house. While giving a briefing, Chief Executive PEDO Engineer Naeem Khan said that PEDO has successfully completed 7 hydropower projects from which a total of 161 megawatts of electricity is being generated, from which the province is getting income of more than Rs. 4 billion annually.

He further added that PEDO has prepared a business and financial plan for the next ten years, under which several projects of

2000 megawatts will be completed, from which the province is expected to earn Rs. 50 billion annually. Furthermore, several energy projects have entered in the final stages of completion. Plans are also being made to sell the cheap electricity generated to the industrial sector at favorable rates under the wheeling model.

At the end of the meeting, Dr. Sarfaraz expressed his satisfaction with the overall performance of PEDO and committed that the issues faced will be resolved on a priority basis at high-level forums, he concluded.

Counter steps vital as debt escalates rapidly to Rs64tr

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Presidential candidate for the upcoming polls of 2024 Muhammad Ali Sheikh has called for taking corrective measures as rapid escalation in debt is widely seen as unsustainable, yet serious steps are now vital to curb this alarming trajectory, by keeping check on government expenditure and high cost of debt servicing, as the federal government debt has surged to a staggering Rs64 trillion.

Quoting the State Bank of Pakistan report, the FPCCI Presidential candidate nominated by the BMP, said that the federal government's debt has soared by Rs14.5 trillion, constituting a substantial 29.2% rise compared to the same period last year. He said that the debt burden is gradually increasing because of insufficient tax revenue collection that forced the government to borrow from the domestic and external resources to finance the soaring fiscal deficit.

In its monthly report on

Foreign Economic Assistance (FEA), the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) said against its annual target of \$17.6bn, total FEA in the July-September quarter amounted to \$3.527bn when compared to just \$2.234bn of the same period last year, an increase of 58pc. Total inflows recorded by the EAD in September came in at \$321 million against \$316m in August.

Major FEA during the first quarter flowed in at \$2.89bn in July soon after Pakistan reached an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a fresh short-term program.

This FEA is in addition to \$1.2bn released by the IMF on July 13 as the first tranche of the \$3bn Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) and \$1bn by the United Arab Emirates that are separately accounted for by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The bulk of foreign loans reported by the EAD came from Saudi Arabia as a time deposit followed by a \$508m guaranteed loan to Pakistan Air Force (PAF) by China National Aero-Technology Import & Export Corporation (CATIC). Of the remaining

inflows included \$490.48m from multilateral agencies and \$324m from bilateral lenders.

Another \$204.5m flowed in from overseas Pakistanis in Naya Pakistan Certificates (NPCs).

The government has estimated about \$17.62bn in foreign assistance in the budget for the current fiscal year, including \$17.385bn in loans and the remaining \$235m in grants. As such, total loan disbursements in the first three months stood at \$3.49bn and \$34m in grants.

Mainly because of this, the country's total external public debt slightly declined to \$85.2bn as of March 31 from \$86.56bn as of Dec 31, 2022, according to the EAD's quarterly report for the third quarter of last fiscal year ending March 31.

Out of the total external public debt of \$85.18bn, the government owed \$64bn to multilateral and bilateral development partners including IMF which meant more than two-thirds (i.e. 75pc) of the total external public debt was on concessional terms with a longer maturity, 16pc (i.e. \$13.5bn) from international

capital markets and foreign commercial banks, and 7pc (i.e. \$7bn) of the total external public debt constituted deposits from friendly countries like China and Saudi Arabia.

Muhammad Ali Sheikh said that this unsettling trend has raised concerns about fiscal sustainability and the adverse impacts of steep currency devaluation come at a time when the World Bank has cautioned Pakistan about the growing risks of its macroeconomic framework.

For the past one and half year, the country is facing a serious financial crunch and continually relying on borrowing to meet its financial needs.

The growing debt stock carries significant fiscal costs and exposes the country to debt vulnerabilities, as highlighted in the Pakistan Development Update report by the World Bank. He also emphasised that persistent fiscal deficits and debt repayments have resulted in consistently high annual gross financing needs, averaging 27% of GDP over the past decade. This level is notably higher than the emerging market threshold of 15%.



KARACHI: Representatives of State Life and MedIQ Smart Healthcare signing MOU during a ceremony.

137 sui gas connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting 137 connections while imposing fine of Rs. 4.8 million and 205 under billing cases processed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 08 connections on illegal use of gas, another 08 connections on the use of compressor? The team also booked Rs.0.07 million against gas theft. In Bahawalpur, the regional team disconnected 23 connections on illegal use of gas. The company disconnected 10 connections on illegal use of gas, another 06 connections on the use of compressor and 37 under billing cases have been processed in Multan and amount of Rs 0.04 Million have been booked against gas theft and Under billing cases.

In Sheikhupura, the regional team disconnected 18 connections on illegal use of gas, another 03 connection on the use of compressor and 41 Under billing cases processed. The team also booked Rs. 2.29 million against gas theft and Under billing cases.

SNGPL's team in Mardan 20 Under billing cases processed, the team also booked Rs.0.16 million against Under billing. In Peshawar, the Regional team disconnected 42 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal connections and 25 Under billing cases processed.

The team also booked Rs.1.24 million against gas theft and Under billing cases. In Sargodha, the regional team disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas and 40 Under billing cases processed. The team also booked Rs. 0.02 million against Under billing cases.

The regional team in Gujranwala, 01 meter was disconnected on the use of compressor while another 01 on illegal use of gas and 32 Under billing cases processed. The region also imposed fine of Rs. 0.1 million against gas theft under billing cases.

The company disconnected 09 connections on illegal use of gas in Islamabad.

In Sahiwal, 03 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas. The regional team in Faisalabad, the regional team processed 10 Under billing cases. In Sialkot, the regional team disconnected 04 connections on illegal use of gas.

State Life, MedIQ Smart Healthcare sign MOU

F.P. Report

KARACHI: State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC), the nation's largest and leading life and health insurance provider is excited to announce a strategic partnership with MedIQ Smart Healthcare. The collaborative objective is to create customer-centric solutions that boost customer retention, enhance the overall customer experience, and expedite the penetration of health insurance in the country. Through the amalgamation of expertise and resources, SLIC and MedIQ Smart Healthcare aspire to provide the nation with a robust financial safety net against health challenges.

Speaking about the partnership, Executive Director, Shahid Baloch said, "Our commitment is to offer Pakistanis optimal health protection and financial empowerment, and this collaboration marks a significant stride in that direction. Teaming up with MedIQ Smart Healthcare ensures that our customers can access necessary treatments without the added concern of financial burdens."

Dr. Saira on this collaboration "MedIQ Smart Healthcare is honored to

unite with State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan in this transformative partnership. Together, we aim to redefine healthcare services in Pakistan, making them more accessible, efficient, affordable, and customer-centric. The provision of hybrid outdoor patient services (physical and online) is a revolutionary step towards patient-centric approach. This collaboration is a testament to our commitment to improving the lives of Pakistanis through innovative healthcare solutions."

MOU Signing Ceremony between State Life and MedIQ Smart Healthcare held in Karachi was witnessed by Shoaib Javed Hussain CEO of State Life. Executive Director, Shahid Baloch and Dr. Saira Siddique CEO MedIQ Smart Healthcare signed MoU where Nabeel Akhtar, Head of Partnerships MedIQ Smart Healthcare was present along with the senior officials from State Life.

State Life Pakistan: State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan, established in 1972, stands as a pillar of reliability and excellence in the insurance industry. With a commitment to securing the future of individuals and families nationwide, State Life's

comprehensive range of insurance products caters to diverse needs. With 69 percent of market share, the corporation's total premium sales witnessed a growth of 67 percent year-on-year in 2022, while the new business sales incurred a staggering growth of 143 percent. This growth makes SLIC the leader in the industry and one of the most successful state-owned entities which is continuously adapting to meet the evolving needs of Pakistanis.

MedIQ: MedIQ Smart Healthcare is a health technology company for having completely healthcare ecosystem under one digital platform connecting health service providers, patients and corporates/insurance companies as well as payment gateways to ensure seamless delivery of healthcare services to the customers. MedIQ Smart Healthcare provides end to end Cashless Outdoor Patient Services Provision and Management Platform through its network of physical and digital health service providers (doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, laboratories and diagnostic centers). Our Technology and Customer focus are what drive our Operational Excellence.

PIAF calls for serious steps as Pakistan exports continue to fall

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Raising grave concern over the continued falling trend of Pakistan exports the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has said that the country's textile exports fell for third month in a row due to growing production costs and liquidity crunch, indicating that the government has failed to win the confidence of the business community due to multiple reasons. In the first quarter of FY24, the total exports dipped 3.63pc to \$6.91bn this year from \$7.17bn over the last year.

Quoting the figure, PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol observed that the textile and clothing exports shrank 9.95 per cent in the first quarter (July-September) FY24 to \$4.12 billion from \$4.58bn in the corresponding period last year. In September, the textile and clothing exports contracted 10.88pc to \$1.36bn from \$1.52bn in the same month last year.

The PIAF chairman advocated the need for raising the country's tax base

so that tax-to-GDP ratio improves from current poor level. He urged the trade officers to explore opportunities to diversify exports of goods and services in their respective areas, asking them to meet the challenges faced by Pakistan in European markets. He also suggested the ministry to devise strategies for promotion of Pakistani products, calling upon trade officers to take advantage of opportunities offered by China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The Caretaker Commerce Minister last month announced that the government would soon offer regionally competitive energy prices to textile exporters and resolve their cash flow issues by releasing pending sales tax refunds.

However, the decision was yet to be implemented. The exports of textile and clothing contracted by 14.63pc to \$16.50bn in FY23. However, the total merchandise exports dipped 12.71pc to \$27.54bn from \$31.78bn in the preceding year.

The PBS data showed

the exports of readymade garments shrank 11.21pc in value in July-September but grew by 8.24pc in quantity, while knitwear dipped 15.83pc in value but grew 34.14pc in quantity, bedwear posted a negative growth of 10.02pc in value and but grew 1.39pc in quantity.

However, towel exports slightly increased by 2.89pc in value and 16.24pc in quantity, whereas those of cotton cloth dipped by 18.15pc in value and 7.50pc in quantity.

Oil and eatables imports dipped 29.41pc in the first quarter of the current fiscal year to \$5.35bn from \$7.58bn a year ago, PBS data showed.

A noticeable decline was observed in both the quantity and value of major imports during the period under review amid the economic slowdown and a steep fall in the purchasing power of consumers.

In dollar terms, the oil import bill dipped by 28.03pc to \$3.50bn during 3MFY24 from \$4.86bn in the same period last year.

In rupee terms, the decline was relatively

lower at 5.86pc because of massive currency devaluation and amounted to Rs1.02tr this year, compared to Rs1.08tr last year.

As a consequence, exports of petroleum products were down by 82.82pc in 3MFY24 from a year ago. The foreign sales of crude oil and petroleum products were down by 100pc and 39.43pc, respectively.

According to the PBS data, the imports of petroleum products declined by 36.55pc in value during July-September and 26.03pc in quantity.

Import of crude oil decreased by 18.36pc in quantity while the value decreased by 30.10pc.

Similarly, liquefied natural gas imports dipped by 7.36pc during July-Sept FY24 on a year-on-year basis. On the other hand, liquefied petroleum gas imports declined 7.79pc in the months under review.

The reduction in import quantities of crude oil and petroleum products is a clear indication of reduced transportation amid slowing down economic activities.

Businessmen for easing import as Afghan transit trade thru Pak rised

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has suggested the government to reduce the tariff rates on smuggling prone items to the lowest level to curb smuggling, as Afghanistan's imports through Pakistan under the transit trade facility has gone up nearly two-thirds to \$7.3 billion in the last fiscal year.

The FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that the total elimination of smuggling only through administrative measures at the borders was difficult and the remedy

lies in reducing incentive for smuggling by reducing tariff rates.

Smuggling is eating vitals of Pakistan economic fabrics and needs to be curbed through fiscal and administrative measures.

It renders industrial products uncompetitive and discourages legal imports thus make colossal losses to the trade, industry and government exchequer.

Despite efforts of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) with limited resources cannot control smuggling form boards of Iran and Afghanistan.

This will result in higher government revenue, provide impetus to local trade/industry and generate employment opportunities. He said that elimination

of smuggling, which is causing loss of billions of dollars to the national exchequer, could help reduce dependence on debts.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the government could save billions of dollars annually by eradicating the menace of smuggling. Then there would be no need for dependence on loans to meet the budget deficit, he added.

He said that smuggling had become a big threat to economic growth. The BMP Chairman urged the authorities concerned to stop harassing traders and establish an effective monitoring system at borders to stop the illegal trade.

He said that smuggled goods through the borders of Afghanistan, Iran China, India and the Afghan

Transit Trade form a chunk of the informal economy.

He said that high rate of taxes and duties give way to smuggling. Therefore, there was dire need to bring down the rate of duties and taxes especially on smuggling-prone items.

There seems to be some correlation between the surge in transit trade and the decline in Pakistan's purchases. Out of the increase of \$2.8 billion in imports under the Afghan transit trade (ATT) in the previous fiscal year, about \$2.3 billion was on account of goods that Pakistan did not import due to the balance of payments crisis, showed official statistics.

Afghanistan imported \$7.3 billion worth of goods through Pakistan in fiscal

year 2022-23, which ended in June this year. Imports were \$2.8 billion higher than the preceding fiscal year.

Pakistani authorities have run an analysis of its own imported goods that showed a double-digit dip during the previous fiscal year and compared with the increase in goods import under transit trade. It was revealed that some of those goods were imported under the ATT Agreement but then smuggled back to Pakistan.

Two days ago, the government took a raft of measures, including a complete ban on the import of goods under the transit deal, imposition of 10% fee on some other imports and a new condition of bank

guarantee equal to duties and taxes in order to ensure that the goods imported by Afghanistan reached their final destination.

The commerce ministry issued the Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) and amended a 2004 order that governed the country's import and export regime. It banned the import of tyres, black tea, nuts and dry fruits, fabrics, cosmetics, vacuum flasks and home appliances under ATT.

An analysis of 20 major imports of Afghanistan showed that in FY22 Kabul spent \$3.3 billion on their imports, which jumped to \$5.6 billion, or 70%, in FY23. In the case of Pakistan, the import of those items dropped.

There was a 48% reduc-

tion in imports of synthetic fabric by Pakistan but imports of the product through ATT registered a 35% increase during the previous fiscal year, showed the official statistics.

Similarly, Pakistan's imports of electronic equipment decreased 62% but imports of those goods by Afghanistan increased 72%.

Being a landlocked country, Afghanistan has the right to import goods for its consumption through Pakistan's sea, air and land routes. However, various government studies and intelligence reports have proved the misuse of transit trade agreement.

Afghanistan has never taken the responsibility of smuggling and rather blamed Pakistan for its lax

enforcement measures. Afghanistan also does not accept Pakistan's stance of mismatch between its consumption and imports. It insists that being a trading nation, it also imports goods for their sale to the landlocked Central Asian States.

Pakistan has banned the import of black tea by Afghanistan through its territory. Data showed that in FY23 there was a 59% increase in Afghanistan's tea imports compared to a 9% dip in imports in the case of Pakistan. Islamabad has also banned the import of tyres by Afghanistan. In the last fiscal year, the import of tyres by Pakistan decreased 42% but there was an increase of 80% in imports by Afghanistan.



In brief

Jeep rally to commence 9th

DG KHAN (APP): The four-days 8th Thal Desert Jeep rally will start from November 9 in Dera Ghazi Khan division. In this regard, Commissioner DG Khan division, Dr. Nasir Mahmood Bashir here on Sunday chaired the meeting to review arrangements. Deputy Commissioners besides Director TDCP Nauman Khan along with his delegation participated in the meeting. Addressing the meeting, the Commissioner said that the jeep rally would start from November 9 and continue till November 12. He said that 200 kilometres long track was being prepared in Layyah, Muzaffargarh and Kot Addu for the rally. Over 100 male and female drivers from across the country were expected to participate in the rally, he told. He said that various competitions of eleven categories, cultural mela and other programs would be included. Dr. Nasir Mahmood further said that the rally was the identity of DG Khan division and the administration would ensure appropriate measures for the historic Jeep rally. He directed all departments concerned to work together for the security and better arrangements for the rally.

Fog stops WC match

DHARAMSALA (AFP): Thick fog stopped play in the Cricket World Cup clash between India and New Zealand at Dharamsala in the shadows of the Himalayas on Sunday. India were 100-2 in 15.4 overs when the umpires took the players off the field at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium. Virat Kohli, on seven, and Shreyas Iyer, on 21, were batting with India needing another 174 runs to win the game and maintain their unbeaten streak. Play eventually resumed after a stoppage of around 10 minutes. By the mid-way point of 25 overs, India had moved on to 140-3 with Kohli on 24 and new batsman KL Rahul on 10. Skipper Rohit Sharma (46) and Shubman Gill (26) provided a strong start in a stand of 71 before Kiwi fast bowler Lockie Ferguson struck in his first two overs to remove the openers. Left-arm quick Trent Boult sent back Iyer for 33 in his second spell, coming around the wicket with a bouncer and getting the batsman caught in the deep. Earlier Daryl Mitchell hit 130 to guide New Zealand to 273 all out after being invited to bat first.

Topley set to be ruled out

MUMBAI (Agencies): England are set to be without leading wicket-taker Reece Topley for the remainder of their World Cup campaign due to a suspected broken finger and have already ruled out Jofra Archer as a possible replacement. Reigning champions England suffered a colossal 229-run thrashing by South Africa in Mumbai on Saturday to leave their hopes of a successful title defense hanging by a thread. Their record one-day international defeat was compounded when England coach Matthew Mott confirmed Topley was unlikely to feature again at the tournament. "We're still waiting to confirm about Reece's finger, it looks like it's a crack, that's an early diagnosis," Mott told Sky Sports. "It's highly likely there's a fracture there, which would make it difficult for him to keep playing." Topley, who has taken eight wickets in three games, was struck on the index finger of his bowling hand when attempting to block a drive in his follow through.



DHARAMSALA: Virat Kohli was in midst of another tense ODI chase.

Kohli and Shami lead India to win over New Zealand

DHARAMSALA (Agencies): Virat Kohli made a masterful 95 and Mohammed Shami claimed 5-54 as World Cup hosts India beat New Zealand by four wickets in Dharamsala.

Kohli hit two sixes and eight fours in another classy knock to put India on the brink of victory as they chased down a target of 274. Shami earlier started with the ball as Daryl Mitchell's 130 made up the bulk of New Zealand's runs. Table toppers India are the only unbeaten side left after five matches.

Fog briefly stopped play during India's reply but Kohli's mind remained clear as he played a big hand in the highest successful chase in a one-day international at this ground.

He produced another stellar innings and now has 354 runs at an average of 118 in a tournament on which he looks set to leave an indelible mark.

Rohit Sharma had given India a solid start with a typically bold 46 off 40 balls but Kohli's calm assurance to pace the chase was key after three of India's top order made starts without kicking on.

Kohli fell five runs short of equalling Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 one-day international centuries when he holed out to Glenn Phillips in the deep off Matt Henry with five runs needed for victory.

But Ravindra Jadeja, who made 39 not out, got India over the line with 12 balls to spare when he hit Henry for four.

Earlier, Mitchell and Rachin Ravindra, who struck 75, helped New Zealand recover from the loss of two early wickets with a third-wicket stand of 159. Mitchell brought up his century off exactly 100 balls but both he and the Kiwis will rue the fact they could not capitalise in the final 10 overs to post a more commanding total.

Peerless Kohli keeps India on course

Both teams headed into this meeting in the foothills of the Himalayas unbeaten, and the match had been billed by some as a dress rehearsal for the World Cup final. India had not tasted victory against New Zealand at an ICC tournament for over two decades, but the Kiwis were unable to carve open up the scars

of those defeats.

Indeed, there was little in this contest to suggest India's ascent to at least the semi-finals of the tournament will be anything other than smooth.

Especially if Kohli, who has notched scores of 85, 55*, 16, 103* and 95 so far, continues to mine runs from such a rich vein.

He was in India's team when the legendary Tendulkar made the last of his 49 ODI centuries against Bangladesh in Mirpur at the 2012 Asia Cup. Kohli already had 10 ODI hundreds to his name at that point and the Little Master must have had more than an inkling of the most likely candidate to dethrone him.

The 34-year-old came mightily close to drawing level with Tendulkar here, but still has potentially six more games to score the two hundreds needed to surpass him during a home World Cup in front of his own fans. With fewer ODIs expected to be played in the future, amid the popularity of T20 cricket, he could reach 50 ODI centuries knowing the record may never be broken again.

Faisalabad, Islamabad, Lahore and Peshawar win matches

ISLAMABAD (APP): Defending champions Faisalabad, Islamabad, Lahore, and Peshawar earned victories on the opening day of the Inter Division National Basketball Championship Grade A here at the Pakistan Sports Complex on Sunday.

The day featured four contests showcasing the best basketball talent in Pakistan, organized by the Federal Basketball Association (FBBa) under the supervision of the Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF).

The first match of day one saw defending champion Faisalabad Division facing off against Karachi Division, and it was Faisalabad that emerged victorious with a final score of 50-39, demonstrating

their prowess on the court. Muhammad Usman Abbas scored 13 points, Hassan Bhatti scored 10 points for the winning team, and Anas Asher scored 11 points for the Karachi division.

The excitement continued in the second match as Peshawar clashed with Gujranwala. Peshawar's team displayed their dominance, scoring 80 points against Gujranwala's 63, securing a well-deserved win with the support of Abdul Wahab, who scored 37 points. In the third match, Lahore went head-to-head with Rawalpindi, and it was Lahore that triumphed with a final score of 78-61, impressing the fans with their skillful gameplay.

The day concluded with the Islamabad team taking on Hazara, and the contest

was a spectacle of basketball finesse. Islamabad outclassed Hazara with a score of 70-54, marking a victorious end to the opening day of this highly anticipated championship.

Rizwan Khurshaid scored 21 points for the winning side, while Muhammad Atif scored 20 points for Hazara Division, and sizeable spectators witnessed the matches. Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Deputy Director General Chaudhry Saeed Akhtar, Director PSB Muhammad Faizan, Fida Muhammad Khan, Federal Basketball Association Secretary General Ouj E Zahoor, Head Coach Malik Riaz, Dr. Akhtar Nawaz Ganjara, Muhammad Azam Dar, and fans witnessed the matches.

Shabbir clinches Open Golf C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Top golfer Muhammad Shabbir bagged the 30th WALEE COAS Open Golf Championship title, held at the Rawalpindi Golf Club.

The professional category saw intense competition, with Shabbir from Islamabad Golf Club emerging as the winner. His skill, discipline, and unwavering commitment to the sport earned him the top spot, making him a worthy champion.

In the amateur category, the COAS Open Golf Championship was clinched by Muhammad Shuaib Khan from Gymkhana Golf Club,

Lahore. His outstanding performance displayed the potential and dedication of amateur golfers across the country.

The tournament saw 607 golfers from golf clubs across the country, showcasing their talent and dedication in various categories.

The prize distribution ceremony was graced by the presence of Lt Gen Shahid Imtiaz, HI (M), President of Rawalpindi Golf Club and Commander of the 10 Corps.

Ahsan Tahir, CEO – WALEE Technologies, said, "Golf is a game that requires precision and

focus, qualities that are integral to our mission at WALEE Technologies. Congratulations to all the participants and winners on their remarkable achievements."

Brig Zahid Hussain, Secretary of Rawalpindi Golf Club, commended the participants and sponsors, saying, "This championship wouldn't have been possible without the enthusiastic participation of golfers from all over Pakistan and the generous support of sponsors like WALEE Technologies. It's heartening to see how golf continues to unite people and promote a sense of community."

We are to make history by winning ICC CWC: Afridi

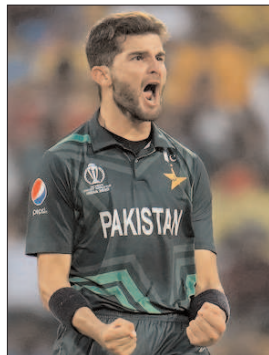
ISLAMABAD (APP): Pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi see Pakistan making history by winning the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 in India saying the Green-shirts were very much alive in the tournament.

The Chennai chapter of Pakistan's campaign in the World Cup begins on Monday when they play Afghanistan at MA Chidambaram Stadium. After Afghanistan, Pakistan would stay in the city to play South Africa on 27 October for their second and last match of the tournament here.

Pakistan, after four games, are fifth on the points table with two wins and as many losses. After following the tournament with remarkable wins over the Netherlands and Sri Lanka, which saw them make the record for the highest successful chase in the history of the tournament, Pakistan have had a few tough outings.

Pakistan were eager to leave Chennai 4-2 up and Shaheen Afridi believes that learnings from the last two matches would help the side in the upcoming matches. "We are aware of the expectations from the team and we are eager to fulfil them," he told PCB Digital.

"A loss is a loss and we need to accept it. But, learning from it would be better for the team. These two matches were very important for us, but we are very much alive in the tournament. We are here to



make history (by winning the World Cup)."

"There is no room for complacency in a tournament like the World Cup as any team can beat anyone, something that we have seen so far. Afghanistan have been playing good cricket and they have recently defeated England. We will have to show up with the best skills against them. They have world-class spinners, but, thanks to Almighty, our batting unit has also been doing well."

Afridi said there were many venues in India that favour spinners and Chennai was one such venue. As fast bowlers, our role is to make the most of the reverse swing on offer in the middle overs and in the latter stages of the game."

Speaking about the loss to Australia, Afridi said he was aware that it was a high-scoring venue. "I tried different variations as you have to do to be successful on such pitches. So, bowling variations and pulling

my length a little back helped me. "It is very important to acclimatise as a bowler. It is not like I have done something new, but I have gotten used to the conditions here. You do not get that much swing in India as you do in England, Australia or New Zealand. There is not much bounce in the pitches here either, because of which we get to see high-scoring games here. So, being good in the field becomes of utmost importance as a couple of good catches or run outs can boost your team.

"Bowling in partnerships is also crucial. I had not picked up wickets before, but now that I have gotten them, I will look to carry momentum in the next games and give such performances that win us games." Shaheen could have had his first wicket of the match in his first spell had Usama Mir not put down Warner at mid-on. Reflecting on the catch, he said, "Dropping a catch is part of game. I think what is important is the effort and how much energy you put in when you are fielding and how much you enjoy it.

"It was his first game, no doubt, but sometimes such crucial catches are important. You cannot blame anyone because of one dropped catch. This is a team game and we win or lose as a team. "What is important is that everyone continues to contribute for the team."

Afghanistan braced for more 'passionate' rivalry with Pakistan

CHENNAI (AFP): Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott said Sunday that his team are looking forward to renewing a "passionate" rivalry with Pakistan which has often reflected the stormy political relationship between the two neighbors.

Both sides are in desperate need of a win at the World Cup. Pakistan have lost their last two games after a pair of opening wins. Afghanistan pulled off a shock victory over defending champions England but have also slumped to three defeats. Adding spice to Monday's crucial clash is the current cross-border friction between the two nations.

Pakistan has seen a sharp rise in militant attacks since the Afghan Taliban surged back to power in Afghanistan in 2021. The militant assaults have been focused in regions abutting Afghanistan, and Islamabad alleges some are being planned on Afghan soil — a charge Kabul denies. Islamabad has also recently announced a plan to evict hundreds of thousands of Afghan migrants living in Pakistan.

There have been intense cricket clashes as well. At the 2019 World Cup match in Leeds, which Pakistan won by three wickets, riots between the two sets of fans erupted outside the stadium.



Afghanistan fast bowler Fareed Malik and Pakistan batsman Asif Ali almost came to blows in a Twenty20 game at Sharjah last year. "I think for them (Afghanistan players) it's a rivalry that excites them," said Trott on Sunday.

"I think it's a rivalry that sometimes in the past has been very passionate. "We've had very close games as well. Hopefully tomorrow isn't very exciting and we win by a lot. It's just the nature of the rivalry, I should say." He added: "Both teams, I think, respect each other, but are very desperate to win."

Trott said he wasn't aware that Pakistan had unsuccessfully demanded the International Cricket Council switch Sunday's game to another venue.

Reports claimed that Pakistan were keen to dent the threat posed by Afghanistan's world-class spin attack.

"I didn't know about them wanting to (change the venue), but I think Pakistan have got good spinners themselves and the thing with spinners, there are only two or three of them playing a game," said Trott.

Afghanistan's spin trio of Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi will pose a threat for Pakistan as they did against England, sharing eight wickets in an upset 69-run win. That game, however, took place in New Delhi.

"It's everybody's job, not just the spinners, to win games. There's batsmen who've got to put runs on the board or batsmen who've got to chase down a total," added former England batsman Trott.

"Chennai is normally a good wicket. So, with regards to the mindset, it's important, as I said, the mindset we have there is that it's a team game. It's not just a spinners game."

Afghanistan have lost all seven ODIs against Pakistan but can take a degree of satisfaction from knowing that they clinched three of the teams' last four Twenty20 meetings.

"We always look to put the opposition under pressure straight away so we'll be looking to do that tomorrow obviously, and I don't think there's any thoughts with regards to previous matches," said Trott.



CHENNAI: Pakistan's Ifikhar Ahmed fields a ball as Saud Shakeel watches during a practice session ahead of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup match between Afghanistan and Pakistan.



In brief

89,800 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 89,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 66,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1528.85 feet and was 130.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. The water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 33,100 cusecs and 35,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1209.20 feet, which was 159.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 8,500 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 48,900, 46,000, 37,900 and 12,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police arrest suspect

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested suspect for stabbing to death a man few days ago here on Sunday. According to police spokesman, the arrested suspect Sher Baz Khan stabbed a man namely Haroon Ali to death over petty dispute. The case of the incident was registered in the Race Course police station on the complaint of the victim's brother-in-law. The Race Course police, by using the intelligence and human resources through using scientific method, traced and arrested the accused who was fled away after committing the crime. SP Potohar Muhammad Waqas Khan said that the accused would be challenged and punished. The arrest of such accused involved in heinous crimes is important for ensuring the justice, he said.

Five stolen bikes recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested three members gang involved in motorcycle theft and recovered 05 stolen motorcycles, 05 mobile phones, Rs 50,000 from their possession during crackdown here on Sunday. Police have also recovered the weapons used in the crime. According to police spokesman, the Naseerabad police during the course of action, have arrested three member gang involved in motorcycle theft along with 02 accomplices, among the arrested accused were identified as the leader of the gang Bilal, Amanullah and Wajid. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. The accused have been shifted to the jail for identification parade on the revelation of several incidents. The SSP Operations appreciated the performance of police team adding that strict action against organized and active gangs were being accelerated to eliminate the crime.

131 absconders arrested

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police have arrested 131 absconders involved in heinous crime during the last week, a public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, special tasks were assigned to all seniors' police officials to ensure the arrest of proclaimed offenders and absconders involved in heinous crimes.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Health Minister Dr Nadeem Jan addressing participants of polio awareness walk to end polio.

Caretaker Federal Minister announces 3-pronged strategy

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Minister for National Health Services Dr Nadeem Jan has announced the three-pronged strategy to successfully interrupt the circulation of polio virus in the country and include in the ranks of the polio-free country.

Addressing a ceremony in Islamabad Sunday, he said localized operational hubs are being established in Bannu as three out of four polio cases have been surfaced over there. He

vowed to make these hubs well-resourced by providing additional resources and health experts.

Highlighting the effectiveness of an integrated approach to combat the circulation of polio virus, the Health Minister said polio drops are being administered to the children less than five years country wide with the supplementary doses of vital vitamins.

Nadeem Jan said government has devised a com-

munication strategy with the major focus to remove all the misconceptions in the minds of general public related to the inoculation of polio drops.

Paying rich tribute to the polio workers, who are offering voluntary services by putting their lives into the risk, he said their services will be used further in nutrition, family planning and Health Hygiene after the eradication of polio virus in the country.

Sheikh Rashid to launch 'amnesty mission'

RAWALPINDI (NNI): Former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed announced that he would launch an amnesty mission tomorrow (Monday) for the innocent people incarcerated in connection with the May 9 incidents.

Taking to X (formerly known as Twitter), the head of Awami Muslim League said it is mission of his life to seek pardon for the people imprisoned on charges of their involvement in the May 9 incidents.

He thanked the entire nation which prayed for his release. "I don't know

where I was imprisoned, however, he was not hurt during the confinement."

He said that he was grateful to the entire nation and the mothers, sisters, and daughters through whose prayers he had been released after 40 days. "I do not know at which place I spent the 'chilla', but I was not hurt during the time," he said. He said he would seek pardon for the people those are innocent, confined, hiding or involved in the May 9 incidents.

"Now the mission of my life is to seek amnesty for all those who commit-

ted a mistake on May 9 and have been in hiding since then, and for all those innocent people who have been in jails since May 9," he added.

He appealed masses to lend him support for the amnesty of those who committed the mistake on May 9. I am going to launch this mission by tomorrow, the former minister announced.

"I have never appealed on Twitter. Today, I am appealing for the first time to join me in my mission to appeal for amnesty to those who committed a wrong on May 9."

Fogging drive in full swing to control dengue

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the directions of the Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, health teams under the supervision of the Director Health Services Metropolitan Corporation are continuing the anti-dengue fogging process in various areas of the city.

In a recent drive, fogging was carried out in Government Schools G-7/3, G-7/4, G-7/1 and G-7/2 of Islamabad, which includes DHS, DHO Office, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates, Health Department teams, MCI,

UAS teams and other departments.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner Islamabad said that all possible resources will be used to control the deadly virus in Islamabad.

He added that the rural area of Islamabad is among their priorities and every possible step to protect the lives of the citizens is their priority.

The Deputy Commissioner further said that due to the increasing dengue fever in Islamabad, it is also necessary to follow precautionary measures to prevent the dengue

virus.

He further directed that in order to prevent dengue, sanitation arrangements should be improved in different areas of the city and garbage should not be picked up and water should not be accumulated at any place including workshops, tire shops, as well as an awareness campaign should be launched among the people.

He also said that the anti-dengue spray would be sprayed in all schools and colleges of Islamabad and number of dengue patients would be reduced due to dengue prevention drive in the federal capital.

Railways earn over Rs 6 million from saloons

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

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

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

The official said, "Only

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

In addition, eight saloons had been allocated for the Railway Headquarters Lahore, in which one each would be marked to Chief Executive Officer/General Manager (BS-22), Additional General Manager BS-21, Inspector General Railway Police, Federal Government Inspector, and four saloons were allocated for Principal Officers, he added.

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

He said that the

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

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

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

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

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

Nine drug dealers arrested during raid

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested nine drug dealers and recovered more than 09 kg of drugs from their possession during a crackdown here on Sunday.

According to a police spokesman, Rata Amaral police recovered 1.6 kg of drugs from Ijaz.

Similarly, Bani police held Kamran and recovered 1.4 kg of drugs from his possession and 1.2 kg of drugs from Danyal. While Gujjar Khan police recovered 1.6 kg 680 drugs from Usman.

Jatali police recovered 1.1 kg of drugs from Waqas.

Following the operation, Naseerabad police nabbed Abdul Qadoos and recovered 550 grams of charas from his possession.

Dhamyal police recovered 560 grams of charas from Haider and 560 grams of charas from Irfan. Chontra police recovered 560 grams of charas from Babar. After recovering drugs, separate cases were registered against the accused and further investigation was underway.

City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani appreciated the performance of police teams and said that the arrested accused will be challenged with concrete evidence and will be punished. CPO further said that the crackdown will be continued against drug peddlers without any discrimination.

Five book's launching ceremony held

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Arts Council (PAC) in collaboration with the International Writers Forum organized the book-launching ceremony of five different writers and poets.

The well-known poet and writer of the country Dr. Farhat Abbas presided over the literary gathering.

Poet and writer Nusrat Yab Khan Nusrat presented Naat while Shahzad Afaq was the host of the event.

Dr Khalid Asran's fictional collection "Fusun Zaar", Faiza Malik's poetry collection "Ek Shahr Wafa Tha", Dr Saber Afaq's book "Aapka Kaalam", Asim Nawaz Khandi's books "Baba Ji Salim Khandi, Naqznazar" was presented in the literary event.

Naseem Sahar, Naveed Malik, Prof. Nauman Nazir, Ahmed Mazhroo Ashraf and Kamal Abbas, while discussing extensively, said that these books were a great addition to Urdu literature in many respects. The participants and observers paid tribute to Chairman Shehzad Afaq Al-Tamimi's books, literature, writings and services for literature.

Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmad said that the future of Urdu literature was bright in Pakistan, adding the young generation was stepping into the field of literature with creativity. A new generation was creating the best literature with research. Naveed Malik, patron of the forum, said that the forum was trying to promote and develop literature by supporting writers and poets outside the grouping.

A large number of people from the twin cities attended the function.

CDA retrieves 750 kanals land in Sector I-12

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has retrieved as many as 750 kanals of its precious land from the land grabbers in Sector I-12/1,2 and 3 of the federal capital during the last week.

"The authority has launched a comprehensive operation to curb encroachments in the federal capital on the directives of CDA Chairman Capt@ Anwar ul Haq," an official told APP on Sunday.

He said that the Enforcement Directorate of CDA had launched the operation in collaboration with various departments near NUST University, Sector I-12 against an illegal Afghan settlement established over an extensive area.

The official said that heavy machinery was used during the operation, resulting in the demolition of numerous rooms and livestock enclosures.

ANF seizes 106 kg drugs in 11 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations across the country managed to recover over 106 kg drugs and arrested 13 accused including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Sunday.

He informed that 504 grams heroin was recovered from the possession of a passenger, arrested at Islamabad International Airport. The accused, a resident of Wehari, was leaving for Bahrain by flight number GF-771.

In another operation, a raid was conducted on a courier office in Rawalpindi and 18 grams weed sent from UK was recovered from a parcel.

He informed that two operations were conducted in DHA Lahore and Askari-10. A total of 7 kg heroin and 940 grams cocaine were recovered from three vehicles.

During the operation, three accused residents of Lahore and Sheikhupura were netted.

In fifth operation, 500 grams Ice drug was recovered from a passenger, resident of Khyber at Allama Iqbal International Airport. The accused was leaving for Doha by flight number QR-621.

In sixth operation, a Bahrain bound passenger going on flight number GF-791 was arrested at Faisalabad Airport. The accused, resident of Gujranwala was trying to smuggle 335 grams Ice which was concealed in his trolley bag.

800 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a passenger's bag at Jinnah International Airport. The accused, a resident of Karachi, was leaving for Jeddah by flight number SV-705. Over 9 kg ketamine was recovered from three suspects, residents of Quetta and Karachi,

rounded up from City Railway Station Karachi.

57.6 kg hashish, 12 kg opium, 7 kg heroin and 1 kg Ice were recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Government College Peshawar. During the operation, two accused including a woman, resident of Charsada, were nabbed. The recovered drugs were being smuggled to Punjab.

In 10th operation, 112 Ice-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a passenger netted at Bacha Khan International Airport. The accused, resident of Khyber, was leaving for Doha by flight number QR-601. In 11th operation, 10 kg hashish concealed for smuggling was recovered from an uninhabited area of Khyber. Cases have been registered against the accused under the Anti-Narcotics Act while further investigations are under process.

Poliovirus confirmed in 11 more samples

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Eleven (11) more environmental samples collected from several cities have tested positive for wild poliovirus 1 (WPV1) officials from polio eradication programme said Sunday.

"The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health Islamabad has confirmed the detection of Type-1 Wild Poliovirus (WPV1) in 11 environmental (sewage) samples collected in October 2023 (four from Peshawar, three from Quetta Block, two from Karachi and one each from Bannu & Lahore)," an official told.

Balochistan, poliovirus was found in Pishin, Chaman and Quetta, the official said.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, poliovirus was detected at the 'Hinjal Noorabad' environmental sample collection site in Bannu, which is the second positive sample from District Bannu this year.

Similarly, poliovirus was detected at four sites 'Naray Khwar', 'Hayatabad 1&2', 'Yousafabad & Tajabad' and 'Gulabad & Chungee' composite environmental sample collection sites. In Karachi, the environmental sample (Grab) was collected from the 'Orangi Nala' environmental sample collection site, which is the third positive sample from Keamari this year.

Similarly, in District

Karachi Central, the environmental sample (BMFS) was collected on October 4, 2023 from the 'Haji Mureed Goth' environmental sample collection site.

On Sept 2, a polio virus was found for the second time in Rawalpindi district during a sewage sampling carried out by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

According to an official of the District Health Authority, the polio virus was found in a sample collected from a nullah at Safdarabad near Pirwadhai.

He said the sewage sample from Safdarabad was collected on August 10 and the virus was stated to be genetically linked to YB3A cluster, which is active in Nangarhar, Afghanistan.

Hajj 2024 cost estimated at over Rs1 million

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The cost of the highly anticipated Hajj pilgrimage in 2024 under Pakistan's government scheme is projected to exceed Rs 1.1 million per pilgrim.

This policy is currently under review by the federal cabinet and is expected to receive approval shortly. The draft Hajj Policy 2024 reveals that the estimated cost of Rs 1.1 million will encompass various expenses for pilgrims. Notably, in the case of single-family pilgrims, separate accommodations will be provided.

The official announcement of the cost will be made once the Hajj Policy 2024 is approved. It is also anticipated that the cost for private tour operators will exceed this amount. For the upcoming Hajj in 2024, the government is planning to introduce a short-term Hajj package, which could last from 20 to 25 days. This move aims to provide more flexibility to prospective pilgrims.

grims.

Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed, has affirmed that the Saudi Arabian government is dedicated to improving facilities and services for Pakistani pilgrims during Hajj 2024.

Recently, discussions among lawmakers revolved around the reduction of Pakistani Hajj Group Organizers (HGOs) from 905 to only 46.

While a letter has been forwarded to the Saudi Hajj and Umrah Ministry, requesting a delay in the reduction for the current year and suggesting a gradual decrease in the upcoming years, it has been highlighted that Saudi authorities may not be inclined to alter their decision.

The religious affairs ministry has been advised to prepare for the upcoming Hajj accordingly.

In a significant development, Saudi authorities have approved the expansion of the 'Road to Makkah' project from Lahore and Karachi airports, with proposals to extend it to airports in Peshawar and Quetta.

The 'Road to Makkah' initiative, part of Saudi Arabia's Guests of God Service Program, aims to simplify the pilgrimage experience for Hajj pilgrims. This initiative includes issuing visas and providing baggage facilities at the pilgrims' respective countries' airports, facilitating their smooth transition to buses that transport them to their places of residence in Makkah and Madina while delivering their luggage directly to them, alleviating various hassles upon their arrival in Saudi Arabia.

The agreement for this project was renewed in May as Saudi Arabia's deputy interior minister, Dr. Nasser bin Abdul Aziz Al-Dawood, met with Pakistan's then-interior minister, Rana Sanaullah.

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VC urged to simplify online registration

ISLAMABAD (APP): The current students of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) have urged the Vice Chancellor Dr. Nasir Mahmood to make the online registration and enrollment procedure of admissions in the new semester.

Talking to APP, the students also demanded to revive the manual procedure of admissions and registration as they were facing immense problems in enrollment and uploading assignments.

The students were of the view, that they could not register for next semester due to the absence of manual procedure, lengthy enrollment process and poor internet facilities particularly in far-flung areas of the country.

"They have to pay a handsome amount to the bookshops and photocopy shops for online registration and generating fee challan" they added.

Meanwhile, a student Ambreen Shahid told this news agency that in an era of such inflation, they have to pay Rs 100-200 to the bookshops for uploading their assignments on the AAGHI LMS Portal of the university.

"Mostly, middle and poor people take admission in AIU for the sake of acquiring education but their wishes are continuously dashing down with such a laborious and difficult enrollment process," she said.

Another student, Rifat Iqbal said that earlier there was a manual system of admission and course registration which has totally been abandoned now.

The university enhanced the hardship of continuous students of the varsity through the new system, she added.

She said the new enrollment procedure has also caused a decrease in the

enrollment of new students as they have to spend more time and money on uploading assignments and enrolling in the next semesters.

Naveed Baloch who belongs to Balochistan while commenting on the issue, said that he is very disappointed in taking admission to the university due to poor internet connectivity in our area and the difficult university's online enrollment system, he is facing immense problems with generating fee vouchers and course enrollment.

"We have to wait for generating a fee voucher and then able to deposit the fee," he regretted. Zahid Abbasi urged the VC to revive the old manual mechanism besides the online system which would not only reduce the agonies of the students but also help enhance a number of students' enrollment.

UAE pledges additional aid

KABUL (Pajhwok): The United Arab Emirates (UAE) says it is dispatching more aid to survivors of the recent earthquake in western Afghanistan. In Abu Dhabi, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) announced the deployment of six planes carrying over 200 tonnes of food supplies and tents to Afghanistan. On October 10, three days after the magnitude-6.3 earthquake killed thousands of people in the war-torn country, the UAE had flown 33 tonnes of food supplies to survivors.

The Frontier Post AFGHANISTAN

RABI-US-SANNI 6, 1445 — Monday, October 23, 2023

Polio vaccination campaign

KUNDUZ (Agencies): The latest polio vaccination campaign in Afghanistan will launch on Monday across 14 provinces. The organization Polio Free Afghanistan wrote on X, formerly Twitter that, the campaign will be launched in the provinces of Kunduz, Takhar, Baghlan, Parwan, Kapisa, Kabul, Kunar, Nuristan, Laghman, Nangarhar, Paktia, Paktika, Khost and Ghazni. This institution asked parents to vaccinate their children under five years old so that polio will eradicated in Afghanistan.

Karzai renews call for lifting curbs on education for girls



KABUL (Pajhwok): President Hamid Karzai has called for the resumption of education for girls and the return of women to work. The reversal of the restrictions on women was vital to the development of the country, he said at a meeting here with UN Special

Coordinator for Afghanistan Sinirlioglu.

In a statement from his office, the former president called national understanding the only way to bring durable peace and stability to the country. During discussions on the current situation in Afghanistan, Sinirlioglu expressed his condolences and sympathies for the victims of the recent earthquakes in western Afghanistan.

While commending the UN for helping Afghanistan, Karzai underlined the world body's critical role in maintaining international peace and security.

He went on to acknowledge Sinirlioglu's efforts to improve Afghanistan's economic situation and ensure lasting peace in the country.

IEA's acting Interior minister meet Japan's new and outgoing ambassadors

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Minister of Interior Sirajuddin Haqqani met with the outgoing ambassador of Japan Takashi Okada and with his replacement, Takuyoshi Kurumaya.

Okada expressed his condolences to the acting interior minister about the recent incident in Herat and promised to collect \$4 million in aid for the quake victims. During the meeting Okada also spoke of his country's achievements during his mission in Afghanistan.

Okada praised the security situation in the country and said that he has traveled to all parts of Afghanistan, including Kandahar and Bamiyan, without any fear or problems. Meanwhile, the acting interior minister thanked Okada for the work he had



done in the country and welcomed Kurumaya to the country.

"Japan has always helped and sympathized

with Afghans and this spirit is reflected in the good mission of the ambassadors," said Haqqani.

According to Haqqani,

considering the historical relations between the two countries, Japan can play a constructive role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Dam in Logar at risk of collapse, residents say

K H A R W A R (TOLOnews): A number of residents of Kharwar district in Logar said that part of the water dam of the district is at risk of collapse due to the increase in the sediments of the recent floods in the reservoir of the dam.

According to them, parts of the land affecting the dam have been taken by land-grabbers in recent years. "The Kharwar Dam needs complete reconstruction, which means that this dam faces the threat of destruction.

If you see the gates of this dam, the stones and the cover of the dam, which were built in the past, are being destroyed and need to be rebuilt," said Muhibullah Wesal, a resident.

"The technical equipment that existed in the past revolutions has been looted and disabled," said Nasratullah Akef, another resident.

"People near this dam have started their agricultural work, if it goes further into ruin, it will be a major loss for the people,"



said Mohammad Layeq Sahel, a resident.

Some residents of the district want serious attention from the Islamic Emirate to the reconstruction of the dam.

"We call on the Islamic Emirate to help us rebuild this dam. This can damage Logar and Charkh district and is very important for Kharwar," Hazratullah Abed told Tolonews.

"They should pay seri-

ous attention to this dam, which is useful for both Kharwar and will not be damaged in the case of floods," said Abedullah, a resident.

However, local officials in Logar have announced that 100 million afghanis have been allocated to start reconstruction work on the dam. "More than 100 million Afghans have been allocated for the Kharwar Dam and its

work is underway. This has been volunteered by companies, but it's not final. Based on the information we have received, hopefully it will begin work next year," said Rafiullah Samim, head of information and culture in Logar province.

The dam was reportedly built in Kharwar district of Logar during the reign of Mohammad Zahir Shah in Afghanistan.

Afghan women demand release of activists from Taliban detention

KABUL (Agencies): Several protesting women demanded the immediate release of Julia Parsi, Neda Parwani, Matiullah Wesa, and Rasoul Parsi, who are currently held captive by the Taliban, in a public statement.

The "Women's Protest Movement for Freedom" considers women and civil activists imprisoned by the Taliban as part of their "repressive policies."

These protesting women gathered at a discreet location in Kabul on Saturday and called on the international community not to recognize the Taliban officially. According to a statement from the "Women's Protest Movement for Freedom," they state, "We demand an end to the oppressive rule of the Taliban. Afghanistan needs stability and the establishment of a democratic government that respects the



freedom of its people, especially women."

The letter emphasizes that freedom is a natural and civil right for every individual, and practical and urgent actions must be taken to free activists from Taliban captivity.

Earlier, France reported that Mortaza Behboudi, who had been detained in Afghanistan since January 7 by the Taliban for 284 days, has been released.

Over the past two years, the Taliban has frequently resorted to the detention

and torture of civil activists and women actively participating in protests.

These distressing incidents of detainment and abuse underscore the challenging human rights situation in regions under the control of the Taliban.

Kazakhstan's aid for Herat earthquake victims reaches Balkh



KABUL (Agencies): Local officials in Balkh province have reported the arrival of a much-needed humanitarian aid consignment from Kazakhstan intended for the earthquake victims in Herat. This significant gesture of support has brought hope to the affected region. The humanitarian aid consignment made its way

to Balkh through the Hairatan port, representing a lifeline for those struggling in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake.

The consignment comprises both food and non-food items, generously provided by Kazakhstan, and has been officially received by the local authorities in Balkh.

Among the essential items included in the aid packages are flour, rice, oil, dairy products, clothing, and blankets, reflecting the diverse needs of the earthquake victims.

The representative of Kazakhstan, who facilitated this act of compassion, highlighted the importance of international solidarity in

times of crisis. Officials in Balkh have expressed their gratitude for this support, emphasizing their commitment to promptly forwarding these aid supplies to the affected individuals in Zinda Jan district, Herat.

Kazakhstan's proactive response to the earthquake crisis in Herat included dispatching a shipment of humanitarian aid. This vital aid package contained much-needed health equipment and medicine and involved the deployment of 45 health workers to assist and provide medical care to the earthquake victims.

Kazakhstan's comprehensive approach to aid delivery, combining essential supplies and skilled personnel, underscores its commitment to aiding those affected by natural disasters and contributing to the recovery efforts in Herat.

Taliban publicly flogs a man and woman in Bamyan province

KABUL (Agencies): The Supreme Court of the Taliban has announced the public punishment of a man and a woman in the Shiber district of Bamyan.

On Saturday, the court stated that these individuals have been sentenced on charges of "adultery."

Taliban officials have reported that members of the group and some residents from Bamyan were present during the execution of the punishment.

According to a report in a Taliban newsletter, the punishment inflicted upon these two individuals was carried out by the

judgment issued by the Bamyan Provincial Court. This punishment was further ratified by the Chief of the Public Criminal Court within the Supreme Court of the Taliban.

This underscores the Taliban's approach to imposing and upholding their interpretation of justice, with local courts and higher authorities within their legal framework playing a crucial role in determining and administering these penalties.

The Supreme Court of the Taliban has not provided specific details about the nature of the punishment but has men-

tioned that each accused has received a sentence according to the penal code.

Last year, the Taliban publicly lashed a young girl and boy for alleged premarital relations in Bamyan and, in a separate incident, publicly flogged two individuals in the central area of Bamyan on charges of theft.

After regaining control over Afghanistan, the Taliban has systematically executed numerous public punishments across various provinces over the past two years.

These punishments have been imposed on

individuals accused of a wide range of charges, including adultery, theft, and violations of their interpretation of Islamic law.

These actions have raised significant concerns within the international community regarding human rights and the treatment of individuals under Taliban rule.

The frequency and severity of these public punishments have underscored the challenges in achieving a more inclusive and rights-respecting governance system in Afghanistan since the Taliban's resurgence.



Facing winter, retirees despair over unpaid pensions

KABUL (Monitoring Desk): As winter approaches, civil servant retirees called on the Islamic Emirate to pay their retirement pensions. Payenda is one of these retirees, who has worked at the Ministry of Economy for many years, and she is not satisfied with her life's bad conditions. With the arrival of the cold season, Payenda said that he is struggling with severe conditions.

"I have a patient, the father of children had heart surgery and we are supposed to visit the doctor on Tuesday, but we have no



money," Payenda said.

"I am here to receive my retirement pension, I need to pay house rent, I have a patient who had surgery lately, for how long should I keep begging," said

Zarifa, another retiree.

Some retirees appealed to the Islamic Emirates to consider their request, otherwise they will expand protests. "Why don't they give us our right, is it given

free or for God's sake? this is our own money, so why don't they give it to us, we are from this country," said Abdul Khaliq, a retiree.

"We don't want to bother people, or else we can ban the main roads, venues and even we can break the doors. They can just arrest us, nothing else," said Ahmad Omer, another retiree. The Islamic Emirate has not commented on the issue, but earlier said that the plan for the payment of pensions for the retired government workers has been sent for confirmation to the office of the Islamic Emirate's leader.

Nawaz Sharif to file appeal in High Court

— challenging sentence in various cases

LAHORE (NNI): Former Prime Minister and Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) leader Nawaz Sharif has decided to file appeals against the sentence in the Avenfield reference and the Al-Azizia Steel Mills reference in the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

This was decided in a meeting with party leaders at the Jati Umra house of the leader of PML-N Nawaz Sharif on Sunday.

Sources said that appeals against the convictions in both references will also be filed in the Islamabad High Court on Monday. Nawaz Sharif is expected to leave Islamabad on Monday, said sources.

Sources said that Nawaz Sharif will also meet important party leaders and

legal and constitutional experts in Islamabad.

While talking to leaders Nawaz Sharif said that we were first subjected to political revenge, now we hope to get relief from the courts.

In this regard former Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, former Chief Minister Hamza Shehbaz and legal expert Atta Nazir Tarar also met with Nawaz Sharif and discussed the legal issues.

In the meeting of the leaders with Nawaz Sharif, there was a detailed discussion on the upcoming general elections, Avenfield reference, Al-Azizia Steel Mill reference, Tosha Khana case and other important legal matters. “We will focus all our ener-

gies on the economic prosperity of Pakistan”, said Nawaz Sharif.

Earlier, Nawaz Sharif also met with Hamza Shehbaz’s wife and sisters in Jati Umra while Maryam Nawaz’s daughter Mehra-ul-Nisaa, her son-in-law Raheel Munir and children also met with Nawaz Sharif.

Ahsan Iqbal hopes judiciary will do justice with Nawaz Sharif

Former federal minister Ahsan Iqbal said Sunday that those who had Nawaz Sharif punished in false cases were gone, adding it was hoped that the independent judiciary of Pakistan would give justice to him.

Speaking to the media after the funeral of Mian

Akhtar Latif, brother of former federal minister Mian Javed Latif in Sheikhupura, Ahsan Iqbal said that Nawaz Sharif had the right to redress the injustice meted out to him.

He said it had been proved that after 2017, Nawaz Sharif was implicated and disqualified in false cases.

He added the Minar-e-Pakistan meeting had proved that the Muslim League-N was the biggest political force in Pakistan.

“The vision presented by Nawaz Sharif for the future is the roadmap for Pakistan. The entire nation is united now. Nawaz Sharif should be supported so that Pakistan could be taken out of the economic crisis,” he said.



RAFAH: Truck aid convoy entering Gaza crossing Rafah border.

PPP sees effort behind delay in polls

KARACHI (NNI): Pakistan Peoples Party leader Faisal Karim Kundi stated on Sunday that the reason for the delay in the elections is a planned effort to manipulate the results.

In a statement issued here, Kundi stated that the elections should not be postponed based solely on the wishes of a couple of political parties.

The PPP leader emphasised that the Election Commission of Pakistan’s (ECP) decisions should be in line with the constitution, rather than influenced by the preferences of a select few.

Kundi, who is also the PPP’s information secretary, pointed out that instead of continuously experimenting with the “selection” process, the ultimate decision should rest with the voters in a fair election.

He asserted that the authority to choose and reject their representatives in the upcoming elections should lie solely with the people.

Bushra Bibi brother’s home raided

LAHORE (INP): Punjab anti-corruption authorities raided the houses of several high-profile suspects in Sahiwal, Okara, and Pakpattan. The raids were part of an ongoing crackdown on corruption in the country, authorities confirmed on Sunday.

According to media reports, among those whose homes were raided were former MNAs Rai Hasan Nawaz and Rai Murtaza Iqbal, former MPA Naeem Ibrahim, political leader Saleem Sadiq, and Ahmed Mujtaba, the brother of former First Lady Bushra Bibi. All of the suspects were able to flee before they could be arrested.

The Director General of the Anti-Corruption Establishment has directed his team to speed up their efforts to arrest the suspects. He has also said that all of the wanted suspects will be brought to justice.

Maryam thanks masses

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz senior vice and chief organiser, Maryam Nawaz, on Sunday thanked people for according to a warm welcome to three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif on his return to the homeland on Saturday.

Maryam Nawaz in his post on X, formerly known as Twitter said: “A huge thank you to the people from all corners of Pakistan who joined the people of Lahore to give a phenomenal welcome to their Leader, their Quaid, The one and only.. Nawaz Sharif! You created history! Alhamdulillah!”

PML-N supreme and three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif on Saturday arrived in Pakistan after four years of self-imposed exile in London.

PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif reached Lahore’s historic Minar-e-Pakistan monument, the venue for a grand rally of the PML-N to welcome the former premier, in a helicopter after landing in Lahore from Islamabad.

PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif and former finance minister Ishaq Dar were accompanying the former premier Nawaz Sharif on the trip.

Zardari pays rich tribute to Nusrat Bhutto

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Former President of Pakistan and President Pakistan Peoples Party

Parliamentarians, Asif Ali Zardari while paying homage to the Mother of Democracy, Begum Nusrat Bhutto on the occasion of her death anniversary said that the sacrifices made by her for the country and the nation are the greatest in the political world.

He said that there is no example of such a struggle in history.

President Zardari said that Begum Nusrat Bhutto had set bright examples of reconciliation in the country. Those examples are a beacon for us. The great lady endured violence but kept the flag of the Party flying high.

Asif Ali Zardari said that when a brutal dictatorship was imposed in the country, Begum Sahiba had strongly

resisted the dictators. From the platform of MRD, she led the historical movement for the restoration of democracy and the Constitution.

President Zardari said that the struggle of Pakistan Peoples Party is to fulfil the goals for which the Mother of Democracy, Begum Nusrat Bhutto made great and unprecedented sacrifices.

Meanwhile, Chairman Pakistan People’s Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that Madar-e-Jamhuriat Begum Nusrat Bhutto is a metaphor of compassion, patience and courage, who never hesitated to sacrifice for the sake of Pakistan’s democracy and the people.

According to a press release issued by Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP, in his message on the 12th death anniversary of Begum Nusrat Bhutto, paid tribute to her and said that Madar-

e-Jamhuriat was a visionary women leader, who led a historic movement against a tin-pot dictator to restore political and democratic rights to the people of Pakistan. “After the judicial assassination of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, as long as health allowed her, Begum Bhutto continued to fight for people’s rights and never sat down silently for a single day,” he added.

“Madar-e-Jamhuriat’s values and struggles are a beacon of light for us, she will live forever in our hearts and history,” said Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and urged that today, on the occasion of Begum Nusrat Bhutto’s death anniversary, we must once again pledge that we will continue to fight for the rights of the people with the same courage, determination and independence that Madar-e-Jamhuriat fought for.

Govt plans to hike gas price up to 200 per cent

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The caretaker finance minister has called the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) on Monday to deliberate on the proposal for an increase in the gas tariff.

According to sources, the ECC meeting has been called at 4 pm tomorrow. A summary of the increase in gas prices is likely to be presented in the meeting.

The summary forwarded by the petroleum division has suggested about 200% increase in the gas tariff.

It has been proposed to increase the price of gas up to 172% for domestic consumers, for other categories, it has been suggested to hike the price of gas up to 200%.

Sources said that a phenomenal increase in the fixed charges for the lowest gas users has been proposed.

It has been proposed to

raise the fixed monthly charges from Rs10 to Rs400 for the protected customers.

Sources divulged that the increase in gas prices will be applicable from October 1. An increase in price by Rs100 per MMBtu has been suggested for non-protected consumers who use up to 0-25 cubic meters.

An increase in price by Rs.300 per MMBtu has been suggested for consumers who use gas up to 60 cubic meters per month. For these consumers, the gas price will be hiked from Rs300 to Rs600 per MMBtu.

An increase in gas price by Rs600 per MMBtu has been suggested for non-protected consumers who use gas up to 100 cubic meters per month. For these users, the gas price will be risen from Rs400 to Rs1,000 per MMBtu.

The consumers who use gas up to 150 cubic meters per month, their gas tariff will be hiked from Rs600 to Rs1,200.

For those users who consume 200 cubic meters of gas per month, their tariff will be increased to Rs1,600 from Rs800.

The consumers who use gas up to 300 cubic meters per month, their gas tariff will be hiked from Rs1,100 to Rs3,000.

For those who consume 400 cubic meters of gas per month, their tariff will be increased to Rs4,000 from Rs3,100.

Sources said that the petroleum division has suggested a Rs2,900 per MMBtu increase in the gas price for the cement sector; Rs950 per MMBtu hike for export industries; Rs1,400 per MMBtu hike for non-export industries; and Rs4,400 per MMBtu increase for the CNG sector.

Six LHC judges complete five years

LAHORE (INP): Six justices of the Lahore High Court (LHC) have completed five years of their service as judges, it revealed on Sunday.

Justice Anwaarul Haq Pannun and Justice Farooq Haider have completed five years as judges.

Justice Muhammad Waheed Khan and Justice Rasool Hasan Syed have also completed five years.

Justice Asim Hafeez and Justice Sadiq Mahmud Khurram have also completed five years.

The lawyers, colleagues, and relatives of the judges congratulated them on completing five years and expressed good wishes for them.

The judges had been appointed in the LHC on October 23, 2018.

Justice Anwaarul Haq Pannun will retire on March 27, 2025.

Justice Farooq Haider currently ranks 26th in the seniority list of judges. He will retire on April 23, 2030.

Justice Muhammad

Waheed Khan ranks 27th in the seniority list of judges, and he will retire on April 27, 2031.

Justice Rasool Hasan Syed ranks 28th in the seniority list of judges, and he will retire on September 10, 2032.

Justice Asim Hafeez is at 29th position in the seniority list of judges, and he will retire on September 13, 2032.

Justice Sadiq Mahmud Khurram ranks 30th in the seniority list, and he will retire on January 7, 2035.

Rich tributes paid to martyrs of Bijbehara massacre

SRINAGAR (INP): The leaders of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) have paid rich tributes to the martyrs of Bijbehara massacre on their 30th martyrdom anniversary.

According to Kashmir Media Service, over 50 innocent Kashmiris were martyred in the Bijbehara area of Islamabad district on October 22, 1993, when the personnel of Indian Border Security Force opened fire on the peaceful demonstrators, who were protesting against the

Indian military siege of Srinagar’s Hazratbal shrine.

The APHC leaders including Ghulam Muhammad Khan Sopori, Syed Bashir Andrabi, Khawaja Firdous, Abdul Ahad Parra, Saleem Zargar, Yasmeen Raja, Zamrooda Habib, Farida Behanji, Maulana Musaib Nadi, Javid Ahmed Mir, Fayaz Hussain Jafari and Syed Sibte Shabbir Qummi, in their separate statements in Srinagar said the sacrifices of the Kashmiri martyrs will bring positive results

and the day is not far away when the Kashmiris will get freedom and political justice which has been snatched by the Indian government since 1947.

The leaders also sought the role of the UN and other international human rights organizations to stop India from altering the demography of Jammu and Kashmir. Under a well-hatched conspiracy, Indian troops were killing innocent Kashmiris to turn the Muslim majority into a minority in the territory, the deployed.

Farooq invites Miftah

KARACHI (NNI): Dr Farooq Sattar in a meeting with PML-N’s estranged leader Miftah Ismail, invited him to join MQM-Pakistan.

Farooq Sattar called on Miftah Ismail at his residence in Karachi two days’ ago and invited the former finance minister to join the MQM-Pakistan.

“When Pakistan is passing through in existing adverse circumstances it is necessary to form a team of good people,” Sattar said.

“A joint national agenda is necessary for the country,” MQM leader said. “I discussed this national agenda in the meeting with Miftah Ismail,” he said.

“I told him that presently no political platform is better than the MQM”, MQM leader said. “He said, he will reply after considering over it,” Sattar stated.

Solangi clarifies about live coverage

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi on Sunday gave an explanation on the live coverage of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz public meeting in Lahore.

In a statement on the social networking site X, he said that PTV had only three days ago, on the 16th anniversary of the Karsaz tragedy covered live the speeches of all the leaders, including Bilawal Bhutto.

It should be noted that Nawaz Sharif’s address from the rally last night was broadcast live by almost all TV channels, including PTV. However, PTV’s live broadcast of Nawaz Sharif’s rally was criticized by some persons on social media.

Russian strike on Ukraine

KYIN, Ukraine (AFP/ APP): Russian missile strikes killed at least six postal workers and wounded 17 others Saturday when they hit a mail depot in Ukraine’s northeastern Kharkiv region, officials said.

President Volodymyr Zelensky shared a video on social media of what appeared to be a heavily damaged warehouse surrounded by rubble and a container with the logo of the Ukrainian postal operator Nova Poshta.

The six killed in the attack were all workers at the Nova Poshta depot, located in the village of Korotyach on the outskirts of Kharkiv city, regional governor Oleg Sinegovov said.

“The victims, aged between 19 and 42, received shrapnel wounds and blast injuries,” he said.

Of the injured being treated in hospital, seven were in a serious condition, Sinegovov said, adding that “Doctors are fighting for their lives”.

The regional prosecutor’s office later updated the number of injured to 17.

Sergiy Nozhka, who works for Nova Poshta, described the condition of some his colleagues as “mild to moderate severity”, adding that “there are some people in a very serious condition”.

Ghulam Ahmed Bilour not allowed to meet Nawaz

LAHORE (NNI): Senior leader of Awami National Party (ANP) and former federal minister Ghulam Ahmed Bilour failed in meeting with former prime minister and PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif in Jati Umrah.

Bilour reached Jati Umrah to meet Nawaz Sharif, who landed in Pakistan after ending his four-year self-exile on Saturday.

Ghulam Ahmed Bilour upon his arrival in Jati Umrah said Nawaz Sharif

has gone through a very tough time in jail and pinned hope that he will steer the country out of the present crises.

Bilour wanted to meet the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supreme but was not allowed. The cause behind the denial remains unknown. After the denial, Bilour left Jami Umrah.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme and three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif on Saturday arrived

in Pakistan after four years of self-imposed exile in London.

PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif reached Lahore’s historic Minar-e-Pakistan monument, the venue for a grand rally of the PML-N to welcome the former premier, in a helicopter after landing in Lahore from Islamabad.

PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif and former finance minister Ishaq Dar were accompanying the former premier Nawaz Sharif on the trip.

Siraj questions govt’s response to Turbat killings

SHUJAABAD (NNI): Jamaat-e-Islami chief Sirajul Haq expressed deep concern over the alarming surge in crimes across Pakistan on Sunday, stating that incidents involving shedding the blood of the weak, burning the houses of the vulnerable and kidnapping anyone’s daughter had become disturbingly common in the country.

The JI chief conveyed these views during his visit to the residence of a victim of the Turbat shooting.

He argued that there was a severe lack of protection for the rights of the vulnerable in the country, and

questioned the government’s response to the Turbat killings.

On Oct 14, unidentified gunmen killed six construction workers and injured two others in a pre-dawn attack on their camp near Turbat in Balochistan’s Kech district.

Police said the labourers were sleeping in an under-construction house when they were attacked, resulting in six instant deaths.

The JI chief expressed regret that no government representative had offered condolences to the grieving families of the shooting victims. He lamented the

absence of visits from the president of Pakistan, the chief minister or the governor to condole the impoverished families who had lost their loved ones.

He said that these labourers had gone to Balochistan to make a living, not to engage in political activities or commit robberies.

The JI chief also criticised the police and media, accusing them of favouring the rich over the poor. He claimed that when the mother of a poor person cried out for justice, they seemed to turn a blind eye to her pleas.

China urges ceasefire, access for relief in Gaza

BEIJING (APP): China has urged an immediate halt to military operations in the Gaza Strip that further aggravate the situation and the opening of humanitarian relief channels, a Chinese envoy said at a summit held in Cairo on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The international community should be objective, impartial and practical in promoting a comprehensive, just and permanent solution to the Palestinian issue as early as possible, Special Envoy of the Chinese Government on the Middle East Issue Zhai Jun said at the summit, CGTN reported on Sunday.

Noting China is deeply saddened by the heavy civilian casualties and the

severe humanitarian situation caused by the escalation of the conflict, Zhai said China opposes and condemns all actions that harm civilians and any violations of international law.

He stressed that the continued escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict once again proves that the Palestine question cannot be ignored or forgotten. The fundamental way out of the recurring Palestinian-Israeli conflict lies in implementing the “two-state solution” and establishing an independent State of Palestine, so as to realize the peaceful coexistence of Palestine and Israel, he noted.

China will continue working with all relevant

parties and the international community to de-escalate the conflict as soon as possible, support the Palestinian people’s just cause of restoring their legitimate national rights, implement the “two-state solution” and push for lasting peace and security in the Middle East region, said the Chinese envoy.

The Cairo Summit for Peace was attended by the representatives from 31 countries, including China, Jordan, Qatar, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and South Africa, together with United Nations and European Union officials. Israel, however, did not send any representatives to the summit.

Iran sentences two women journalists

DUBAI (Reuters): An Iranian Revolutionary Court has handed out long prison sentences to two women journalists over their coverage of the death in custody of Kurdish-Iranian Mahsa Amini last year, state media reported on Sunday.

The death of 22-year-old Amini last September while in the custody of the morality police for allegedly violating the Islamic dress code unleashed months of mass protests across Iran, marking the biggest challenge to Iran’s clerical leaders in decades.

Iran’s state news agency IRNA said Nilofar Hamed and Elaheh Mohammadi were sentenced to 13 and 12 years in prison respectively on charges, including collabo-

ration with the U.S. government and acting against national security.

Lawyers for the two journalists have rejected the charges.

“They received seven years and six years each respectively for collaborating with the hostile U.S. government. Then each five years in prison for acting against the national security and each one year in prison for propaganda against the system,” IRNA reported.

Hamed was detained after she took a picture of Amini’s parents hugging each other in a Tehran hospital where their daughter was lying in a coma and Mohammadi after she covered Amini’s funeral in her Kurdish hometown Saez, where the protests began.

IRNA said the “issued verdicts” were subject to appeal.

If confirmed, the time the women have already spent at the Evvin jail, where most political prisoners are held, would be deducted from the sentences, according to the judiciary’s Mizan news agency.

A statement released by Iran’s intelligence ministry in October last year accused Mohammadi and Hamed of being agents for the United States’ Central Intelligence Agency.

“There is documented evidence of Hamed and Mohammadi’s intentional connections with certain entities and individuals affiliated with the U.S. government,” Mizan reported.