

Plea against Nawaz dismissed

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Wednesday dismissed the pending contempt of court plea against the former three-time prime minister and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif since 2018 for non-compliance. According to details, a plea was moved in IHC against Nawaz Sharif in 2018 by a resident over his anti-judiciary remarks after being disqualified.

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First bailout review

Pakistan, IMF reach staff-level agreement

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a major development, Pakistan has reached a staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the first review of a \$3 billion bailout, wherein the country will receive \$700 million after approval from the Washington-based lender's Executive Board.

Upon approval, Pakistan will have access to around \$700 million, bringing total disbursements under the programme to almost \$1.9 billion, the IMF announced in a statement on Wednesday. In conversation with Geo.tv, Ministry of Finance's former adviser Dr Khagan Hassan Najeeb said the board's approval will help Pakistan unlock more funding from other multilateral and bilateral donors.

"That is a good development and a satisfying one for Pakistan indeed," he said, adding that inflation should steadily decline "is the thought process moving forward". The IMF said the agreement supports the Pakistani authorities' commitment to advance the planned fiscal consolidation and accelerate cost-reducing reforms in the energy sector.

The short-term deal also envisages a complete return to a market-determined exchange rate, and pursues state-owned enterprise and governance reforms to attract investment and support job creation while continuing to strengthen social assistance. "Anchored by the stabilisation policies under the SBA, a nascent recovery is underway, buoyed by international partners' support and signs of improved confidence," the statement added.

The global lender said steadfast execution of the FY24 budget, continued adjustment of energy prices, and renewed flows into the foreign exchange market have lessened fiscal and external pressures. It further said inflation is expected to decline over the coming months amid receding supply constraints and modest demand.

However, Pakistan remains susceptible to significant external risks,

including the intensification of geopolitical tensions, resurgent commodity prices, and the further tightening of global financial conditions, as per the IMF. "Efforts to build resilience need to continue." Pakistan clinched the deal with the IMF for the \$3 billion short-term loan agreement in June this year, averting the looming default threat, and undertook painful economic reforms including hiking electricity and gas tariffs in line with the Lender's conditions.

An IMF mission has been in Pakistan for the last two weeks for technical- and policy-level talks to review whether the government was on track to meet benchmarks set under the \$3 billion standby arrangement agreed in July. The IMF team led by Nathan Porter visited Islamabad from November 2-15, and held discussions with the authorities on the implementation of the SBA conditions. "The IMF team thanks the Pakistani authorities, private sector, and development partners for fruitful discussions and cooperation throughout this mission."

In the official statement, the IMF highlighted the Pakistani authorities' policy priorities for balanced growth and strengthening macroeconomic sustainability. The statement said authorities continued fiscal consolidation to reduce public debt, while protecting development needs. According to the global lender, Pakistan authorities are determined to achieve a primary surplus of at least 0.4% of GDP in FY24, underpinned by federal and provincial government spending restraint and improved revenue performance supported, if necessary, by contingent measures.

"The authorities are building capacity to expand the tax base and raise revenue mobilisation and are committed to improving the quality of public investment and spending." The authorities will continue the timely disbursements for social protection under BISP's budget allocation — which are about a third higher than in FY23. Further reforms to reduce costs in the energy sector and restore its viability. With the com-

bined circular debt (CD) across power and gas sectors exceeding 4% of GDP, immediate action was critical.

While protecting vulnerable consumers, the IMF said authorities implemented power tariff adjustments that were pending since July 2023 and increased gas prices after a long time, effective November 1, 2023. While these increases were substantial, they were necessary to avoid further arrears that threatened the viability of these sectors and the provision of critical energy supplies.

The authorities are also moving to tackle cost-side pressures, including bringing private sector participation to DISCOs, institutionalizing recovery and anti-theft actions, improving PPA terms, and reducing the incentives for captive power. While inflows following increased regulatory and law enforcement helped normalise import and foreign exchange payments and rebuild reserves, the authorities recognised that the rupee must remain market-determined to sustainably alleviate external pressures and rebuild reserves.

To support this, Pakistan plans to strengthen the transparency and efficiency of the foreign currency market and to refrain from administrative actions to influence the rupee, the statement said. With appropriately tight monetary policy, inflation should steadily decline and the authorities stand ready to respond resolutely if near-term price pressures reemerge, including due to second-round effects on core inflation or renewed exchange rate depreciation.

The IMF said the Pakistani authorities will ensure public access to asset declarations from the cabinet members and a task force, with participation from independent experts, will complete a comprehensive review of the anticorruption framework to further strengthen governance. "The [Pakistan] authorities have accelerated the engagement with multilateral and official bilateral partners. Timely disbursement of committed external support remains critical to support the authorities' policy and reform efforts."

IMF Mission Chief calls on PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The IMF Mission Chief for Pakistan Mr Nathan Porter and IMF Resident Representative for Pakistan Ms Esther Perez Tuiz called on Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar today and apprised him of status of the negotiations held at the technical levels with the team of Government of Pakistan under the First Review of the SBA.

Nathan Porter acknowledged the efforts made by the Government of Pakistan in meeting the various program quarterly targets. He stated that these efforts have resulted in positive conclusion of the technical level talks. He stated that both the teams have had extensive talks on various aspects of the SBA. He appreciated the role played by the Finance Minister and her team and Governor SBP along with his team in technical level talks.

The Prime Minister thanked the IMF team for its ongoing work with the Pakistan and praised the leadership of the Minister for Finance and Revenue and the contribution of her team in taking the program forward. He also appreciated the role of Governor, State Bank of Pakistan. The Prime Minister reaffirmed the Government's enduring commitment to the reform efforts agreed with the IMF as these are aimed at stabilizing the Pakistan's economy in the long run. Minister of Finance, Governor State Bank of Pakistan, Chairman Federal Board of Revenue, and senior government officials also attended the meeting.

KP Caretaker CM, CEC discuss polls

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Chief Minister, Justice (Retd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah called on Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja in Islamabad on Wednesday and discussed with him matters pertaining to the elections.

During the meeting, the caretaker chief minister briefed the Chief Election Commissioner about the election preparations in the province. Justice (Retd) Arshad Hussain assured that the provincial government along with the Election Commission will ensure the conduct of free, fair and transparent elections in the province.

CEC Sikandar Sultan Raja congratulated the caretaker Chief Minister on assuming the office and said that keeping in mind the current security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, necessary steps should be taken for the peaceful conduct of general elections, in which the safety of voters should be given priority. The Chief Election Commissioner said the Election Commission will soon visit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to review the preparations for elections in the province.



ISLAMABAD: IMF Mission Chief for Pakistan, Mr. Nathan Porter and IMF Resident Representative for Pakistan, Ms. Esther Perez Tuiz called on Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Xi lands in US

US, Chinese presidents meeting to be held at an undisclosed location

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP): Chinese President Xi Jinping has arrived in the US on his first visit to the country in six years during which he will hold a high-stake meeting with Joe Biden at an undisclosed location in the San Francisco Bay Area on Wednesday morning.

After the Biden meeting, Xi will attend the annual summit of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. Xi's summit with Biden will be the first face-to-face meeting between the US and Chinese leaders in a year and has been billed by US officials as an opportunity to reduce friction in what many see as the world's most dangerous rivalry.

Xi waved from the steps of his Air China plane upon arrival and descended to meet US officials on the tarmac, including Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns. He then got into his Chinese Hongqi, or "Red Flag," limousine and departed the airport into San Francisco, where demonstrations are expected both for and against his visit.

Less than two hours earlier, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken addressed ministers of the 21-member APEC and stressed the US believed in "a region where economies are free to choose their own path...where goods, ideas, people flow lawfully and freely." Blinken did not mention China by name, but his language echoed US rhetoric in recent years in which Washington has accused China of bullying smaller countries in the Indo-Pacific and trying to undermine what the US and its allies call the "rules-based" order.

US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, who with Blinken opened the APEC ministerial session, said the San Francisco meeting came at a time of "great uncertainty and challenges" for the region. She noted increasing geopolitical tensions, fragile supply chains and a worsening climate crisis. Earlier, Biden said he aimed to improve the relationship with China after a period of strained ties and would seek to resume normal communications between the two superpowers, including military-to-military contacts.

White House national security spokesperson John Kirby told reporters that Biden and Xi would also talk about the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza as well

as US efforts to support Ukraine in its fight against the Russian military. Biden said the US does not want to decouple from China, but wants to change the economic relationship for the better. His administration has made a push to "de-risk" some critical US supply chains from China as the two countries' economic and military competition has grown.

Xi, who is seeking to entice foreign investment during the APEC to counter his country's recent struggles, is expected to dine with top US business executives on Wednesday. For American businesses, it will be a chance to hear directly from China's leader as they search for ways to navigate that country's economic slowdown and uncertainty caused by expanding Chinese security rules.

Biden has been careful to assure countries in the region, including China, that the US does not seek complete economic separation, a notion that has fueled concerns among Washington's partners and allies of a superpower showdown that would upend the global economy. China severed military-to-military contacts with the US after then-House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited democratically governed but Chinese-claimed Taiwan in August 2022.

Restoring the contacts is a top US goal to avoid miscalculations between the two militaries. Washington also hopes for more cooperation from Beijing in combating production of the potent synthetic opioid drug fentanyl, which has become a scourge in the United States and particularly in San Francisco. Sino-US relations worsened after Biden ordered the shooting down in February of a suspected Chinese spy balloon that flew over the United States.

Top Biden administration officials have since visited Beijing and met with their counterparts in an effort to rebuild communications and trust. Several hundred mostly pro-China demonstrators carrying Chinese flags gathered outside the Chinese delegation's hotel ahead of Xi's arrival in the US. Larger protests, including by rights groups critical of Xi's policies in Tibet, Hong Kong and toward Muslim Uyghurs, are expected near the summit venue on Wednesday.

Israeli troops enter Gaza's Shifa hospital after gunbattle

GAZA: Israeli troops entered Gaza's biggest hospital on Wednesday and were searching its rooms and basement, witnesses said, culminating a siege that caused global alarm after what Israel said was a deadly clash at the gates.

Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City has become the main target of the ground operation by Israeli forces, who say Hamas fighters have their headquarters in tunnels beneath it, which Hamas denies. World attention has been focused on the fate of hundreds of patients and thousands of displaced civilians trapped inside. Gaza officials say many patients including three newborn babies have died in recent days as a result of Israel's encirclement of the facility.

Israel said its troops killed fighters in a clash outside the gates, and had brought medical supplies for those inside. "Before entering the hospital our forces were confronted by explosive devices and terrorist squads, fighting ensued in which terrorists were killed," the Israeli military said.

"We can confirm that incubators, baby food and medical supplies brought by IDF tanks from Israel have successfully reached the Shifa hospital. Our medical teams and Arabic speaking

soldiers are on the ground to ensure that these supplies reach those in need," the Israeli military said. Dr. Ahmed El Mohallalati, a surgeon, told Reuters by phone that staff were in hiding as the fighting unfolded outside the hospital overnight.

"So yesterday early evening it started... shooting around the hospital and within the hospital. And the sound was really horrible. Look, you can feel that it's, you know, it's very near to the hospital," he said. "And then we realized that the tanks are moving around the hospital. One of the big tanks entered within the hospital from the eastern main gate, and they were, they were they just parked in the front of the hospital emergency department."

"All kinds of weapons were used around the hospital. They targeted the hospital directly. We try to avoid being near the windows," he said. Another witness inside the hospital, reached by telephone, said tanks had entered the compound at 3:00 a.m. The Israeli troops dismounted and spread out in the yard, and began searching the basement and entering buildings.

"It was very dangerous looking from the glass window. The administration of the hospital told us the occu-

pation army informed them they wanted to search us and search room by room. I am very scared," the man said, asking that his name be withheld for fear of Israeli reprisals. "There was no shooting because there were no gunmen inside the facility. The soldiers were acting freely as were people inside the hospital, the doctors, the wounded and the displaced," the man said. He later said that gunfire could occasionally be heard and he was remaining in hiding.

In a statement, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said: "Based on intelligence information and an operational necessity, IDF forces are carrying out a precise and targeted operation against Hamas in a specified area in the Shifa hospital." Israeli army spokesman Lt. Col. Peter Lerner told CNN the hospital and compound were for Hamas "a central hub of their operations, perhaps even the beating heart and maybe even a center of gravity."

The US said on Tuesday that its own intelligence supported Israel's conclusions. Hamas said that amounted to giving Israel a "green light" for Israel to raid the hospital, and it held US President Joe Biden fully responsible for the operation along with Israel itself. — Aljazeera

Govt slashes petrol price by Rs2.4 per litre

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The caretaker government — in relief to the inflation-weary Pakistanis — has slashed the petrol price by Rs2.4 per litre for the next fortnight.

The new prices will come into effect from November 16, at midnight and remain in place till November 30.

In a statement, the Finance Division said the rates of petroleum products were slashed by up to Rs9.01 on the recommendation of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority. The per litre price of high-speed diesel (HSD) was slashed by Rs6.47, while the prices of kerosene oil and light diesel oil were reduced by Rs6.05 and 9.01, respectively.

7 terrorists killed in Tank operation

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Kiri Machan Khel, Tank District, on reported presence of terrorists.

During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists, as a result of which seven terrorists were sent to hell. Terrorists hide-outs were also busted during the operation.

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities including recent target killings of Police in Tank and surrounding areas. Sanitization operation is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. Locals of the area appreciated the operation and extended their full support to the security forces in elimination of menace of terrorism.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja called on KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah.

PM plays Israeli barbarism in Palestine

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday calling Israeli barbarism in Palestine unparalleled even in the medieval era, reprimanded the world's double standards on war ethos and its "bizarre and surreal" rationalization of the killing of children in Gaza.

The prime minister, addressing the annual Magalla Dialogue 2023 conference held by Islamabad Policy Research Institute on "Evolving World Environment: Charting the Course for Our Future," said Israeli forces were targeting vulnerable people in hospitals and eliminating children. Referring to his discussions with some diplomats who defended Israeli actions by citing Israeli children's deaths, he expressed his surprise at the argument. However, he reiterated that the killing of any child, regardless of faith or origin, is condemnable.

"So how many Palestinian children have to be killed to appease and address the Israeli anger? One, five, ten, 500, 1000, 4,700? Can they give us a number so that we can satisfy those parents to wait as some 10,000 children needed to be killed to address the Israeli anger," he remarked. He said those claiming to be the followers of Prophet Moses, were actually following the footsteps of Pharaoh by killing the children which was "utterly unacceptable."

The prime minister, who had also been the IPRI's board member, highlighted the potential for connectivity with the countries in the region including India, and said Pakistan never shielded away from establishing trade links with India but it could not beg that as trade should be for mutual benefits. However, he said before such links, it was essential to speak out on the Kashmir conflict as without addressing that issue, it was challenging to have normal relations with the current Indian regime.

He told the gathering that the Kashmir issue demanded attention aligned with the aspirations of its people as despite promises and UN guarantees, the Kashmiris could not be given their right to self-determination. Postponing the issue is not a solution as the historical resilience against colonization is evident, he added. Referring to the Hindutva ideology infesting Indian society, he said such policies were a recipe for disaster.

He said contrary to the ongoing persecution in India, the minorities in Pakistan were sharing their destinies with Pakistan having deep entrenched roots in business as well as society. The prime minister said Pakistan was faced with the challenge of non-state actors but the country was prepared to respond that, without needing anyone's tangible assistance.

Giving a historical account of human history to

the formation of modern-day political groups, the prime minister said amidst the containment policy, China arose to become the second biggest economy of the world. He said, unlike India, Pakistan never incentivized the conflicts. Prime Minister Kakar said the country was ready to give a push to its economy by exploiting its potential of land and mineral resources and that the energies of a huge youth population needed to be channelised which was yet under-invested in terms of human resource as well as skill development.

Coming to climate change, he said it was becoming an existential threat even more than a military challenge as recent floods caused devastation even more than some small conflicts. This challenge cannot be overcome by a single power or group of powers. To a question, the prime minister said the government was designing the projects in renewable energy and other areas of focus which also required global coordination and cooperation as the country was trying to stimulate the discourse at domestic, regional and global levels.

Earlier, IPRI President Ambassador Ambassador Raza Muhammad told the gathering that the conference featured six forums. The event also marked the launch of an IPRI's publication highlighting the persecution of Indian minorities which faced a difficult time there.



OGDCL, KUFPEC partner to explore joint business opportunities and expertise sharing



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A senior level delegation from Kuwait Petroleum Exploration Company (KUPPEC), Kuwait, led by Mr. Tareq M. Ebrahim (EVP – Operations) and including Mr. Ali Taha Al-Temimi (Country Head – KUPPEC, Pakistan), Mr. Bader Al-Matar (Manager Asia Region), Mr. Nawwaf AlSalem (Manager Exploration), Mr. Khaled Al-Athainah (Manager Exploration, Pakistan) and Mr. Abdul Ghafoor (Sr. Specialist Geologist, Pakistan), visited OGDCL Head office today and met with Mr. Ahmed Hayat Lak MD / CEO along with senior management team of OGDCL.

During the visit, an MOU has been signed between the two companies. The objective of this MOU is to formalize joint evaluation of potential business opportunities in upstream projects in Pakistan and internationally, participation in bid rounds, joint studies, formation of a pool of technical experts / specialists from both companies, knowledge sharing and secondment of officers.

KUFPEC is a JV Partner with OGDCL in Qadipur and Makhd blocks. Both sides have agreed to constitute dedicated working groups for implementing agreed objectives in the MoU. The leadership of both companies will monitor progress on quarterly basis in order to ensure meaningful and effective cooperation between the companies. Mr. Tareq M. Ebrahim on recommendation of MD/CEO – OGDCL agreed to head a workshop of technical experts on production optimization, as Kuwait has made significant progress in this domain and Pakistan can benefit from

their experience.

OGDCL will also have the opportunity of placing its technical professionals on reciprocal basis on secondment with KUPPEC, which will help capacity building and experience sharing. The delegation also visited the OGDCL Seismic Data Processing Centre and acknowledged OGDCL's capacity and capability in up-

stream sector and its leadership role in the industry. Mr. Tareq M. Ebrahim underlined the commitment of KUPPEC of augmenting its presence in Pakistan by expanding the footprints in the E&P sector of the country in collaboration with OGDCL. The Kuwaiti delegation reiterated Pakistan's importance in their business strategy for the region.

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA COMMUNICATION AND WORK DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING TENDER E-BIDDING (Single stage single envelope E-Bidding System)

C&W Department (C&W Highway Division District Orakzai) Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites electronic Bids from the eligible firms/bidders in accordance with KPRA Procurement rules 2014 on single stage single envelope procedure for the following works.

S #	Name of work	Required category of PEC	Estimated Cost	Bid Security 2%	Tender Entry Fee	Period of Completion	Last Date of Submission of Bid Documents	Date of opening of Financial Bids
1	AOM&R of all roads in C&W Division District Orakzai during 2023-24							
I	Sub Division Lower Orakzai	C-6 & Above	2.00 M	0.040 M	0.03% of E/Cost	As per work Order	27/11/2023 (12:00 Hours)	27/11/2023 (12:30 Hours)
II	Sub Division Upper Orakzai	C-6 & Above	3.950 M	0.079 M	0.03% of E/Cost	As per work Order	27/11/2023 (12:00 Hours)	27/11/2023 (12:30 Hours)

1. All bidders are required to be registered with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority. Enlistment with C&W Department & Pakistan Engineering Council in relevant category/specialty. 2. The award of contract shall be on the basis of above/below engineer estimate on MRS instead of item rate. 3. As per KPRA notification No. SRO.(14) Vol: 1-24/2021-22 dated 10/05/2022/6058-71 security shall be submitted by the bidders as under: I. The Contractor quoting their bid more than 10% below on Engineer Estimate shall submit bid security to the extend of 2% of Engineer Estimate only. II. The Contractor quoting their bid more than 10% below upto 20% below on Engineer Estimate shall submit alongwith their bid 8% Additional Security of Engineer Estimate cost in addition to 2% bid security if the bid is not accompanied with required amount of additional security then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security be forfeited in favour of government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. III. Similarly a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with this bid an additional security on Engineer Estimate cost equal to the different amount of submitted bid and Engineer Estimate alongwith detail rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted alongwith such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. IV. In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is in view of the procuring entity not convincing. The head of the procuring entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeited of bid securities of bid securities and record reason thereof. V The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidders after due diligence in the context of financial difference below such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh. 4. Bid shall accompanied with 0.03% of E/Cost as tender entry fee in shape of separate CDR Which is non-refundable.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
HIGHWAY DIVISION DISTRICT ORAKZAI 0925-690146

www.khyberpakhtunkhwa.gov.pk

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INVITATION FOR BIDS

GOVERNMENT MEDICINE COORDINATION CELL, DIRECTORATE GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES, KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA, PESHAWAR
SELECTION AND RATE CONTRACTING OF LEFT-OVER ITEMS OF MEDICINES, DRUGS, MEDICAL DEVICES, SURGICAL DISPOSABLES & NON-DRUG ITEMS FOR THE FY 2023-24.

- In compliance with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (KPRA) Act, 2012 and KPRA Rules, 2014, Government Medicine Coordination Cell (Govt. MCC), Directorate General Health Services (DGHS), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Warsak Road, Peshawar invite sealed bids from:
 - Manufacturer/s and/or Importer/s of medicines / drugs authorized by the Goods Principal Manufacturer(s) or producer for import/supply of the said quoted goods in Pakistan, registered as such with the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) for the quoted item/s falling under The Drug Act 1976 & Rules framed there under; and
 - Manufacturer/s of Medical Devices in Pakistan, registered as such with the DRAP for the quoted item/s and regulated under the DRAP Act 2012 and the Rules framed thereunder; and
 - Importer/s of Medical Devices, duly authorized by the goods Principal Manufacturer or producer to import / supply the said goods in Pakistan, as registered and regulated as such for the quoted item/s under the DRAP Act 2012 and Rules framed thereunder; and
 - Manufacturer/s of Non-Drug Items (NDIs) in Pakistan; and
 - Importer/s of NDIs, duly authorized by the goods' Principal Manufacturer or producer for import/supply of the said quoted goods in Pakistan.
- Manufacturer/s and/or Importer/s of various items interested to enter in this bidding competition must obtain separate application form from the office of the Directorate General Health Services (MCC), Old FATA Secretariat, Warsak Road Peshawar on any working day till **Thursday, 16th November 2023**. At the time of submission of the bid, the original receipt of (non-refundable) cash payment of Pak Rupees One Thousand only (Rs. 1000/-) per application form shall be submitted with technical bid. Bid Solicitation Documents (BSDs) may be downloaded from the websites i.e. www.kpra.gov.pk, www.healthkp.gov.pk and www.dghskp.gov.pk.
- Bidding competition under this advertisement shall be conducted through **Single Stage-Two Envelopes** Bidding Procedure as per KPRA Act 2012 and Rules framed there under. Under this procedure, the bidders should submit the bids in two separate sealed envelopes of technical and financial bids, each of which must bear on them the clearly written words **'Government MCC Technical Bid 2023-24'** and **'Government MCC Financial Bid 2023-24'** as well as the full and complete identification of the bidder along with its postal and email addresses and phone number/s on each of the respective envelope. Both these sealed and labeled envelopes should be placed inside another outer envelope of appropriate size which should also be sealed and should bear clearly written words **'Bid for Govt. MCC FY 2023-24'** along with the identification and contact details of the bidder.
 - A pre-bid meeting is scheduled to be held on **Wednesday, 22nd November, 2023 at 11:00 AM**, in the Committee room of Directorate General Health Services, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Warsak Road Peshawar. The bidders shall thoroughly study the Bid Solicitation Documents before the Pre-Bid meeting and bring their queries / suggestions to the forum for clarification/understanding and the same shall be submitted in written before the Pre-Bid meeting. In case of non-submission of hard copy on or before the pre-bid meeting day, the queries / suggestions shall not be considered / entertained.
- Bidders must submit sealed bids to the office of Directorate General Health Services (MCC office), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Warsak Road Peshawar on or before **10:30 AM (sharp), 1st December, 2023 and shall be open on the same day at 12:00 noon** in the presence of bidders or their authorized representatives (who choose to attend the bids opening process) Any bids presented / submitted received later than this deadline shall not be considered and shall be rejected without any further processing.
- Mandatory Bid Security / Earnest Money amounting to a flat rate of **Rupees One Million only (Rs.1,000,000/-)** from each bidder in the shape of written Guarantee from a Schedule Bank/CDR, excluding Microfinance and Financial Institutions in the name of the Director General Health Services, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is required to be submitted in original along with the Financial Bid within its sealed envelope and shall be from the account of the firm/manufacturer/importer. An affidavit stating that the bid security shall be placed inside the sealed envelope of Technical Proposal. Ordinary crossed or open Cheques shall not be acceptable as Bid's security.
- It must be noted that "Quotation must be computer typed & printed; the Offered rate, and Maximum Retail Price (MRP) must be written both in words & figures". **All pages of the submitted bid shall be signed, numbered, and duly stamped by the authorized person of the bidding entity as mentioned in the BSD.**
- The bidders are required to submit the unit prices of quoted items on the format as prescribed for financial bid in the Bid Solicitation Documents.
- Quotations with cutting, erasing, and over-writing shall not be accepted to the extent of that particular quoted item.
- To facilitate the data entry during bids processing, all bidders are required to submit the quoted product list as per the prescribed proformas in the approved Bid Solicitation Documents for the year 2023-24 for this bidding competition in soft **"MS Excel format"** only **on a USB**, duly labeled by a permanent marker with the name of bidder firm along with the words 'Government MCC FY 2023-24'. The bidders must ensure that said USB is operable and readable. Moreover, in the same context, the bidders are also required to submit a hard copy of Tape bind booklet bid, **having table of contents** (Indexing with proper page number and contents mentioned in the start of bid and each page of the submitted bid shall be properly **numbered, signed and stamped by the authorized person of the bidding entity**).
- Bidders offering Medical devices, Surgical Disposables, Cotton and Related Goods, & Non-Drug Items are required to submit their sample(s) of their quoted products to the office of Director General Health Services (MCC) in sufficient quantities for evaluation by the end-users on or before **Friday, 1st December 2023 at 12:00 noon**. **Sample/s submitted after the due date shall not be accepted and the same item/s will be considered non-responsive.**
- The Selection & Rate Contracting Committee or their authorized committee shall also collect quoted samples of Medical devices, Surgical Disposables, Cotton and Related Goods, & Non-Drug Items from open market for evaluation by the end-users / consultants / MCC experts etc.
- The Selection & Rate Contracting Committee of Government MCC Directorate General Health Services, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reserves the right to reject any or all the bids under Rule 47 (1) of KPRA Rules, 2014

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The technical bid must be a Tape bind booklet, having table of contents (indexing with proper page number and contents mentioned in the start of bid and each page of the submitted bid shall be properly numbered, signed and stamped by the authorized person of the bidding entity). Any bid which is submitted in box file, ring binding, wire binding, comb binding, coil binding, slide binding, velo binding, paper/card file, or unbind bid shall be rejected.

Chairman S&RCC/ Director General Health Services
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Warsak Road, Peshawar Tel No: 091-9210269

INF(P):
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Transparency International Pakistan organized Training of Public Information Officers

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Transparency International Pakistan organized training of Public Information Officers under Section 6 Proactive Disclosure, Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Act 2016, at a local hotel in Karachi.

The primary objective of the conference was to emphasize on essential aspects of proactive disclosure under Sindh RTI Act 2016 and aimed to enhance awareness and capacity of Public Information Officers to ensure compliance with Sindh RTI Act 2016.

The training was attended by designated PIOs of more than 50 departments of the Government of Sindh. Diverse speakers including Justice (R) Zia Perwez, Former Judge Supreme Court of Pakistan and Chairman TI Pakistan, Mr. Kashif Ali, Executive Director, TI Pakistan, Dr. Nausheen Wasi, Asst. Professor of International Relation, UoK and Board of Trustee TI Pakistan, Dr. Jawaaid Ali, Chief Information Commissioner, Advocate Saima Agha, Information Commissioner and Mr. Shahid Jatui, Information Commissioner from Sindh Information Commission, Mr. Nadeem Ur Rehman, Secretary Information, Govt of Sindh, Dr. Raza Gardezi, RTI Activist and Mr. Muhammad Ali Shaikh, former VC SMI attended the training and spoke on various aspects of Sindh RTI Act 2016.

Mr. Kashif Ali, Executive Director, TI Pakistan highlighted that the proactive disclosure is the future of RTI laws and there is a gap when it comes to understanding and implementation of proactive disclosure provision among various departments of the government of Sindh. He highlighted that enhancing understanding of PIOs who are at the forefront of RTI implementation in the

province will pave the way for an effective implementation of RTI in the province. He provided detailed training on various clauses of proactive disclosure along with the type of information covered under each clause and encouraged PIOs to ensure that the information is readily dis-

closed through the websites of the public bodies.

Dr. Nausheen Wasi, Asst. Professor of International Relation, University of Karachi and member board of trustee TI Pakistan, spoke on the importance of RTI for good governance. She highlighted that RTI is a

cornerstone of democracy and rule of law. Under Article 19-A, citizens now have the right to access public information. She argued that training of public officers and awareness sessions on RTI among the citizens will improve understanding and implementation of RTI law.

TENDER NOTICE FOR HIRING OF OFFICIAL ACCOMODATION

The Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO-Pakistan) is an autonomous body working under the administrative control of the Ministry of Commerce. The major functions of the organization are as under:

- Administer and coordinate all Government systems for protection and strengthening of Intellectual Property (IP);
- Manage all IP offices in the country;
- Create awareness about IP Rights;
- Advise Federal Government on IP Policy;
- Ensure effective enforcement of IP rights through designated IPR Enforcement Agencies (Police, FIA, and Pakistan Customs)

In this regard, IPO-Pakistan intends to hire official accommodation for its Regional Office at Peshawar as per the criteria given below:

No	Features	Requirements
01	Preferred Location	Within 5 km radius area of Peshawar High Court
02	Space Required	Covered area around 1060 sq.ft.
03	Building Plan	4 rooms, Space for reception desk, and washrooms + kitchen
04	Parking Space	An open hall which can cater the need of conversion into offices by artificial partitioning along with Separate Bathrooms (for Males & Females), Kitchen with allied necessities.
05	Desired Amenities	For at least 5 cars and 5 motorbikes
06	Availability for Shifting	Complete electrified building (lights and fans), HVAC, facility for disable person, Air Conditioners (if available), Telephone lines, CCTV Cameras, Security Gadget, Electric lift(in case of multi-story building, Electricity Connection and Generator etc
07	Minimum Term	December, 2023
08	Status of Building	03-Years extendable
08	Status of Building	Commercial Building

Terms & Condition:

- Complete terms & conditions are available at IPO-Pakistan and PPRA website
- The date for opening of bids and the last date for submission of bids shall be the same at 11:00 am after 15 days of advertisement. Bids shall be opened at 11:30 am in the office of the Deputy Director, IPO-Regional Office, Peshawar.

The Deputy Director IPO-Regional Office
TDAP Building, Plot No. 24, Phase-V, Peshawar
Tel: 091-9217185, Fax: 091-9217126
Email: peshawar@ipo.gov.pk

PID(I) 2969/23

DIRECTORATE GENERAL JABBA DAM, DISTRICT KHYBER GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING FROM CONTRACTORS / FIRMS ON SINGLE STAGE SINGLE ENVELOPE (SSSE) SYSTEM

The Directorate General Jabba Dam, District Khyber, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Irrigation Department intends to invite Electronic Bids from the eligible Firms / Contractors in accordance with Rule 14/2-a (Chapter-III) of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement of Good, Works and Services Rules, 2014 (Amended up-to-date) on **Single Stage Single Envelope Bidding Procedure** for the project, **"Construction of Jabba Dam, District Khyber"** approved by the PDWP Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under AIP (2023-24) as per details below.

Name of Work	Required PEC Enlistment Category	Bid Security i/c Stamp Duty (Rs. Million)	Date of Pre-Bid Meeting	Last Date & Time for Sub-mission of Bids	Date & Time for opening of Technical & Financial Bids	Completion Period
(AIP 2171/195187) Construction of Jabba Dam, District Khyber (Work Component Cost= Rs. 6234.972(M)	CA (No Limit)	126.5	05-12-2023 at 11:00 am	18-12-2023 till 13:30	18-12-2023 at 14:00	48 months

(1). Bid solicitation Documents, detailed terms & conditions, Evaluation Criteria and Instructions to Bidders etc., can be downloaded from the Irrigation Department website www.irrigation.gkp.pk and KPRA website. (2). The Bidders should submit their E-Bids (Technical and Financial Bids in Sealed Envelope) along with duly filled Bid Documents as mentioned at Para-1 above, as per KPRA Notifications. (3). The Bidders are required to be validly registered with the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) for relevant category, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority and other as mentioned in the Bid Solicitation Documents. (4). A foreign bidder is entitled to bid only in a joint venture with a Pakistani constructor enlisted with PEC in category CA, in accordance with the relevant provisions of PEC bye-laws. (5). The bidders are required to quote **SINGLE PERCENTAGE RATE, with two digits after the decimal point, "ABOVE / BELOW / AT PAR"** of the Engineer's Estimated Cost on Market Rate System - 2022, 2nd Bi-Annual and Non-MRS Items as well. (6). Venue of Bid opening is office of the Directorate General, Jabba Dam Project Distt. Khyber (at Peshawar), Bungalow No.254, Hadi Lane Afzal Abad, Old Bara Road University Town. Peshawar. (7). The Envelope containing the Technical and financial proposals should accompany the following. (i) Bid Security in the shape of Call deposit in Original. (a). Attested copy of Valid Registration with Govt. of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for CFY 2023-24. (ii) Attested copy of Valid Registration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority. (iii). Attested copy of Computerized National Identity Card. (iv) Attested copy of Valid Pakistan Engineering Council license in category CA. (v) Attested copy of Form H of the Company/Firm. where applicable. (vi) Attested copies of documents showing general capabilities. financial soundness, general and relevant experience record, personnel capabilities, equipment capabilities and Active Income Tax registration status with FBR/NTN certificates etc. (vii) Any other documents to support the technical bids. (8). The bid must contain the Bid security of 2% (two percent) up-to a limit of 10% below the Engineer Estimate, in the shape of Call Deposit (in original). (i). The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below upto 20% below on Engineers' Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineer's Estimated cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security, then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. (ii). Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer's Estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineers' Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. (iii). In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non- responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof. (iv). The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh. (v). After commencements of work by the successful bidder, the procuring entity may replace the Additional Security with a bank guarantee of the same amount from the scheduled bank; if the already deposited security is not in the form of bank guarantee. (vi). The Additional Security shall be released to the contractor in four installments i.e., 1st installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 25% of the project, 2nd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 50% of the project, 3rd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 75% of the project and the 4th installment of 25% to be released after 100% completion of the project. **The above procedures and hereinafter shall be as per all Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulations.** (9). The Bids containing Incorrect, fake or fraudulent documents shall be considered as non-responsive. (10). All the bids shall be opened and evaluated in the manner prescribed in the Bidding Documents. Those not qualified will be considered as non-responsive. (11). Electronic Bid shall be valid for 180 days. (12). Successful Bidder shall sign the Contract Agreement with the department within 28 days after issuance of Letter of Acceptance. (13). Call Deposit of only Scheduled Banks shall be acceptable. (14). If the evaluated electronic responsive bids of Two or more lowest bidders is found equal, then the successful bidder shall be determined through past performance. (15). Bid will be opened after 30 minutes of closing time in the presence of Bidders/their Authorized Representatives who choose to be present. (16). The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject any or all bids at any time prior to acceptance of a bid as per KPRA rules. (17). Bid Security of the 1st, 2nd & 3rd lowest bidders shall be retained by the Procuring Entity till signing of the Contract Agreement with the successful bidder. (18). All taxes levied from time to time by the Government shall be deducted according to the Government rules. (19). A complete set of Bid Solicitation Documents containing detailed description, criteria, specifications and drawings. should be obtained by an interested eligible bidder from the office of the undersigned between 09:00 AM - 05:00 PM on any working day (Monday to Friday) on submission of a written application to the undersigned on or before 18-12-2023 till 13:30 and upon payment of a Non-refundable fee of Rs.15,000/-, otherwise his bid will not be entertained.

DIRECTOR GENERAL

Jabba Dam Project District Khyber Irrigation Department Peshawar
Bungalow No. 4, Hadi Lane Afzal Abad,
OLD Bara Road, University Town, Peshawar

INF (P) 2790/23

Power pilferage detected at pharmacy

LAHORE (APP): An inspection team of the Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) detected electricity theft at Ashfaq Pharmacy in Nagra Chowk in Dholanwal Sub-Division. Company's spokesmen told the media here on Wednesday that Dholanwal SDO led the inspection team during a search operation against the electricity thieves and found that owner of the pharmacy was stealing electricity by hooking directly from the transmission line of LESCO. The inspection team seized the wire used in the theft and also got registered a case against the accused in Nawankot Police Station. The electricity pilferer was also charged a detection bill worth Rs 200,000.

181 new dengue patients confirmed in Punjab

LAHORE (INP): During the last 24 hours, 181 new dengue patients were confirmed across the province of Punjab on Wednesday.

According to Secretary Health Ali Jan Khan, 92 new cases were reported in Lahore, 8 in Rawalpindi, 17 in Multan, 32 in Gujranwala, 9 in Faisalabad, 4 in Narowal, 3 each in Sheikhupura, Attock and Okara, 2 in Dera Ghazi Khan, and one each in Kasur, Sargodha, Sialkot, Toba Tek Singh, Jhang, Hafizabad, Rajanpur and Jhelum.

This brings the total number of confirmed dengue cases in Punjab to 12,455 this year. A total of 160 dengue patients are currently being treated in hospitals across the province. Secretary Health Ali Jan Khan urged citizens to keep their environment clean and dry to avoid dengue, and to cooperate with health department teams to prevent dengue. He also reminded citizens that the health department provides free help for dengue fever treatment, information or complaints.

Citizens can contact the health department on line 1033.



Wafaqi Mohtasib chairs meeting to review reforms

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Wafaqi Mohtasib Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi has urged upon all stake holders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to ensure improvement of living conditions of prisoners in jails especially children, women and destitute/resource less prisoners.

He was presiding over a meeting of the prison reforms to review and follow up implementation of recommendations in the report on prisons. This was desired by the apex court of Pakistan, during hearing of the case on miserable conditions of prisoners in jails in September, 2018.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Ch. Secretary Home, Muhammad Abid Majeed, Inspector General Prisons, Muhammad Usman

Masood, Provincial Mohtasib KP, Syed Jamal-ud-Din Shah, Advocate General KP, Amir Javed, DG (Prosecution) Mian Muhammad and Regional Head Peshawar Wafaqi Mohtasib, Badsha Gul Wazir.

Wafaqi Mohtasib urged upon the provincial government of KP to build additional accommodation where there is overcrowding in district jails, which should have separate and independent portion for women and juvenile prisoners with sleeping space for every prisoner and adequate toilet and hygiene facilities.

He stressed the need to link biometric system in Jails with courts to maintain record of prisoners and ensure development of an interface between jails, courts and NADRA for monitoring and verification of Prisoner's record.

He added that drug users

and mentally challenged prisoners are to be kept outside of jail premises, in drug clinics (rehabilitation centers) with provisions for medical treatment.

Prisoners with ailments of HIV Hepatitis, TB and those who are drug addicts should be segregated and kept apart from other prisoners and strict surveillance should be implemented in jails for protecting prisoners from physical and sexual assaults.

The Home Secretary Abid Majeed informed the members of the meeting that 39 prisons with authorized capacity of 13375 have so far been made operational in KP with health and hygiene facilities, separate and independent detention facilities for women, juvenile inmates, where education/ skill training facilities to the prisoner have been ensured.

He further updated that

efforts are in hand to allot dedicated rooms for installation of Prisons Management Information System (PMIS) Main Server and for the conduct of examinations for Prisoners by the HEC and other relevant institutions. He mentioned that PMIS has also been installed in 14 Jails and networking has been completed in 38 Jails.

The Wafaqi Mohtasib appreciated the steps taken by KP government toward implementation of the recommendation on prison reforms and added that significant improvement was visible in the condition of prisons and life of the jail inmates.

He also directed the provincial authorities to pursue the construction of jails in new Districts of Upper Chitral, Kolai-Palas, Upper South Waziristan, Lower Kohistan and Torgher.



PESHAWAR: Wafaqi Mohtasib Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi and Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Choudhry presiding over a meeting regarding prison reforms.

Service Tribunal attached salaries of Secretaries

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Service Tribunal Kaleem Arshad Khan ordered the attachment of salaries of the Chief Secretary, Secretary's Establishment, Section Officers including S.O. (1-V) & S.O. (Litigation II) Establishment Department due to non-compliance to the orders, on Wednesday.

Service Tribunal chairman ordered the attachment of salaries in execution of petitions against govern-

ment. In his order it was held, the compliance of the judgment of this Tribunal has not been made nor is there any plausible explanation with the departmental representatives of the respondents.

There is nothing shown to the Tribunal that any progress has been made therefore, the Tribunal is constrained to attach salaries of Chief Secretary and Secretary Establishment along with Section Officer (1 V) and Section Officer (Litigation II) of the Establishment

Department Peshawar who appeared to be delaying the matter unnecessarily.

The salaries to be attached in the manner under section 60 (1) (i) of Civil Procedure Code, 1908 till further orders or complete compliance of the judgment of the Tribunal. Account General KP Peshawar shall submit report in writing that the salaries of the respondents are actually attached.

Case is adjourned till November 28, 2023. Saleem Shah Hoti Advocate counsel of

Petitioners argued that the Respondents were resorting to delay of the matter on lame excuses since February 2023.

The authorized officer had not been deputed and an Assistant of Litigation of Establishment department, Amjid had been appearing in the cases.

The said Assistant has been giving misleading statements in the tribunal. The Tribunal snubbed him and directed that an authorized officer of Grade 17 and above should appear in Tribunal.



PESHAWAR: Joint Provincial Election Commissioner (Elections) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Javed Rehmat addressing during a meeting.

Importance of voting, electoral process:

Civil society to play role in informing public: Javed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Civil society should play its role in informing the public about the importance of voting and the electoral process, said Joint Provincial Election Commissioner (Elections), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Javed Rehmat in an awareness organized by Blue Vans regarding the participation of minority women in the general elections.

Director (Elections) Asif Ali Yasin, Deputy Director (Media Co-ordination) Sohail Ahmed, Assistant Director (Gender and Social

Inclusion) Uroba Ali and Aliza Mahfooz of Blue Vans participated in the voter awareness session. Arooba Ali of Blue Vans welcomed the Election Commission team and briefed the participants about the objectives of the session.

The Deputy Director (Media Co-Ordination) has reviewed the electoral process, importance of vote, formation of ECP, constitutional and legal framework and measures to be taken for inclusive and credible elections including election laws regarding minority communities and

deprived classes and their gave his detailed presentation on the measures for the participants took keen interest in the session and asked many relevant questions which were answered by the Director (Elections).

Apart from this, several women representatives shared their experience and offered some suggestions to increase the turnout in the next general elections.

The Joint Provincial Election Commissioner welcomed the holding of the session and assured the support of the Election Commission.

DG assures cooperation to doctors

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation of doctors that are hired under Accelerated implementation program (AIP) here Wednesday met with Director General (DG) Health Services, Dr. Shaukat Ali and discussed issues related to extension of doctors' contracts and non-payment of salaries.

Talking to the delegation, Dr. Shaukat Ali assured full cooperation to them and said that extension of contractual period for AIP doctors has already been approved and requests for disbursement of salaries have been sent to the finance department through the respective district health offices.

He told that a special meeting with secretary finance has been scheduled to discuss release of salaries for AIP doctors.

He said that Dr. Irshad Roghani Director Public Health has been nominated as the focal person for the timely payment of salaries. He pledged to run health department as a team ensuring that payment process is streamlined for the convenience of the medical professionals.

KP PSC cancels ability test conducted on June 24

F.P. Report PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission cancelled ability test conducted on June 24, 2023 and disqualified 18 candidates from 1 to 3 years for using unfair means in the test.

The test will be reconducted on December 23, 2023, said a notification issued here on Wednesday.

The ability test was conducted for the posts of Assistant Engineer / SDO BPS-17 in Irrigation Department (Adv. No. 01/2022, Sr.33) and C&W Department (Adv No. 4/2022, Sr.2) on 24.06.2023.

On receiving complaints in written and through Prime Minister Citizen Portal and upon strict body search, 18 candidates were implicated using unfair means including electronic devices and master cards etc.

Fair and impartial inquiry was conducted and the charges were proved against them. Opportunity of showing cause and personal hearing was provided to all the candidates. Consequently, the accused candidates were banned with the penalties of disqualification from 1 to 3 years for all kinds of recruitments of KPPSC.

Highway cleared of illegal encroachments

PESHAWAR (INP): In a decisive move to reclaim public spaces, the district administration of Peshawar on Wednesday launched a comprehensive operation against illegal encroachments along the Indus Highway in Badh Bir.

According to the spokesperson, the operation was led by TMO Imtiaz Pracha, TOR Rizwanullah, and Demolition Superintendent Mian Sohail, the operation saw the removal of numerous handcarts and other obstructions that had been illegally occupying the busy highway.

The operation was conducted under the direct instructions of Commissioner Peshawar Division Muhammad Zubair, who has vowed to continue this initiative until the Indus Highway is completely free of illegal encroachments. The Demolition Squad and

staff have assured the public that these operations will continue on a daily basis, prioritizing the convenience and safety of commuters.

The public has wholeheartedly welcomed this crackdown on illegal encroachments, expressing their satisfaction with the progress made thus far. They have also urged the authorities to maintain this momentum and ensure that the Indus Highway remains clear of obstructions.

This operation against illegal encroachments is a significant step towards improving the overall infrastructure and traffic flow in Peshawar. By reclaiming public spaces and ensuring the smooth movement of traffic, the district administration is demonstrating its commitment to providing a better living environment for its citizens.

Mission of serving people to be continued

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali has said that following the footprints of his father, he will continue his mission of serving the people without any discrimination.

He said he will always remember the respect awarded to him by the people, business community and traders of Peshawar. He said he wanted to thank the traders' unions, businessmen, artists, minorities and people from all walks of life for their trust and confidence which they reposed in his personality and services.

The mayor further said that he was thankful to those who held a coronation ceremony in the honor and services rendered by his father, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali.

The people of Peshawar, he said, elected him for mayorship with a thumping majority and he will continue to serve his people without any discrimination.

He said his bond with the people has further been strengthened in view of development works executed during the last two years of his tenure. He hoped that his selfless services would further strengthen his relation with the people.

FC educational outreach promotes engagement with students

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Faculty members and students from various universities and colleges of districts Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Swat, Dir and Chitral visited Fort Balahisar Peshawar, where they had the opportunity to meet with Inspector General Frontier Corps North, Major General Noor Wali Khan.

During the visit, they were given a comprehensive briefing on the areas of responsibility of Frontier Corps North, highlighting the measures taken for peace and development in these areas. Emphasizing the importance of education, Major General Noor Wali Khan encouraged students to pursue education aligned with the demands of the modern age, contributing to the progress of both the country and their local communities. Major General Noor Wali Khan underscored the positive use of technology and the



significance of cultivating a positive mindset.

IG FC expressed concerns about the misuse of social media, particularly its negative impact on the younger generation. He urged students to exercise caution on social media, emphasizing the importance of verifying information before sharing it and avoiding participation in campaigns that could sow

discord in society.

Commending the initiative taken by Frontier Corps North, the students expressed appreciation for the visit, acknowledging its role in raising awareness about the crucial role of security forces.

The visitors highlighted the significance of such visits in inspiring a sense of responsibility and passion among the youth to actively

contribute to the development and security of the nation. Prior to their meeting with Major General Noor Wali Khan, faculty members and students paid their respects at the Martyrs Memorial in Fort Balahisar Peshawar.

Laid flowers and offered prayers for the elevation of the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the well-being of Pakistan.

Certificate distribution ceremony held at KTH

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The certificate distribution ceremony was organized at Khyber Teaching Hospital on Wednesday under the chairmanship of hospital director Dr. Muhammad Zafar Afridi, Khyber Teaching Hospital Nursing Director Asmat Pasha, Director Quality Assurance Dr. Haseeb Awan, Manager HR Muhammad Younas, Biomedical Engineer Yawar Hayat and HR Muneebur Rahman participated.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Care Commission

Inspector Amanullah Khan, Adil Waqas, Farhan Wadud and Biomedical Assessor Shumail Alam were also present on this occasion.

The five-day training on Minimum Service Delivery Standards (MSDS) course covers introduction and review of biomedical assessment, hospital facility tour and orientation, inspection of biomedical equipment, documentation and reporting, record keeping and documentation standards, infection control and safety, health care improvement.

At the beginning of the ceremony, Dr. Muhammad Zafar Afridi distributed certificates and shields among the participants and said that it's an honor that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Care Commission received this advanced training services from Khyber Teaching Hospital because in the last few years Khyber teaching hospital is undergoing developments and has professional directors and managers for each field, due to which satisfactory services are being provided in

every department of the hospital.

Dr. Zafar Afridi also praised the services of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Care Commission and said that the selfless services of the commission in collaboration with healthcare institutions that provide the best transparent health facilities in the province and played an important role.

He further said that we hope the officials of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa HCC learned a lot from this training and we always say welcome whenever our servic-

es are required.

At the end of the event, the Inspector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Healthcare Commission thanked all the trainers and the hospital director for the recent five-day training program on Minimum Service Delivery Standards (MSDS) organized by team of Khyber Teaching Hospital and he also expressed happiness over the development works and high quality services and provision of best medical facilities to the people in Khyber Teaching Hospital.



PESHAWAR: Railway staffers pushing railway track push cart on a track for repairing track near Haji Camp.



In brief

Gujjar tribe team meets RPO Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Malakand Muhammad Ali said that law and order situation is his top priority while arguing civil society to cooperate with law enforcers for sustainable peace, on Wednesday. This he claimed during a meeting with delegation of Gujjar tribe comprised of Haji Shahzad Gujjar, Sher Bahadar Khan, Waqar Shahzad and Abdul Aziz advocates. He added that peace is fundamental element for development and prosperity. The delegation requested RPO Malakand to provide employment opportunities to Gujjar youth as constables and other junior officer cadre which will led to community policing as well as ease investigation. They added that Gujri speaking people are living in large in different areas of Malakand division. RPO Muhammad Ali appreciated the proposal and assured that in next recruitment it would uphold before competent authority. The delegation wore a traditional cap named Pakol and granted a shield to the RPO.

Two killed, four injured

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): At least two people were killed and four others injured in separate road accidents and an electrocution incident in different localities of Sheikhupura, police and rescue sources said on Wednesday. According to details, the first accident took place at Farooqabad PC road where a 20-year-old bike rider identified as Ghulam Ali was crushed to death by a tractor trolley after he fell down on road while overtaking the vehicle. A youth identified as Muhammad Asif 30, was electrocuted to death in Girja Colony at Lahore road. Four people including Saeed 22, Adil 28, Arshad 50, and Ali Raza 30, were injured in collision between two passenger rickshaws at Sargodha road. The bodies and injured were shifted to different hospitals and police after registering separate cases into the three road accidents started investigations.

90 killed during 10 months F.P. Report

LARKANA: Past in Larkana. During 10 months, more than 90 people were killed in various incidents, while more than 85 people were killed, more than 85 people were injured, were kidnapped for ransom where 6 cases were registered in different jails while 90 people were killed including 94 incidents of theft and looting while more than 85 were injured. District Larkana is the fourth largest city of Sindh, in which major revelations have been revealed in the police performance report. According to the police report, during the last ten months of this year, 90 people were killed, 17 women and children were raped, while 74 people were raped, was kidnapped for ransom in which 6 cases were registered while five children were also kidnapped, 120 complaints of looting and robbery were registered across the district in which more than one crore was looted from citizens while More than 94 cars and motorcycles have been stolen from citizens. On the other hand, there has been an increase in the incidents of half-frying and full-frying by the police. After being given the task of arresting the fugitive advertising accused, the police has started arresting the accused's relatives, who are being charged lakhs of rupees for their release, while the wanted accused managed to hide due to the fear of half-fry and full-fry.

KP governor urges journalists to play role for development

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali on Wednesday urged the journalists to play their role in the development of the country. He was speaking as the chief guest at a ceremony organized here at Dera Press Club (DPC) to celebrate its 'Golden Jubilee'. The ceremony was also attended by JUI-F Leader Maulana Ubaid ur Rehman, Commissioner Zafar ul Islam, Regional Police Officer Nasir Mehmood Satti, former provincial minister Haleem Qasuria, Gomal University Vice Chancellor Dr Shakibullah, and others.

The governor said the journalists were 'eyes and ears' of the society, who not only highlighted the public aspirations but also play their role in forming public opinion. He said the journalists should highlight the positive image of their country through their pen. "We should stand with our state and its institutions," he said.

The governor quoted examples of some other Muslim countries which faced destruction due to their weak institutions in

the recent past. He said all the citizens should have to fulfill their responsibilities for social development, peace and prosperity. The journalists should also play role to create awareness among the masses and to motivate youth for research and businesses, he added.

The people had a potential and talent, however, they needed guidance so that they could work for the country's development and the media could play an important role in that regard, the governor said. Haji Ghulam Ali said after assuming the charge of his office, he had meetings with the administrations of all universities of the province and steps were being taken to make them all self-reliance.

He said the issues of Gomal University would also be resolved as it was the second largest university in the province after Peshawar University. The universities should focus on research work and equip youth with technical training so that they could become useful citizens of the society, he added. Earlier, DPC President Yasin Qureshi, in his welcome address, said the Dera Press Club (DPC) had com-

pleted its 50 years and provided the local journalists all possible facilities.

Presenting a charter of demands, he said the press club had been deprived of its approved annual grant of Rs 2 million for the last seven years and urged the governor to play his role for the release of funds. He also demanded that mobile phones and laptops should be provided to the DPC members so that they could play their journalistic responsibilities smoothly.

He called for setting up a media colony for the local journalists as like that their colleagues in Peshawar. Responding to the DPC president's demands, the governor said the Agriculture Department had not approved the land which was earlier proposed for the media colony. However, the other locations had been identified for the purpose. The demand of media colony would be fulfilled in coming weeks after consultation with the Provincial Agriculture and Information Ministers, he assured. The ceremony was also addressed by trader Kafeel Ahmad Nizami and former DPC president Ahmad Khan Kamrani.



HYDERABAD: Children enjoying on main Latifabad Road.

Evaluation at KKKU Karak conducted F.P. Report

KARAK: A distinguished team from the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Post Graduate Program Review (PGPR) Panel visited Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, to assess and enhance the quality of the postgraduate programs offered by the University. Director Quality Enhancement Cell at Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, Muhammad Shah Din, provided the Panel a comprehensive overview of the university's MS/MPhil/PhD regulations and related rules. He briefed the panel on the institution's commitment to maintaining academic excellence and ensuring that its programs adhere to the highest standards of HEC. The inaugural session of the review was attended by all Heads of Departments, Controller of Examinations, Dr. Muhammad Zubair and Assistant Director QEC of Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak Dr. Nasir Iqbal.

The evaluation team, consisting of renowned experts in academia, included Prof. Dr. Muhammad Arif Khattak from Bahria University, Islamabad, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Sarwar, Dean of the International Islamic University, Islamabad, Dr. Obaid Ullah, Manager of the Quality Enhancement Cell at NUML, Islamabad and Mr. Sohail Khan, Assistant Director Quality Assurance Agency HEC Islamabad. The team started their assessment by focusing on various programs offered by Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak like MS & PhD Management Sciences, MS Bioinformatics, MS Computer Science, MPhil & PhD Library and Information Science, and MPhil & PhD Physics.

The panel scrutinized each program's academic requirements, curriculum structure, and overall quality standards in line with the guidelines provided by the Higher Education Commission. The aim of this rigorous evaluation is to ensure that the university's postgraduate programs meet the highest educational standards, fostering an environment conducive to research, innovation, and academic excellence.

Supply of drugs for DHQ hospital sought

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The government contractors' association divisional general secretary Imran Takur on Wednesday demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa health department to immediately provide the district headquarters hospital Timergara with intracardiac injection (Epinephrine) needed to cardiac patients. Talking to local journalists at Timergara he said the intensive care unit of the DHQ hospital Timergara was short of essential injections for cardiac patients that posed serious threat to human lives. He said the hospital was also short of anti-rabies vaccines. He demanded the concerned authorities to take notice of the situation and provide the facility with those essential drugs.

Separately the Lower Dir transporters complained that they were being fined on the Swat motorway by the highways police without any fault. Talking to local journalists the local transporters said that they were already suffering due to an increase in the price of compressed natural gas while the fine of Rs 5000 to 1000 added to their miseries. They demanded the higher authorities of the highways police to take notice of the matter and get them rid of illegal fines on the motorways.

Gas distribution line inaugurated in Adenzai: The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz provincial vice president barrister Attaullah Khan has said that Pakistan again will be put on the path of development under the unstinted

leadership of Mian Nawaz Sharif. He was addressing local residents after inaugurating a gas distribution line at Kharkanai Ouch as chief guest here on Wednesday.

The PML-N tehsil president Daud Khan, executive committee member Pervaz Khan and other party workers were also present on the occasion. Mr Attaullah Khan said the PML-N had played a vital role in the development of Dir. He said the party provincial chief Engineer Ameer Muqam had been leading the party well and therefore the workers loved him. He said the Adenzai tehsil would be made a model if the PML-N formed its government in the province. He said the PML-N and its leadership would never disappoint the masses.

KP Minister visits South Waziristan

F.P. Report

WANA: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged Districts Affairs, Dr. Aamer Abdullah on Wednesday visited South Waziristan Upper to review ongoing development activities in the newly merged districts.

He was also briefed about development projects, law and order situation and public concerns during a Jirga that was also attended by Deputy Commissioner of South Waziristan Upper and leaders of the Mehsud and

Barki tribes. Tribal leaders informed caretaker minister about their problems and emphasized the need for development funds, tax-free facilities in tribal areas urging minister to play an active role in these matters.

Addressing the Jirga, the caretaker provincial minister highlighted provincial government's primary focus on the development, prosperity, and peace of tribal districts. The minister announced the establishment of a commission relating to border boundaries and pledged to take steps to connect Upper South

Waziristan to Pak-Afghan border through a road.

Caretaker minister also met with a youth delegation from Upper South Waziristan and discussed health, education, public issues and tourism promotion. Stressing the pivotal role of tribal youth in societal reform, the minister encouraged their active participation in eliminating social evils and local conflicts. He said that two major projects of tunnel farming and olive grafting in the district are to enhance agriculture sector.

AWKU employees hold protest

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Abdul Wali Khan University Employees Association staged a protest in favor of their demands, the protesters blocked the road in front of the press club and closed it for all traffic and shouted slogans against the vice chancellor.

Earlier, he was addressing a press conference here. Chairman of the Association Muzamil Khan, President Adnan Saeed, Vice President Jawad singar, Umair Ali Shah and others said that illegal transfers and demotions of university employees are not acceptable under any circumstances. Less than a month is left. Legally, they do not have the authority to make any major decision.

They said that despite the passage of fourteen years in the university, the service structure of the employees has not been made. All the campuses have been given the status of universities and there the employees are promoted every year on the basis of seniority, but on the other hand, the employees are being treated like a surly mother. Bills worth lakhs of

rupees of the officers are approved.

He demanded that 35% allowance should be given immediately by the government for the employees which is being given to the employees of other universities of the province. The association officials have sought an inquiry from NAB, FIA and Anti-corruption, alleging misappropriation and corruption in university construction works, selection board recruitment, petrol and scholarship money given to students by HEC. He demanded and said that the current vice chancellor, Dr. Zahoor Haq, is actively trying to get his tenure extended. If the demands are not considered, they will protest in Peshawar and Islamabad.

Meanwhile, on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Mardan Captain (R) Abdur Rehman, Additional Assistant Commissioner Katlang Attaullah sealed three gur ghanis after finding more than 2500 kg of unhealthy molasses during inspection of molasses making units in Tehsil Katling.

The jaggery was allegedly adulterated with dangerous chemicals like sodium

hydroxymethane sulfinate. The Additional Assistant Commissioner said that legal action will be taken against the arrested persons while others were issued strict instructions based on the principles of cleanliness and hygiene. The Additional Assistant Commissioner has given a clear message to the gur unit owners that no concession will be made to those who violate the law.

Five killed in firing on vehicle

GUJRANWALA (INP): A candidate of union council (UC) election among five people was killed in firing of armed motorcyclists on a vehicle here on Wednesday. The Gujranwala Police said that armed men riding motorcycle sprayed bullet on a vehicle at Kashmir road of the city.

As a result of firing, UC candidate Rana Ifthikhar among five people was killed. Punjab caretaker chief minister Mohsin Naqvi taking notice of the incident has sought a report from Inspector General (IG) Police, Gujranwala.

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad has expressed her resolved to ensure provision of fertilizer to farmers at official prices and no one fertilizer dealer will be allowed to receive arbitrary prices of fertilizer.

While addressing a meeting held to review supply and demand of fertilizer, she directed the officers of district administration and agriculture department to check warehouses of fertilizer dealers and take strict action against profiteers and hoarders in the district.

She warned the fertilizer dealers refrain from hoarding of fertilizer and creating artificial shortage of fertilizers for black marketing and to keep record of supply and sale of fertilizer as well as past official price list at their shops at prominent places.

She also warned that not only hefty fine would be charged from profiteers but criminal cases would also be registered against fertilizer dealers. Officers of different departments and fertilizer dealers attended the meeting. Meanwhile, addressing the meeting of Criminal Justice Coordination Committee Hafizabad, District and Session Judge Ali Raza Awan has urged upon all stakeholders to play their vital role for providing free and speedy justice to people.

Different reports submit-

ted by the government departments reviewed in the meeting. The meeting recommended to appoint doctors at District Court Hafizabad and Pindi Bhattian while special medical camps also be arranged for providing treatment and diagnostic facilities to the lawyers.

Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad, DPO Faisal Gulzar, District Judge Umer bin Akbar, Additional Session Judge Malik Shahid Hussain Awan, Senior Civil Judge Criminal Division Usman Ghani, Senior Civil Judge Civil Division Shabana Hameed, DPP Rana Irfan Ahmad Khan, SP Investigation Muhammad Farooq Bhatti, Superintendent District Jail Farrukh Rasheed, Superintendent District and Session Judge Mirza Bashir Hussain Jarra and President District Bar Malik Waqas Raza Awan and others members of the committee attended the meeting.

Nine cases registered for air pollution: After strict directions from Punjab's government regarding curtaining of smog in the area, Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Sundas Irshad herself fielded to take action against farmers who are burning residues of paddy crops in the district Hafizabad. She visited herself different village to check burning of remains of paddy crop and imposed hefty fine to farmers.

Talking to mediemen during the visit, she said that farmers, owners of bricks kilns and smoke emitting vehicles are not deserving any mercy because they were not only polluting atmosphere but also at stake the lives of the people.

DC said that punitive action would be continued against such elements who are causing spread of smog in the areas. She said that officers of district administration and other concerned departments were in the field to take action against violators of smog SOPs and officer had charges Rs. 60 lakh fine from formers, owners of industrial units, bricks kilns and smoke emitting vehicles while 10 cases got registered with different police stations.

Youth tortured by police dies

KHAIRPUR (INP): A youth, who had received serious injuries after having been tortured by the police in Ranipur area of Khairpur, at last succumbed to his injuries on Wednesday. Shah Murad Brohi had been shifted to hospital in a critical condition.

Murad's nephew Ihsan Brohi had married the girl of his choice, which was declared a crime by the locals.

Harnessing natural resources in KP for socio-economic uplift

Asif Rafiq

In the contemporary global economic landscape, marked by market downturns, the spectre of inflation, rising unemployment, and persistent poverty has cast a shadow over developing nations, including Pakistan. Compounding these economic challenges, the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia has introduced another layer of complexity into this multifaceted quandary. It is essential to underscore that unemployment has long been a persistent concern in Pakistan, predating the current wave of global crises.

Within the purview of this analysis, we direct our attention to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

region, located in the north-western expanse of Pakistan. Unlike some other provinces, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa exhibits a relatively limited propensity for arable lands.

This distinctive feature can be attributed to its predominantly rugged topography, characterized by rivers, forests, and mountainous terrain, which sets it apart in terms of agricultural employment opportunities. Yet, it is precisely this unique topographical profile that harbors abundant natural assets, waiting to be strategically harnessed for the purpose of catalysing economic rejuvenation and illuminating a brighter socio-economic horizon.

As we delve into the ecological wealth embedded in the

forests and mountains of KP, empirical data unveil the extent of nature's generosity.

Nearly 45% of Pakistan's total forested land lies within the boundaries of this province. Nevertheless, the potential of these natural resources remains largely untapped, pushing a considerable segment of the population in regions such as Malakand, Hazara, newly merged districts & Chitral to seek employment opportunities overseas.

Endowed with nature's bounty, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa possesses the latent capacity to establish an industry of monumental worth, approximating a staggering 2,000 Billion Pkr. This goal can be achieved by judiciously exploiting the wealth

enshrined within its forests and riverine resources.

At present, the province comprises approximately 2 million hectares of forested terrain. Expert insights suggest that an endeavor to double this expanse could potentially unlock an annual industry valued at 2 trillion rupees, facilitating gainful employment for up to 5 million individuals.

Comparing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Forest coverage per capita with neighbouring countries yields striking insights. China leads with 1499 square meters of forest coverage per capita, followed by Iran with 1265 square meters and India with 525 square meters. In stark contrast, Pakistan lags behind, with a mere 65 square meters per capita. These statis-

tics underscore the substantial disparity in the utilization of forested resources, evident in the instances of China, India, and Germany.

Expanding the forested land in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, coupled with the strategic introduction of agroforestry, holds the potential to usher in a paradigm shift. The resultant benefits transcend economic prosperity, promising to alleviate the persistent scourge of unemployment. This approach charts a transformative trajectory, fostering employment opportunities within the province, and even accommodating those compelled to seek livelihoods beyond the national boundary.

Leveraging the abundant natural endowments of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, encompassing forests and water resources, not only promises economic opportunities and financial dividends but also underscores a proactive approach to mitigating the pernicious effects of global environmental fluctuations. This challenge carries profound implications, not only for Pakistan but also in the broader global context. In conclusion, the untapped ecological and economic potential of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa presents a compelling opportunity for strategic development and environmental stewardship, offering a beacon of hope in the face of economic adversity and environmental challenges.

The writer is a KP Caretaker Minister for Food, Agriculture, Livestock and Forests.



Russia will pay heavy price for Avdiivka: Ukraine

KYIV (Reuters): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the defence of the shattered eastern city of Avdiivka was key to Kyiv's war plans, with heavy Russian losses there likely to undermine Moscow's conduct of the broader conflict.

Zelenskiy's chief of staff, meanwhile, acknowledged for the first time that Ukraine's forces in southern Kherson region had established a foothold on the eastern bank of the Dnipro River, potentially opening a new line of attack towards Crimea. Russian troops abandoned the western bank a year ago and took up positions on the eastern side from which they have been regularly shelling towns and villages opposite.

Moscow's forces have focused on eastern Ukraine since failing to advance on Kyiv in the first days of the February 2022 invasion. They have taken aim at Avdiivka since mid-October and officials from the town, which had a pre-war population of 32,000, say not a single building remains intact. Zelenskiy, in his nightly video address, said Russian assaults in the eastern Donetsk region including Avdiivka had been "very intense".

"Russia is already losing men and equipment near Avdiivka faster and on a larger scale than, for example, near Bakhmut," he said, referring to months of heavy fighting that culmi-

nated in Russian forces capturing the eastern town of Bakhmut in May. "Withstanding their pressure is extremely difficult ... The more Russian forces that are destroyed near Avdiivka, the worse the overall situation will be for the enemy and the overall course of this war," Official Russian accounts of fighting in the east made no mention of Avdiivka, though prominent Russian war blogger Rybar said there had been "some headway" in positions around the town.

Russia's Defence Ministry said Moscow's forces had repelled five attacks around villages near Bakhmut recaptured by Ukraine since May. It said Ukraine had suffered 300 dead and wounded. Reuters could not verify accounts from either side. Bakhmut lies about 50 km (31 miles) north of Avdiivka, which is only 20 km west of the Russian-held regional capital of Donetsk.

Ukrainian military spokesperson Oleksandr Shupun said fighting was heaviest south of Avdiivka. "Over the last three days, the occupiers have actively used guided aviation bombs in Donetsk region, particularly around Avdiivka," Shupun told national television. Ukrainian forces, he said, had repelled 18 Russian attacks over the past 24 hours. The acknowledgement by Ukrainian presidential chief of staff Andriy

Yermak that Kyiv's forces were established on the Dnipro's eastern bank followed weeks of contradictory reports. "Against all odds, Ukraine's Defense Forces have gained a foothold on the left (east) bank of the Dnipro," Yermak said in an address to the Hudson Institute think-tank in the United States. The remarks were posted on Zelenskiy's website.

"Step by step, they are demilitarizing Crimea," he added, referring to the peninsula Russia seized in 2014. "We have covered 70% of the distance. And our counteroffensive is developing." As Ukraine's four-month-old counteroffensive secures only incremental gains, Ukrainian officials have been cautious in describing the activities of their forces on the east bank. Russia's military said last week its forces had thwarted a Ukrainian attempt to forge a bridgehead on the eastern bank and on nearby islands, killing around 500 Ukrainian soldiers. In a highly unusual incident, two Russian state news agencies published alerts saying Moscow was moving troops to "more favourable positions" east of the Dnipro River in Ukraine, only to withdraw the information minutes later. Russia has sometimes used similar phrasing about moving troops to more advantageous positions to describe retreats.

China's state media take a new tone toward US

BEIJING (AP): Ahead of the highly anticipated meeting on Wednesday between US President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Chinese state media have taken a new tone toward the US with less negative coverage, calls for a return to warmer ties and stories of Americans with positive connections to the country. The messaging follows several years of unprecedented tensions between the two countries over issues including trade and technology, the status of Taiwan and Hong Kong and the origins of COVID-19.

Chinese media have focused on a recent visit by members of the Philadelphia Orchestra marking the 50th anniversary of its history-making trip to China that helped build then-fledgling US-China ties, and on another visit by members of the Flying Tigers, a group of American military pilots who helped China fight Japan in World War II. "The Chinese people will never forget an old friend, and that's an important message we want to send to the American people," the official Communist Party newspaper People's Daily said in its overseas edition on Wednesday.

In recent days the official Xinhua news agency carried a five-part series on US-China relations which called for the countries to "meet each other halfway" and "work together to return to the path of healthy and stable development." But it also urged the US to follow through on agreements made by Biden and Xi when they met in Bali last November.

"Only if we return to Bali, can we look forward to San Francisco," it said. The two leaders agreed in Bali on areas of cooperation including tackling climate change and maintaining global financial, health and food stability. China says the US has deviated from pledges to "not seek out a new Cold War," to "respect China's system" and "not oppose China through strengthening its relationships with allies."

"Only by handling well US-China relations can the well-being of the two peoples increase, the progress of human society be promoted, and can there be a contribution to the peaceful development of the world," the People's Daily said in an op-ed on Wednesday. Op-eds in state media are widely seen as reflections of official policy. Even the nationalistic and confrontational Global Times newspaper called for the two countries to cooperate in an op-ed Wednesday.

Chinese state media have often focused heavily on negative coverage of the United States in recent years. During the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States in the summer of 2020, Chinese media provided extensive coverage of violence at protests and clashes with police. The critical coverage of the US and other Western countries aims to show how well China is doing in comparison, said David Bandurski, executive director of the independent China Media Project. "Everything is negative in the US (according to Chinese media) ... and this is the flip side of the bigger picture of the con-

structing of legitimacy by Xi Jinping in his third term," he said.

During the coverage of the Black Lives Matter protests, relations between the countries were at a low point, with China defensive over US accusations about the origin of COVID-19. Ahead of the Biden-Xi talks at a country estate near San Francisco, state media have not played up the city's homelessness problem, although some social media users have posted photos of homeless people urinating and sleeping in the streets along with commentary on how dangerous the city can be.

In one video on Douyin, the Chinese version of Tiktok, a young Chinese man living in San Francisco showed how he kept two bank cards in separate locations, one in his bag and one in his pocket. The point? "If I was robbed, I'd still have one bank card left," he said. He also showed his sneakers, saying if he ran into trouble, "I can run a bit faster."

The new language of cooperation with the US in state media mirrors what China has said in recent months as it has worked to mend strained relations with Australia and some European countries, Bandurski said. Despite the change in tone, few expect substantial changes to the overall direction of relations between the two countries. "There's no fundamental change, they have marked you as a competitor," said Sima Nan, an international affairs commentator with more than 3 million followers on Weibo, a popular social media app.

Russian resources minister visits North Korea

SEOUL (Reuters): A Russian delegation led by natural resources minister Alexander Kozlov is visiting Pyongyang, North Korean state media said on Wednesday, as the politically isolated state announced new progress in its banned ballistic missile programme.

Kozlov arrived, as US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met with UN member states enforcing the Korean War armistice in Seoul and said they were concerned that China and Russia are helping North Korea expand its military capabilities by enabling Pyongyang to evade UN sanctions. Russia and North Korea were conducting talks on the economy, science and technology, KCNA state media reported, without elaborating.

Kozlov told a reception that Russia wants to develop "substantial cooperation" with North Korea based on the agreements made by Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un when they met in September in Russia's far east, KCNA reported. He also cited North Korea's "full support" for Russia over regional and international issues, the report said.

A delegation led by the country's culture minister left for St. Petersburg to attend a cultural event, KCNA said in another article. North Korea is in its final stages of preparation for the launch of a spy satellite, and appears to have received technical assistance from Russia, South Korea's intelligence agency said this month.

North Korean state media also reported on Wednesday that the country had successfully conducted static tests of "new-type high-thrust solid-fuel engines" for intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs). "The test provided a sure guarantee for reliably accelerating the development of the new-type IRBM system," KCNA said. The announcement came on the same day South Korea and the US held a joint aerial exercise involving a US B-52 strategic bomber alongside fighter jets as a show of force aimed at Pyongyang. South Korea's defence ministry said.

North Korea's General Missile Bureau attached great significance to the new IRBM, saying the recent tests are essential for enhancing the strategic offensive capabilities of the military in light of "the grave and unstable security environment facing the country" and the "vicious" collusion of its enemies, KCNA added. Military analysts say solid-fuel missiles are easier and safer to operate, and require less logistical support, making them harder to detect and more survivable than liquid-fuel weapons.

This year North Korea tested its first solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) - the largest category of ballistic missile - and also uses the technology in a range of smaller weapons. North Korea's missile programme, as well as its nuclear weapons, have been banned by UN Security Council resolutions, which imposed sanctions on the country. Washington has accused North Korea of supplying military equipment to Russia for use in its war with Ukraine, and Moscow of providing technical military support to help North Korea. North Korea and Russia have denied any arms deals, though their leaders pledged closer military cooperation at their September summit.

Russian arms makers kept to low profile at Dubai Airshow

DUBAI (Reuters): Russian arms makers appear to have been kept to a low profile at this week's Dubai Airshow, underscoring how the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has sought to balance its ties with the West and Moscow. Unlike past shows, Russian participation has been limited to the very end of the outdoor area where state-arms makers are exhibiting inside their own pavilion rather than in the main hall.

"We have been put a bit away, outside the main pavilion," said a Russian arms industry executive, who declined to be named as they were not authorised to speak to the media. The executive said they did not know why Russian firms had apparently been deliberately kept away from the main exhibition area where companies like US firm Lockheed Martin are present. Still, an aerobatics display of Russian Su35S fighter jets went ahead, the TASS news agency reported.

Rostec, United Aircraft Corp and Almaz-Anty are among the Russian firms participating at the show this week. A representative for the Dubai Airshow, a major biennial commercial and defence industry showpiece, did not immediately respond to emailed questions on the Russian participation. Russian arms makers have in past used the Dubai event to showcase their firepower, with executives often claiming they were gaining



market share in a region traditionally close to the US. At the last show in 2021, Russia displayed a Sukhoi Su-75 Checkmate prototype internationally for the first time.

The UAE, a Gulf Arab power, has not adopted Western sanctions imposed on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, and has resisted US pressure to break links with Moscow. Inside the Russian pavilion, combat gear and models of fighter jets and combat helicopters are on display this week. The Russian executive said military delegations from the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Americas

had visited the pavilion so far. He declined to say which countries.

Outside the Russian pavilion, a Russian KA-52E combat helicopter is on show next to a Russian IL-76MD-90AE military transport aircraft and a RVV-MD2 missile for stealth fighter jets. US Air Force aircraft on show at the week-long event have been placed at the opposite end of the outdoor display area. Russian state arms makers participated in February at a major arms fare in Abu Dhabi, the UAE capital, where they were similarly kept separated from the main exhibition area.

What was the UK's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda?

LONDON (BBC): The UK government wanted to send some asylum seekers to Rwanda, but the policy has been ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court. The Court said there was a risk that any asylum seeker sent there could be returned to their home country, which would breach UK and international human rights laws.

The five-year trial - announced in April 2021 - would have seen some asylum seekers sent to Rwanda to claim asylum there. Under the plan, they might have been granted refugee status to stay in Rwanda. If not, they could have applied to settle there on other grounds, or sought asylum in another "safe third country".

No asylum seeker has actually been sent to Rwanda. The first flight was scheduled to go in June 2022, but was cancelled after legal challenges. The government said the policy would deter people arriving in the UK through "illegal, dangerous or unnecessary methods", such as on small boats which cross the English Channel.

More than 45,700 people used this route to come to the UK in 2022, the highest figure since records began. As of 13 November, the number of small boat crossings in 2023 was a third lower than at the same point the year before, however it is not possible to say if the drop is the result of government migration policies. In October, shadow immigration minister Stephen Kinnock said the weather had been partly responsible for the

fall in numbers, claiming that 2023 was "the wettest summer since 1912".

The UK Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the Rwanda scheme is unlawful. In their ruling, the five top justices said the Court of Appeal had been right to conclude in June that there had not been a proper assessment of whether Rwanda was a safe country for asylum seekers. Lord Reed, the Court president, said there was strong evidence to believe that genuine refugees sent to the country could be at risk of being returned to their home countries - where they could face persecution.

This breaches part of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) which prohibits torture and inhuman treatment. The UK is a signatory to the ECHR. The Supreme Court judges also cited Rwanda's poor human rights record, and its past treatment of refugees as a factor in its decision. In response, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said he remains "completely committed to stopping the boats". He told MPs in the House of Commons that the government was in talks with Rwanda about a new treaty, and was "prepared to change our laws" if necessary. The Rwandan government said it "takes issue" with the ruling that it is not a safe third country for asylum seekers. "We take our humanitarian responsibilities seriously, and will continue to live up to them," it added.

It was not clear how many asylum seekers could have been sent to

Rwanda. The government previously said "anyone entering the UK illegally" after 1 January 2022 could be sent, with no limit on numbers. Under the deal, Rwanda could also have asked the UK to take in some of its most vulnerable refugees. The UK has already paid the Rwandan government £140m, but did not set out an overall cost for the scheme.

An economic-impact assessment prepared for the government's Illegal Migration Bill estimated that removing each individual to a third country, such as Rwanda, would cost £63,000 more than keeping them in the UK. That figure is the difference between the total cost of removing an individual - estimated to be £169,000 - and the £106,000 spent on housing support if they remain in the UK.

The £169,000 total includes a payment to the third country of around £105,000 per person, as well as £22,000 for flights. The Home Office said no cost would be incurred if the policy deterred an individual from entering the UK illegally. But it said acknowledged it was "uncertain" how many people would be deterred because the policy was "novel and untested". The UK's asylum system costs £3bn a year. About £8m a day is spent on hotel accommodation for refugees and asylum seekers. Critics say the daily cost is so high because of the time taken to decide on applications, and a ban on asylum seekers working while waiting for confirmation of their status.

Five years on, France still scarred by 'yellow vest' revolt

PARIS (AFP): Five years after hundreds of thousands of people swarmed through French cities in a show of rage against President Emmanuel Macron's policies, France still bears the scars of the revolt. The "yellow vest" movement was born on November 17, 2018 when people in small-town and rural France began blocking roads around the country over a planned increase in environmental fuel taxes that hit car-reliant citizens in the pocket.

Named after the fluorescent jackets kept by French motorists and worn by the protesters, the revolt posed an abrupt challenge to Macron one-and-a-half years after he was elected as modern France's youngest head of state promising a new era of change. Within weeks, the protests had ballooned into a full-blown insurrection culminating in the sacking of the Arc de Triomphe war memorial in Paris and widespread rioting that was repressed by the police, leaving 23 protesters blind in one eye.

The chief target of the protests was Macron, who had been labouring under the label of "president of the rich" since cutting taxes on the wealthy a year earlier. The ex-banker, who had never held elected office before winning the top job in 2017 with a resolutely upbeat campaign inspired by Barack Obama, was blindsided by the outpouring of anger. "He would never again feel that he had that golden touch and that nothing could get in his way," said Bruno Cautres, a researcher at Sciences Po university.

After initially struggling to respond, Macron attempted to take control of the situation by scrapping the fuel tax hike and rushing through 10 billion euros (\$10.8 billion) in tax cuts and income top-ups. He also criss-crossed the country to listen to voters' frustrations in a marathon of town hall debates, where he impressed with his command of policy detail. The debates succeeded in taking the heat out of the protests, which eventually fizzled out when the Covid-19 pandemic struck. But the political damage had been done.

Macron's party trailed the far-right National Rally of Marine Le Pen in

2019 European elections and was trounced in municipal elections a year later. And while he did go on to defeat Le Pen and win a second term in 2022, his centrist alliance haemorrhaged seats in that year's legislative vote, leaving him without an absolute majority. It was the National Rally that cashed in on the lingering resentment towards urban elites among low and middle-income predominantly white voters in the so-called "peripheral France", winning 88 seats in the legislative elections.

It is an issue that resonates deeply with Marc Beaulaton, a former yellow vest organiser from the western city of Le Mans. "The yellow vests acted as the whistleblowers on the growing impoverishment of society," said the retired technician, who volunteers at a soup kitchen that has seen demand for free meals grow by around 30 percent in three years. Beaulaton, who took part in a 10-day blockade of a petrol refinery in Le Mans at the height of the revolt, prides himself on having been part of a "great solidarity movement" that brought together people of all ages, backgrounds and political affiliations.

But he was turned off by the radicalism of the anti-capitalist protesters who eventually took control of the movement, which was marked by widespread looting and attacks on the police. The police responded with increasingly repressive tactics, including the widespread use of rubber bullets and stun grenades, which left 2,500 demonstrators injured in a year, 23 of whom lost an eye. Some 1,800 officers were injured over the same period.

Beaulaton believes Macron's "great debate" marked its death knell, saying he "bamboozled" the yellow vests by promising them greater say in the running of the country. Half a million people took part in the debates, with hundreds of thousands more registering their grievances online or in complaint books made available in town halls. But the 400,000 pages of complaints recorded are now "gathering mould in the basements of local prefectures, without any follow-up". Green party leader Marine Tondelier said bitterly.

Macron did attempt to give citizens a greater say in policy-making by organising a citizen's convention on climate, some of whose proposals were included in a 2021 climate law. But the yellow vests' demands for popular referendums on contentious government proposals came to nothing. The most enduring impact of the yellow vest crisis, Cautres said, was on the leadership style of a president who in 2018 told an unemployed man that he "need only cross the street to find a job". "He has considerably reduced the occurrence of these little remarks of which he was once so proud," said Cautres.

Guinness World Record: Nigerian sets record for longest wig

ABUJA (BBC): A Nigerian woman has set the Guinness world record for making the longest hand-made wig. Helen Williams constructed a wig stretching up to 351.28m (1,152ft 5in). She spent 11 days and two million naira (£2,000: \$2,500) to create the hairpiece. It took 1,000 bundles of hair, 12 cans of hair spray, 35 tubes of hair glue and 6,250 hair clips.

"This achievement is one of the best things that has ever happened to me. I still cannot believe it," she said. Despite being a wigmaker for eight years, she said it was not an easy task as she "felt exhausted" during the process. "Friends and family encouraged me. I did not want to let them down, so I maintained my focus. The outcome is the longest hand-made wig in the world," she said. After completing the hairpiece, finding a place to lay it out and measure it accurately was difficult. She chose to lay it out on a highway connecting the cities of Lagos and Abeokuta on 7 July.

Guinness World Records confirmed the record. Ms Williams has displayed the wig in her office so people can come and look at her record-setting efforts. Earlier this year, Hilda Baci caused a sensation in Nigeria when she broke the world record for cooking non-stop.

US to resume food aid across Ethiopia next month

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Washington will resume food aid for people across Ethiopia next month, after assistance was paused earlier this year, following implementation of comprehensive reforms, according to a US Agency for International Development (USAID) statement seen by Reuters. Ethiopia's food crisis has deepened in recent years as a result of war in the Tigray region and the Horn of Africa's worst drought in decades.

"USAID is committing to a one-year trial period of the nationwide resumption, during which we will continuously monitor and evaluate the efficacy of the reforms put in place by USAID, implementing partners, and the government of Ethiopia," the statement said. USAID in June said it was suspending food aid to Ethiopia because its donations were being

stolen, and last month resumed food assistance to refugees in the country.

The decision impacted dozens of refugee sites, but none were in Tigray, an official said, where a two-year war between the federal government and forces led by the region's dominant political party ended in a truce in last November. The conflict led to tens of thousands deaths and created famine-like conditions for hundreds of thousands. USAID in the statement said Washington was resuming food aid across the country after significant diplomatic engagement over the last several months resulted in "widespread and substantial reforms of the food assistance structure by the government of Ethiopia and our humanitarian partners."

The agency said the reforms will "fundamentally shift" Ethiopia's food aid system, including by strengthen-

ing program monitoring and oversight and reinforcing commodity tracking, among other measures. The government of Ethiopia agreed to operational changes in their work with humanitarian partners that will improve the partners' ability to identify beneficiaries, USAID said, and also committed to providing unimpeded access for the agency and third-party monitors to review sites throughout the country.

"USAID places the highest priority on taking every possible measure to make sure that US humanitarian assistance is used for its intended purpose, reaches the most vulnerable, and ultimately saves lives," the statement said. "Given the significant number of people in need of food assistance in Ethiopia, we are pleased these important reforms will allow the delivery of food assistance to those who need it most."

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Tri-nations’ teamwork

THE Commerce Ministers of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan co-chaired the first-ever trilateral huddle aimed at strengthening economic ties, trilateral cooperation and regional connectivity. As said, the meeting focused on boosting trade relations among the three nations and discussions centred around reducing trade barriers, simplifying customs procedures, and promoting smooth and sustainable cross-border trade among the neighbouring Muslim states.

Pakistan, Uzbekistan and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan are three brotherly Muslim states, which not only owe a unique geography, weather environment and topology but have the utmost economic interdependence, and social and political alignment that provide them a solid foundation for a shared sustainable economic development and growth. Historically, all three nations not only recognized the importance of their cooperation but already teamed up to grasp the optimum benefits of their partnership and joint work.

Presently, South and Central Asia gradually getting out of political issues and focusing on geoeconomics, by enhancing their inter-state linkages, strengthening their trade ties and removing impediments to achieve their shared objectives. The trio-nations' leadership aimed at stimulating their economic growth and opening up additional avenues of joint ventures, government-to-government teamwork, and public-private partnerships with increased foreign direct investment (FDI) in each other nations. By leveraging their strengths and resources, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan can tap into new markets and expand their economies. Historically, these nations are linked up with each other through numerous mechanisms for cooperation and coordination. Besides the ECO and the US-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan-Pakistan Quad platform, they may collaborate with China and Russia through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

The recent trilateral meeting has marked an important step towards closer economic cooperation and sets the stage for increased trade, investment, and connectivity, benefiting all three countries and paving the way for a prosperous and integrated region. This arrangement will not only boost the transportation networks but promote infrastructure development to facilitate the transnational movement of cargo, passengers and tourists.

Historically, the momentum of cooperation and the level of engagement between Pakistan and Uzbekistan were marred largely due to persistent political instability and meek security situations in Afghanistan. Previously, Islamabad and Tashkent had sent test shipments through Afghanistan to gauge the viability of various trade routes in the region. Meanwhile, the tri-states already agreed to a roadmap for the Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway project that will link Uzbekistan, Afghanistan to Pakistani deep sea ports in Karachi and Gwadar through the China-China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Interestingly, the rail-road connectivity project will run alongside regional energy projects including the 1,000-megawatt Surkhan-Puli-Khumri high-voltage power line and the 1,300-megawatt CASA-1000 energy project that will respectively supply electricity to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The incumbent Afghan government is very interested in the economic uplift of its nation and vigorously working to resume trade and road links of the country with its neighbourhood. Currently, the political and geostrategic environment is highly conducive as all three brotherly nations have geared up to grasp their collective agenda, they have massive untapped potential and face no scarcity of plans yet strike a shortage of bulk funds which can manifest their ideas and dreams into a physical reality. For that purpose, they must seek assistance from global and regional lenders so this region also grasp affluence, progress and prosperity like other parts of the world.

Beijing-Taiwan newest tussle

RECENTLY, the Chinese authorities have launched an investigation into Taiwanese tech giant Foxconn on alleged accusations of tax fraud and violations of land regulations. Foxconn, is a major supplier of iPhone assemblies and electronic gadgets and provides employment to over one million Chinese workers nationwide. Currently, the Foxconn billionaire founder Terry Gou is running for President office as an independent candidate in Taiwan's January polls. Foxconn has recently announced shifting its assembly plants from China to Bangalore, India because of ongoing bout of industrial unrest and continuous diplomatic tensions between Beijing, Taiwan and the United States that slowed down his production in the past months.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) i.e. Taiwan is not on normal working norms. Beijing claims the democratically ruled Island a part of its territory and vowed to embrace it into mainland China even by force if necessary. On the other hand, Tai Pei is determined to protect its sovereignty and forged close security and defence ties with the United States. Presently, tiny Island nation is one of the most contentious issues between the United States and China.

The contest for the topmost slot in autonomous Taiwan is scheduled for January next year. The business Tycoon and Foxconn founder Terry Gou is running for Taiwan's President and his election bid has caused serious challenges for pro-Beijing political group in Taiwan. The Billionaire businessman turned politician not only created serious economic issues for Xi's regime by shifting his businesses to neighbouring countries but also weakening Beijing's influence in Taiwan's domestic politics. The Chinese government has moved smartly by dragging Foxconn into a tax probe to ultimately mould Gou's political and business stance in Beijing's favor. The Taiwanese government accuses China of political victimization and an interference into Taiwanese businesses in its country. Whatever the case may be, trade and economic corecison had always been a major tool for global powers for arm twisting/blackmailing of their adversaries throughout the past. However, time would also characterize the real motives behind the newest Beijing-Taipei tussle in the future.

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America’s indifference on Gaza creates watershed moment in Arab-US ties

Osama Al-Sharif

NO one knows how Israel's war on Gaza, which is now in its second month, will end and what the final civilian death toll will be. But when the guns finally go silent and the dust settles, the Middle East and indeed the rest of the world will wake up to a new reality. Whatever happens to Hamas will mean little compared to the human cost already endured: more than 10,000 deaths, almost half being women and children, and more than 25,000 injured. The level of destruction is beyond description, not seen anywhere since the Second World War.

Most of Gaza has been turned into a wasteland and no one knows if Gazans will ever be allowed to return to their bombed-out homes to resume whatever is left of their miserable and tragic lives. But beyond the humanitarian fallout, which will linger for years, there will be multiple political accounts that need to be settled. In the eye of the storm will be the future of US-Arab ties and where the shaky alliance with the West will go from here.

In Amman last week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with the foreign ministers of five key Arab countries, in addition to a Palestinian Authority representative. They all called on the US to accept the need for an immediate ceasefire and to allow the unfettered delivery of much-needed humanitarian supplies to the besieged Gaza Strip, now a disaster zone. Instead, Blinken rebuffed their calls and repeated the now overused statement that Israel has the right to defend itself and that any truce would favor Hamas.

He pretended to sympathize with Palestinian civilian losses, urging Israel to abide by the rules of war - whatever that means - and tossed the Arab world a bone: a commitment to a two-state solution. In short, the US took Israel's side completely and ignored the pleas of its Arab allies. Even though Blinken said he supported humanitarian pauses, none have come into effect so far. Israel's pummeling of the entire Gaza Strip has only picked up pace, targeting fleeing civilians, hospitals, ambulances, civil defense and

medical workers, and journalists. The carnage went on as Blinken continued to warn against expanding the conflict beyond Gaza. This complete indifference to the Arab point of view, which has nothing to do with defending Hamas but is centered on protecting civilians and ensuring humanitarian assistance, has become a watershed moment in US-Arab ties. Washington could not care less for the sentiments of millions of Arabs, or those of millions of people all over the world. It has

placement would be considered a declaration of war. No one knows, not even the US, how far Israel will go with its current military campaign. And it is now clear that the Biden administration does not have the leverage to stop Israel from going as far as pushing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians into the Sinai desert.

The final outcome of the war on Gaza could push relations with Washington to a breaking point. No Arab country can take the risk of abandoning the

that the region was at a boiling point and that, unless the Palestinian issue was resolved in a just way, chaos would erupt. And that is exactly what is happening now.

No more US assurances will suffice. The US monopoly of the so-called peace process has to end. Israel's impunity must also end. Israel's war on Gaza and its collective punishment of Palestinians ahead of possible ethnic cleansing must be addressed and cannot be ignored. The fact that Israel has committed multiple war crimes in Gaza cannot be swept under the carpet. The entire rules-based world order is about to keel over as a result of Western complicity and its application of double standards. What is immediately needed following the war is to have an international peace conference, in which Russia, China, the Arab region and the rest of the Global South play a key role. The US cannot be trusted to chair, on its own, another round of peace talks that ends up buying time for Israel to complete its usurpation of whatever is left of Palestinian land.

The two-state solution was declared dead a long time ago thanks to Israel's policy of colonizing the West Bank while forcing millions of Palestinians in Gaza into another Nakba. Israel's right to exist has been enshrined in peace treaties and in the Arab Peace Initiative. But this is not a blank check that can be cashed at the teller at the expense of millions of Palestinians, who have the right to self-determination and a state of their own. The war on Gaza has brought us to the moment of truth: Israel wants to liquidate the Palestinian issue once and for all and let the region pick up the tab. That will not happen and the US must not allow it to happen.

The US is not an honest broker and the Arab world cannot allow it to continue to buy time for Israel as it embarks on a pernicious scheme to normalize the occupation and dispose of millions of Palestinians. America's Arab allies need to send a stern message to the US that choosing Israel, no matter what it does, over its allies and their genuine interests can no longer continue.

Israel's pummeling of the entire Gaza Strip has only picked up pace, targeting fleeing civilians, hospitals, ambulances, civil defense and medical workers, and journalists. The carnage went on as Blinken continued to warn against expanding the conflict beyond Gaza. This complete indifference to the Arab point of view, which has nothing to do with defending Hamas but is centered on protecting civilians and ensuring humanitarian assistance, has become a watershed moment in US-Arab ties.

unabashedly taken the side of Israel, even when the war violates all definitions of self-defense and all the scopes of international laws and conventions.

And when Arab diplomats pointed to the escalating situation in the West Bank, where Israeli soldiers and radical settlers are shooting and terrorizing Palestinians, all Blinken could do was to ask Israel to do something about the spiraling violence and then say that he was assured that something would be done.

The level of public rage against the US position on the war in the Arab world must not be ignored. It is putting Arab governments under pressure. It is shaking the foundations of the alliance between the US and its Arab partners. The chasm between these allies and Washington could expand depending on the outcome of Israel's war on Gaza.

A forced displacement of millions of Palestinians into Egypt would bring that relationship to the brink, leaving Cairo and Amman in a tough and precarious position. Jordan has already said that such forced dis-

placement would be considered a declaration of war. No one knows, not even the US, how far Israel will go with its current military campaign. And it is now clear that the Biden administration does not have the leverage to stop Israel from going as far as pushing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians into the Sinai desert.

The problem is that, even if they do deliver such assurances, few will take them seriously. For more than 30 years, the US has taken hold of the so-called peace process, whose aim was to deliver a two-state solution. But Washington has failed to play the role of an honest broker. It has looked the other way while an extremist Israel grabbed more Palestinian lands, demolished Palestinians' homes, empowered Jewish settlers, marginalized the Palestinian Authority and enforced an illegal siege on Gaza's 2.3 million inhabitants. The US ignored warnings by its Arab allies

Saudi-African Summit reflects Kingdom’s growing geopolitical role

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami

THE first Saudi-African Summit was held in Riyadh on Friday. Despite the ongoing events in Gaza and Saudi Arabia's focus on resolving that crisis, the Kingdom continued with its desire to host this important summit, reflecting the attention it pays to the African continent, as well as its flexibility, ability to handle multiple files and the importance of its foreign policy calculus.

Saudi Arabia wanted this summit to result in a significant advancement in its relations with African nations, the creation of frameworks for collaboration and the execution of stated goals and plans. Both parties today place a high value on strengthening their relations.

There is no doubt that Saudi Arabia is giving special attention to its relations with African nations. This comes within the framework of the economic diplomacy adopted by Riyadh, which seeks to deepen partnerships with various vital spheres and regions, the most prominent of which is, of course, Africa. This attention also comes as part of the pioneering Saudi foreign policy and its aspirations, which are driven by a desire to achieve security and stability throughout the entire region, including Africa, which is facing a mounting wave of instability. This, in turn, provides a favorable environment for investment and economic cooperation, which yields development and welfare for the peoples of both sides. This is especially true as Africa is considered a land of opportunities and is home to diverse resources, while it also possesses a large market.

Geographically speaking, Africa is of geostrategic importance and effectiveness in achieving security and stability in the Red Sea and West Asia. On its soil, major regional and global powers are vying for influence. Saudi Arabia is willing to enhance its strategic weight through strengthening its ties with the continent. This comes in the light of a restive international environment.

This Saudi orientation is met with aspirations on the part of African nations to deepen their cooperation with Saudi Arabia. This comes as African nations are also looking to forge credible partnerships that go beyond the traditional form of ties with the old colonial powers, which exploit the continent's resources and deal with it through unjust terms and diktats, pushing the course of interests in only one direction and controlling ruling regimes through staging military coups. This has, in recent decades, left the continent off the course of development and stability. At the regional level, Saudi Arabia is considered an important option for Africa, a source of strength and balance and an alternative to the global powers, which have ambitions and interventions that aim to undermine security and stability on the continent and contribute to deepening crises rather than resolve them.

In addition, the Kingdom is presenting a model that is gaining regional and global attention, given the accelerating accomplishments being made at the political and economic levels. It is an independent model of governance whose aspirations see eye to eye with those of the new African leaders, which aim to break free from the restrictions of the major world powers and the subordination of old and new colonial powers. Saudi Arabia has pioneering experience in addressing extremist and violent groups. It stands out as an inspiring model at a time when African nations are looking for partners in combating terrorism and extremism, which have become among the biggest impediments to advancement and development throughout the continent. The international actors

exploit Africa to deepen their clout and increase their presence without paying heed to the continent's security and stability, as is the case in the Sahel, the center of the continent and Sudan.

Saudi Arabia possesses massive financial resources, which could assist the countries of the continent in overcoming their social and economic crises. Thus, deepening Africa's partnership with Saudi Arabia, which is a heavyweight actor within regional and international organizations, serves the interests of African countries. What is more, African countries have a major share of the votes in these organizations, which creates some sort of clout and influence on the global stage, which could be employed to serve both sides' interests. On the other side, Saudi Arabia's emergence as a stimulant of regional stability and the diplomacy of mediation it adopts make it eligible for an important role in calming and settling the disputes and crises gripping the continent. This is the role that Africa needs at a time when several of its countries are plagued by instability, rampant coups, the intervention by military companies such as Russia's Wagner and its ilk, and proxy wars.

There is no doubt that the Kingdom's standing and its various international partnerships enable it to become an important bridge for the flow of interests toward African countries. Through Saudi Arabia's relations with China, the Belt and Road Initiative gathers the momentum required to include the eastern part of Africa, its heart, the Sahel and southern parts of the continent. Additionally, the Kingdom's strategic relations with the US could allow for the inflow of important investments. For example, there are important Saudi understandings on investments in the field of rare minerals in Africa, which enhance the process of transitioning to clean energy and could bring benefits to the continent.

The summit's outcomes were positive, with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman unveiling an ambitious plan to increase the Kingdom's diplomatic presence in Africa, with the number of Saudi embassies set to exceed 40. This diplomatic initiative is in line with plans to accelerate investment in the continent. Saudi Arabia has also committed a huge \$50 billion in a range of development projects across the continent, which will strengthen Saudi-African economic relations. By making such a staggering investment, the Kingdom aims to foster stability and security not only in Africa but in the global environment as well. These initiatives will open up new horizons for opportunities and collaborations between the two sides. In addition, Saudi Arabia will position itself as a key geopolitical actor in the continent and leverage itself to outcompete other regional actors, such as the UAE, Türkiye and Iran.

To conclude, as Africa seems to be caught in the crossfire of international competition, while at the same time gripped by disputes and crises, it needs an advanced strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia. This comes as Riyadh has become an important and influential actor in the new global order that is being shaped. It also has a pioneering project with security and economic facets, which could be copied by the continent's countries as they seek to find a way out of their crises. Within the framework of the diversification of the Kingdom's partnerships and its role as a stimulant of security and stability, as well as its regional and international aspirations, enhancing the Saudi presence throughout the continent has become a necessity. It is an inevitable step dictated by the current realities and Saudi Arabia's role and standing in the continent, not to mention its strategic interests.

Trump’s bombshell testimony: What we learnt from New York fraud trial

Sadiq Shaban

SEATED in the grandeur of the New York Supreme Court, the former US President, Donald Trump, took centre stage at the witness box on Monday, delivering bombshell revelations under oath. With arms defiantly crossed, he unleashed a four-hour rollercoaster of claims - from flat-out denials of allegations to boasts about his Scottish golf oasis described as "unbelievable."

The courtroom spectacle was laced with blistering attacks on the state attorney general and the judge, offering a tantalising preview of what's to come in Trump's series of high-stakes court battles strewn across 2024, a pivotal US election year where he's eyeing a return to the presidential spotlight. Trump's day in court was as pre-

dictable as his towering real estate empire: out-of-the-box and undeniably controversial.

In a showdown reminiscent of his past campaign rallies, the former president's larger-than-life courtroom drama unfurled in a blaze of accusations, targeting officials, and decrying what he labelled a relentless "political witch hunt." Trump's high-octane courtroom performance provided a glimpse into his potential demeanour in the imminent criminal cases, when he ignited clashes with Judge Arthur F. Engoron. There was courtroom theatrics and the explosive revelations. The drama, the defiance, and the unfiltered Trump spectacle is expected to continue. Here are the key takeaways from Trump's court-

room showdown: Trump's testimony echoed his rally-like rhetoric, targeting the attorney general, judge, and denouncing the ongoing "political witch hunt." His charged language escalated as he directly confronted the judge, Arthur F. Engoron, sitting mere feet away, stating, "The fraud is on the court, not on me."

Judge Engoron's attempts to rein in Trump's speechifying fell short as Trump continued his approach. The judge warned of removing Trump from the witness box, emphasising, "This is not a political rally," urging Trump's attorney to rein in his client's behaviour. Trump faced probing questions from the attorney general's office regarding changes in property valuations, notably the Trump

Tower triplex, devalued after a Forbes article revealed exaggerated apartment size. Trump conceded occasional valuation mistakes.

Beyond defending himself, Trump utilised the courtroom as a sales pitch for his properties. Disputing valuations, he emphasised Mar-a-Lago's worth, stating it was far more valuable than records suggested, estimating its value to range between one and one-and-a-half billion dollars. Trump continuously evaded direct responses to questions, diverting discussions on accounting documents and property valuations toward praising his properties or criticising the judge and prosecutors' alleged biases, in an attempt to shape the narrative to his advantage.

Gulf News

Suella Braverman is sunk, and so are the Tories

Polly Toynbee

THE home secretary, queen of the anti-woke, is gone, again. Her grandstanding infuriated many colleagues, yet most of them share the same sinking life-raft of current Tory thinking. "I wouldn't use her words," each minister says, but they share her thoughts. Reshuffle from what to what? The tide is going out on the conservatism they were bred on, the last ripples of Thatcherism that nurtured them leaving them all marooned on an extremist island. Suella Braverman's backers, such as the Daily Mail, Telegraph and Sun, which 20 years ago seemed to have a direct line to the beating heart of Tory middle England, are now adrift. And there is no sign that sacking her and reviving the Greensill-tarnished David Cameron will help: austerity's author arrives to greet public alarm as his policy crushes public services. Only 24% of voters feel favourably towards him, with nearly twice as many against.

Something else happened on Armistice Day - just as full of symbolism for the future of conservatism, in its way, as a Tory home secretary barely criticising yobs throwing punches beside the Cenotaph in the name of "Ingerland till I die". Here's another scene emblematic of Tory irrelevance. Saturday's National Trust AGM at the steam museum in Swindon had its ructions too, with hecklings and flouncings out. Restore Trust, a rebel rightwing faction against the NT's mainstream, put up its candidates for the governing council, including the august former supreme court judge and historian Jonathan Sumption, the rightwing journalist Andrew Gimson and others. Determined to "shift the focus away from identity politics", it accused the trust of "promoting a self-hating conception of history" after a report detailed 93 NT proper-

ties with connections to colonialism and slavery. The insurgents attacked the trust's net-zero environment policies too, accusing it of playing politics, dangerous for a charity. But despite a vigorous social-media campaign run by a former Liz Truss campaigner, the rebels lost. Not one of their slate was elected: polling shows the NT has a very high trust ranking of 71% with the public. Yet again the culture warriors lose because the public rejects them. Unmoved by their eccentric and malevolent obsessions, irritated by their political weaponising of everything. The Tories should note that the trust has 5 million members, its council representing other colossal charities, such as the CPRE (the countryside charity formerly known as the Campaign to Protect Rural England), the RSPB, English Heritage, the Wildlife Trusts, the Woodland Trust and others. Here are the massed ranks of middle England - and they are modern, progressive and resistant to culture-war nonsense. Alongside heritage, they are concerned about the climate, human rights and an honest representation of history, as perceptions change through the generations. But the Tories have vacated this normal world, "the party and the people now passing each other like ships in the night", says Robert Ford, a professor of political science. And they may not meet again for a very long time.

But I doubt a deep understanding of any of that is behind Braverman's expulsion. Her final provocation - attacking the police as being politically biased for refusing to ban a lawfully organised protest - meant her future depended on being proved right: she needed the pro-Palestinian "hate marches" to turn violent. "Pray they don't end up with a riot at the Cenotaph", splashed the Daily Mail, plainly

yearning for mayhem to vindicate her. The Met commissioner, Mark Rowley, deserves a medal for standing firm for the right to protest, at great risk to his reputation. Everyone waited to see if a riot would prove her right and him wrong. Politically, she needed trouble. She got it, but not from the relatively peaceful pro-Palestinian marchers, despite some toxic antisemitic chants and placards. Instead, the trouble came from the shock troops of thugs who were encouraged by her disgraceful accusations of police favouritism towards leftist and Black Lives Matter protesters. She chose to "sow the seeds of hatred", said Keir Starmer. All this has been a blessing for Labour, taking its own painful internal conflict over a Gaza ceasefire out of the news.

Shuffling the old dogeared pack changes little: they are all in it together. This sacking signals that Rishi Sunak has abandoned those briefly loaned red-wall seats. Old Etonian Cameron's Lazarus, rising from the political grave, signals a desperate attempt to rescue traditional blue seats. Only recently Cameron savaged Sunak for axing HS2, but needs must when confronting the loss of swathes of home counties constituencies. Education is to blame, says Ford, whose forthcoming research exposes the depth of Tory electoral woe. Graduates are already the largest group in every cohort under the age of 50 - and they are social liberals. "The Tory vote is evaporating, and it won't come back," he says. Conservative majorities relied on school leavers, an older dying breed of the less educated, while the young no longer turn Tory as they age. He says the Tories won't recover until they appeal to graduates: naturally, Tories now want to cut university places. Braverman and the party

deputy chair, Lee Anderson, may be loudmouths, but they voice the thoughts of a party that has been marching rightwards for a long time. For years, only candidates swearing allegiance to Brexit and other rightwing nostrums had a chance of selection. Look how many MPs chose Boris Johnson, then Liz Truss, to put to their members. There's barely a shred of difference now between most Tory MPs and Nigel Farage: the beleaguered little One Nation group is lucky not to have been exiled like David Gauke and Dominic Grieve. If Sunak is ejected, it will be because he's a loser, not because his political instincts differ from most of his MPs.

This week, a large and detailed Survation poll showed Labour winning a bigger landslide than in 1997. It revealed the three top concerns in each constituency: the cost of living, the NHS and the economy, almost everywhere. No 10 plans a mighty boast for halving the inflation rate, but people will still see the price of everything rising. Culture wars are supposed to distract people from their cost of living pain. It doesn't work. Nor will reshuffling the cabinet deckchairs. Braverman's type of anti-woke warfare repels moderate Tory voters, Liberal Democrats find, picking it up on erstwhile Tory doorsteps. But she is only one among many who have shape-shifted into a party indistinguishable from the likes of Farage, with their revolutionary assaults on every element of the establishment that the old Tory party once used to conserve. Attacking the independence of the police echoes "enemies of the people" assaults on an independent judiciary, along with their universal loathing of the BBC, the NHS, local councils, the civil service and charities. These new nihilists will never win elections.

The Guardian

My country abolished the death penalty. So can yours

Elbegdorj Tsakhia

A few weeks ago, Singapore elected its new president, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, in a landslide election. While it's a largely ceremonial position (it's the prime minister who's the head of government), the president does exercise at least one important power that if used could shake up this Asian nation-state's identity and send an important message across the globe:

The power to grant clemency to death row inmates. It's a power that can dramatically change the character of a nation and its standing in the world. I should know-it's a power I used as president of Mongolia. When I entered office in 2009, I quickly came to realize that use of the death penalty in Mongolia had been arbitrary, secretive and cruel. As was my presidential prerogative, I initially granted pardons to all those scheduled for execution.

Against some resistance, I initiated the legislative process for full abolition, which was finally accomplished in 2016. Mongolia's signing of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the removal of the death penalty from all relevant national statutes is still one of the proudest moments of my political career. We were not the only country to move away from the use of capital punishment. By the end of 2022, more than two-thirds of the world's nations had done away with the practice, according to the Washington, DC-based Death Penalty Information Center. Last year, four countries abolished the death penalty for all crimes, as Amnesty International noted in a

recent report: Kazakhstan, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone and the Central African Republic.

Despite a small number of countries (20) actually completing executions last year, executions are still on the rise in much of the world, due to a few prominent outliers including Iran and Saudi Arabia. As the Amnesty report notes, "Known executions, excluding the thousands believed to have taken place in China, significantly increased by 53% on those for 2021, from 579 (2021) to 883 (2022)." This is why I have been following Singapore's frequent use of the death penalty with growing concern. Since resuming executions in March 2022 (following the height of the Covid-19 pandemic), Singapore has executed 16 individuals - all for drug offenses.

The most recent executions of three prisoners for small-scale drug trafficking - including the hanging in July of a woman for the first time in nearly 20 years - are deeply worrying. The country's heavy-handed approach raises important moral and ethical questions, while doing little to deter crime or make Singaporeans safer than they already are. Research from Amnesty International found no evidence that the death penalty deterred crime more than life imprisonment. The truth is that capital punishment is not an inevitable part of Asia's political and judicial reality. Ending it is not an imposition of Western values on our societies. It's a choice inspired by universal human rights - one that has been made by the majority of the world's nations. When

I became Mongolia's president, five crimes were eligible for the death penalty: two forms of terrorist attacks, sabotage, rape and aggravated murder. Predictably, ending the death penalty did not bring about waves of violent crime in Mongolia. Homicide rates had already been falling, and they continued to fall. In fact, crime seemed not to be affected at all by abolition, suggesting that the executions never had a deterrent effect to begin with.

While my experience has led me to oppose the death penalty under any circumstances, I find its continued use to punish nonviolent drug offenses in Singapore especially egregious. It is an excessive response to challenges that are best addressed by policies focusing on harm reduction and public health, rather than punishment. Targeting those at the bottom of the illicit drug trade's supply chain is particularly problematic, as many are coerced into doing what they do and are easily replaced by others in case of arrest. Hanging drug traffickers will not solve the bigger issues. It also puts Singapore out of step with neighboring countries - Thailand decriminalized the use of cannabis, and Malaysia has introduced legislation to follow suit.

I agree with many others who have pointed out that Singapore has done well in many other respects and made smart choices that have had significant impact on both crime and drug use. Its investments in world-class education, health care and infrastructure have contributed to stability and prosperity. Singapore has a high-

ly educated and skilled workforce, and a Singaporean passport ranks among the most desirable travel documents in the world. There's much to be proud of. Singapore undoubtedly has a strong national brand.

But brands must be carefully managed. The global attention drawn to Singapore's execution spree over the last 12 months has prompted many of its citizens to ask why they should hold on to a brutal and ineffective form of punishment, despite growing evidence that it is causing more harm than good. While the majority of Singaporeans still state that they support the death penalty, a 2018 study found that "there was a much lower support for the death penalty when respondents were faced with scenarios of cases ... particularly so for drug trafficking." The Singaporean government meanwhile remains adamant that capital punishment works to deter drug traffickers and maintain public safety. In a letter to The Atlantic earlier this year, Singapore's ambassador to the United States, Lui Tuck Yew, wrote: "Other countries can decide on the approach that best suits them. Our approach has saved countless lives and made Singapore one of the safest places in the world." While President Tharman has not shared his views on capital punishment publicly, he noted his support for giving people "second, third and fourth chances" at a forum last month - perhaps opening the door for a reversal to the government's hard-line policy. We all share a sincere desire to see our nations continue to prosper. Singapore will be better off without the death penalty.

CNN

A home secretary actively undermining public order feels like a dangerous step into Trump territory

Gaby Hinsliff

IT reads, with hindsight, uncannily like a prophecy. Long before Suella Braverman became home secretary, when Mark Rowley was enjoying a brief career sabbatical ahead of being appointed chief commissioner of the Metropolitan police, he published an unexpected literary debut. A strictly fictional thriller, co-authored by the journalist David Derbyshire, The Sleep of Reason is set in a world where shrill competing political ideologies make the job of policing infinitely harder and real people consequently risk getting hurt.

"Between you and me, I despair with this generation of politicians," says a senior police officer at one point. "We've got the rise of extreme-right terrorism, the continued threat from Islamists and we're in the middle, supposedly protecting the public. And meanwhile the political class on every side seems more interested in chucking fuel on the fire."

Where the authors got their inspiration for a novel about a female officer struggling to head off terror plots on multiple fronts, while battling not only sexism in the ranks but a rabble-rousing, populist minister who does nothing but pour petrol on the flames, who can say? But as the country approaches an emotionally fraught Remembrance Day weekend, it seems uncomfortably far-sighted.

Not content with suggesting that homelessness might be a "lifestyle choice" best controlled by confiscating the tents over rough sleepers' heads, on Thursday Braverman became the first Conservative home secretary I can remember to actively undermine public order with an eye-poppingly dangerous political attack on serving police officers that risks an already tense situation spiralling out of control. For days, now, Braverman has been locked in a bad-tempered standoff with Rowley over the pro-Palestinian march scheduled for this Saturday, which cannot by law be banned without clear intelligence that it poses a risk of serious disorder that cannot be controlled in any other way.

In her article for the Times, Braverman grudgingly conceded Rowley's point that he can't ban marches simply because people don't like the idea. But she then went on to hurl the incendiary accusation that "there is a perception that senior officers play favourites" with protesters, going easy on left-leaning and minority causes, such as Black

Lives Matter, while giving no quarter to rightwingers. Branding the Met excessively woke may sound to some readers too ridiculous an idea to be taken seriously. But at a time when the English Defence League founder Tommy Robinson is calling for vigilantes to come and "defend the Cenotaph" this weekend, despite the march being routed well away from this understandably sensitive area, there are few things more likely to increase the likelihood of violent clashes between rival camps than a home secretary implying that the police can't be trusted to hold the line by themselves.

If anyone is hijacking what should be a solemn moment for Britons to come together and honour our war dead, it's the government itself.

By seeking to interfere with the operational independence of the Met in this way, meanwhile, Braverman has, if anything, only made it harder for Rowley to back down. As London's mayor, Sadiq Khan, put it, what next? Do we want to become the kind of country where home secretaries dictate who should be arrested? What worries me almost as much, however, is the prospect of becoming a country whose Trump-lite politicians are reckless enough to start riots. For some months now, Braverman has been visibly drawing inspiration not from Tory traditions but from Tea Party Republicanism.

She was the star speaker at this spring's conference held by her party's emerging National Conservatism wing, whose emphasis on faith, flag and family is heavily influenced by US evangelical politics, though at the time she warned the British context would naturally differ in some ways. By last month, in a speech denouncing multiculturalism to a Washington thinktank audience, she was warning of European culture being "diluted", in language that carries an uncomfortable echo of great replacement theory, or the conspiracy theory that white Americans are being deliberately "replaced" with black or brown immigrants.

This week, she cited the sprawling homeless encampments of urban California - which Republicans blame on liberal progressive policies, rather than poverty and crippling housing costs - to justify her war on rough sleepers. If Britain didn't act, she claimed, we'd go the way of San Francisco or Los Angeles, "where weak policies have led to an explosion

of crime, drug taking and squalor".

Even if that were true, confiscating tents is a policy as heartless as it is useless, tackling only the visible symptoms and not the cause of homelessness. But then, workable policy solutions are not really Braverman's thing. In the words of the former Tory cabinet minister Sayeeda Warsi: "She doesn't fix things; she breaks things." It's what culture warriors do: start fires and then blame everyone else when the house burns down to ashes.

What remains of the old Conservative party still has its doubts about following her down this road, judging by the internal backlash against Braverman's proposed tent ban (which is currently on hold, pending arguments in cabinet). The Dover MP, Natalie Elphicke - on the right of the party, but also a former housing policy specialist - tweeted that in all her years working on homelessness, "at no time ever has anyone said the answer lies in the removal of tents". Others wonder what possible electoral good can come from such blood-curdling warnings about supposed social crises that make life in Britain sound worse than it actually is.

Her latest outburst, however, crosses the line from exaggerating tensions to potentially inflaming them. Downing Street now says that her words weren't cleared in advance, a breach of cabinet protocol that makes this potentially a resigning matter. But whether or not he approved the article, Rishi Sunak too has piled excessive levels of pressure on the Met of late, suggesting Rowley would be held personally responsible for any violence this weekend.

What he doesn't seem to have understood, until too late, is that the old convention of politicians leaving operational policing to the police ultimately benefits both sides. It allows the law to be enforced with some degree of public trust, but also occasionally absolves the government of taking difficult decisions. Well, not this time.

It is to be profoundly hoped that Saturday's protests still end peacefully, that nothing disturbs the sanctity of Remembrance Sunday, and that even a public this ill served by its leaders can still conduct itself with dignity and respect in difficult times. But if the worst comes to the worst, the country will remember how many different hands lit the touchpaper. And we will not forget.

The Guardian

Voters deserve better than a return to a failed pre-Brexit past

David Frost

HOW quickly the world moves on. This weekend, we saw appalling scenes of aggression, incitement and anti-Semitism on our streets once again. Today, the one Cabinet minister who called these out for what they were and criticised soft-touch Met policing was unceremoniously dismissed from the Government.

The confected row over whether Suella Braverman cleared her newspaper article with No 10 is obviously not the real cause. I've seen plenty of ministers sidestep Downing Street "suggestions" on speeches and articles. It's about unity and authority. But if you have to establish your authority by killing off your supporters, then you better get every judgment right. Yes, maybe Suella did occasionally express herself imperfectly, but it is hard to feel she has made as many errors of judgment as those in charge of the Conservative Party, who have so far driven away nearly two-thirds of our 2019 voters and, according to a Survation poll over the weekend, are about to hand Labour a 212-seat majority.

The reshuffle has promoted some capable mid-ranking ministers - Richard Holden, Laura Trott, Victoria Atkins - but it is

hard to see what they are going to do with their skills. Radical change to anything much is closed off. With the exception of a few criminal justice Bills, one can't feel that there was much in the King's Speech that engages with the actual problems of the country as most voters understand them: economic growth, health, crime, mass immigration and its consequences and, of course, the cost of living. Yes, inflation may be coming down, but housing costs remain horrific because we aren't building enough houses and because we are slowly destroying the private rental market.

This reshuffle shows the Government has decided its direction of travel. It's back to the past: a world in which Brexit may have happened legally but not in the mindset of those who rule us; a world of social liberalism, of unambitious low-growth economics, and of deferral to the views and interests of the permanent class of people who run institutions like the BBC, the Office for Budget Responsibility, and the Metropolitan Police - just as it was under David Cameron once before, and now will be again. I greatly worry that this will also be

a return to a conservatism for the privileged - people who are already doing alright, people who don't want the change so clearly signalled in those huge 2016 and 2019 victories.

So if you want lower taxation and spending; if you want more houses; if you want cuts to legal as well as illegal immigration; if you want cheaper energy and a proper rethink of net zero; if you want an end to the quango state; if you want changes to the Equality Act or an end to anything-goes multiculturalism, then you have to face the fact that they aren't going to get them from this Government. Conservatives will have to make up their own minds as to whether they are fine with that and, if not, what they are going to do about it.

Iain Dale, the LBC radio host and supposedly conservative commentator, gave "a big welcome back to David Cameron. 'Daddy's home', as someone once texted me." That, I'm afraid, says it all. The British people deserve something better than infantile regression. They deserve a Conservative Party that faces their problems and does something about them. That's what I will keep arguing for.

The Telegraph

Farewell, Suella - the British minister who was both arsonist and firefighter

Chris Doyle

ALL political careers end in failure. Some begin and end in it. This may well be the political obituary of Suella Braverman, sacked on Monday for having defied British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, for undermining the police, and for stoking community tensions. Braverman was a paperweight in a heavy-weight role. She had already been fired as interior minister once last year for a breach of security, leaving huge questions as to why she was ever reappointed.

Hate could be her middle name. Her political approach was a perpetual escalation. She was a field marshal in the culture wars that have engulfed Britain, inspired by similar confrontations in the US and elsewhere. Braverman was the most divisive and polarizing British political figure since Enoch Powell. She instrumentalized identity in a way no other modern British politician has done. To run through all the lowlights of her time as home secretary would take too long. Perhaps one of the worst was when she claimed that grooming gangs were "groups of men, almost all British-Pakistani, who hold cultural attitudes completely incompatible with British values."

Overall, it was her fierce anti-immigrant approach for which she may be most reviled. Her dehumanizing rhetoric would sit well with most of the far-right movements in the rest of Europe. She spoke of an "invasion" of migrants on the south coast. She claimed illegal migration was out of control but did nothing to

bring it under control - if anything, fomenting the crisis, trying to be both arsonist and firefighter. Domestically, her most incendiary recent comment was her description of being homeless as a "lifestyle choice." Quite what she thought she would gain by this approach is anyone's guess. The logic of arguing that homeless people chose to be homeless was lost on most people.

On Palestine, she knowingly and for her own political benefit stirred up tensions on the streets of London by routinely referring to the pro-ceasefire demonstrations as "hate marches." No other Cabinet minister used such a label, even those who were critical of the march being held on Armistice Day. She wrote an incendiary article for The Times newspaper, claiming quite falsely that some senior police officers "play favorites" over how they handle protests, and ignored requests from No 10 Downing Street to amend it. To their credit, the police stood up to her and refused to ban Saturday's march, preserving the vital right to protest in Britain. In fact, the most serious violence on Saturday came not from pro-Palestinian marchers, but from a far-right hate mob. Critics saw her defiance of the prime minister as conducting a leadership campaign while in office. They believe she was daring him to sack her. Would he have the guts? For some time, it looked as if Sunak would not. Despite the pressure, much of it from within the Conservative Party, he

stuck with her until her position became untenable. An embittered Braverman will head off to the backbenches. If her record is anything to go by, she will come out fighting from day one. She still dreams of becoming Tory leader, and most bet that there will be a vacancy after the next election if not before. She wants to be the flag bearer for the far-right of the party.

Where does this leave Sunak? This will not help unify his party, but is that even possible? He would be wise to focus on doing the best job of governing as possible and spend less time worrying about rebellious backbenchers, who never supported him anyway. His electoral chances are slim, but they can only improve with a focus on delivery of what matters to the British people, not least getting the economy on track. All the brouhaha about what have been largely peaceful marches (albeit with a number of vile examples of antisemitism) has been a huge distraction from the job of running the country. In shifting James Cleverly from foreign secretary to home secretary, Sunak has called upon someone who will be far less inflammatory and not inclined to the dangerous naked culture wars of his predecessor. Part of that process of government renewal should be for the new Foreign Secretary, David Cameron to get a grip on the UK's Israel-Palestine policy. Braverman, according to my government sources, had a distinctly unfortunate and negative input into this policy brief, about



SCCI stresses joint efforts for prevention diabetes

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq expressed grave concern over the increasing number of Diabetes patients and called for joint initiatives for prevention and control of this deadly disease by properly creating awareness among the general masses.

In this regard, he said SCCI is ready to cooperate to create awareness for pre-

vention and control of diabetes and obesity by timely diagnosis and treatment.

Fuad Ishaq was speaking at a seminar on "Prevention and Control of Diabetes and Obesity" organized by Novo Nordisk Pakistan in collaboration with the provincial health department and Hayatabad Medical Complex Peshawar.

The seminar was attended by policymakers, government departments, UN, NGOs, education and private organisations and cor-

porates along with media representatives.

The SCCI chief suggested joint efforts of public and private sectors to control and prevent the deadly diabetes and obesity disease. He stressed the need for further arranging sessions to create awareness and SCCI, under the CSR will play its role in this regard.

Fuad Ishaq called for evolving a comprehensive action plan in collaboration with public and private, rel-

evant local and donor organizations, and stakeholders. The chamber president said diabetes is a silent killer, for which maximum awareness should be created in the society to control and prevent by timely diagnosing and proper treatment.

Fuad Ishaq lauded the efforts of provincial health authorities, global organisations, policymakers and stakeholders for prevention and control of diabetes and obesity.

Gas crisis started in country to intensify in next month

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt said on Wednesday that after the sharp increase in gas prices, a gas crisis has started across the country, which will intensify next month.

He called for taking steps to deal gas crisis, as it will hurt the masses and hit the economy.

The price of LPG was also skyrocketing, which should be reduced to save people from the annoyance of a harsh winter, he added. Talking to the businessmen, Shahid Rashid Butt said that the government should not delay the necessary steps to deal with the natural gas and LPG crises.

He informed that many foreign gas exploration companies have left the

country due to discouragement, while the performance of local companies was unsatisfactory, due to which LNG was being imported by spending substantial foreign exchange.

LNG imports were a drain on scarce resources, but at the same time, they provide some relief to people and industries dependent on gas.

He said that advance agreements were made with international gas supply companies in which the interests of the country were not taken into account.

Cancellation of gas supply contracts with international suppliers has become the norm, and a proper mechanism has yet to be put in place to enforce the contract.

Shahid Rashid Butt said that the previous govern-

ment had signed a contract for gas supply with a company from Azerbaijan. Still, this company is more interested in the EU market, which will make the crisis worse in the winter.

Failure by that company to provide LNG will affect not only the people but also the economy, he observed.

The absence of the expected cargo could compel the government to slash the gas supply to the domestic sector, leaving Pakistan at the mercy of the spot market to fill the gap.

The missing cargo translates into a deficit of approximately 100 million cubic feet per day, which will spell a doomsday scenario for some sectors.

He demanded that the government to immediately make alternative arrangements to get LNG to reduce the severity of the crisis.

PSX gains 14 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Wednesday gained 14.14 points, a slight positive change of 0.02 percent, closing at 56,680.07 points against 56,665.93 points the previous trading day.

A total of 661,624,152 shares valuing Rs 24.353 billion were traded during the day as compared to 526,356,508 shares valuing Rs19.539 billion the previous day. As many as 360 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 196 of them recorded gains and 147 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 17 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 70,271,415 shares at Rs.1.40 per share, Pak Refinery with 37,133,521 shares at Rs.24.24 per share and Sui North Gas with 22,477,958 shares at Rs.53.96 per share.

Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.300.00 per share price, closing at Rs.8,900.00, whereas the runner-up was Pak Engineering with a Rs.30.69 rise in its per share price to Rs439.88. Faisal Spinning witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.27.89 per share closing at Rs343.96, followed by Siemens Pak with a Rs.22.75 decline to close at Rs.762.00.

Rupee gains ground

ISLAMABAD (INP): The exchange rate between the UAE Dirham (AED) and the Pakistani Rupee (PKR) stood at Rs77.24, marking a decline of Rs1.14 compared to the previous rate of Rs78.38 on Wednesday.

This shift in the AED to PKR exchange rates in Pakistan's currency exchange landscape is noteworthy, with the inter-bank conversion rate now settled at Rs77.24.

It's important to emphasize that these rates may vary in the open market, impacting those involved in currency exchange for both buying and selling.

The Rs1.14 decrease in the UAE Dirham to Pakistani Rupee exchange rate mirrors ongoing market dynamics and economic factors that influence the currency exchange market.

Fluctuations in AED to PKR rates are under scrutiny by individuals and businesses engaged in international transactions, underscoring the significance of this development in the financial sector.

Gold prices declined

ISLAMABAD (INP): As of Wednesday, the current rate for 24-karat gold stands at Rs211,000 per tola, while those interested in 22-karat gold can acquire it at Rs193,417 per tola.

For individuals seeking smaller quantities, 10 grams of 24-karat gold are now priced at Rs180,898, and 10 grams of 22-karat gold can be obtained for Rs165,824, based on the latest data from the bullion market.

On the international market, gold prices witness fluctuations, with the current rate standing at \$1,967 per ounce.

The price of pure gold in Pakistan has witnessed a substantial decrease.

It's important to highlight that gold rates in Pakistan can fluctuate multiple times throughout the day in response to global market trends. These rates are sourced from reliable outlets, primarily located in Karachi and Multan.



BEIJING: Ambassador of Pakistan to China Khalil Hashmi interacting with Pakistan's tourism exhibitors at Pakistan Pavilion at China Outbound Travel and Tourism Market (COTTM) Expo-2023.

SNGPL cracks down on gas theft — imposes over Rs1.4 crore fines

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 116 connections while imposing fine of Rs. 14.1 million and 848 under billing cases processed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 23 connections on illegal use of gas, another 05 connections on the use of compressor. The team also booked Rs.0.51 million against gas theft.

In Bahawalpur, the regional team disconnected 03 connections on the use of compressor and 58 under billing cases processed.

The company disconnected 05 connections on illegal use of gas and 58 under billing cases have been processed in Multan

and amount of Rs 0.1 Million have been booked against gas theft and under billing cases.

In Sheikhpura, the regional team disconnected 16 connections on illegal use of gas and 40 under billing cases processed. The team also booked Rs.3.08 million against gas theft and under billing cases.

SNGPL's team in Gujrat disconnected 06 connections on illegal use of gas. In Peshawar, the Regional team disconnected 42 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal connections and 10 under billing cases have been processed.

The team also booked Rs. 1.46 million against gas theft. In Islamabad, the regional team disconnected 05 connections on illegal use of gas.

In Abbottabad, the

regional team disconnected 02 connections on illegal use of gas and 662 under billing cases have been processed. The regional team also imposed fine of Rs. 8.51 million against gas theft and under billing cases.

In Gujranwala, 04 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas and compressor. The team also booked Rs. 0.22 million against gas theft.

In Sahiwal, 4 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas and compressor. The team also booked Rs. 0.01 million against gas theft.

In Faisalabad, the regional team disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas and 20 under billing cases processed. Rs 0.21 Million have been booked against gas theft and under billing cases.

LCCI stresses promotion of construction sector

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) President Kashif Anwar has said that the construction is the most important sector of Pakistan. He said that more than 75 industries are directly and indirectly associated with it, so it should be given special attention.

In a meeting with Administrator DHA Bahawalpur Brigadier Naveed Iqbal and Director Marketing Brigadier Muhammad Usman here at LCCI on Wednesday, he

added that the development of the construction sector would not only boost economic activities but also increase government's revenue and generate employment opportunities.

Kashif Anwar said, "We were supposed to establish new cities and build new markets, but could not succeed in this regard and the objectives for which the motorways were built could not be achieved."

While appreciating the DHA Bahawalpur project, he urged the delegation to

share its details with Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which would be communicated to its members.

Administrator DHA Bahawalpur Brigadier Naveed Iqbal said that the business community is the capital of the country and the purpose of the visit to Lahore Chamber is to benefit from the experiences. He said that Bahawalpur DHA covers 6,500 acres of land where all the facilities of life have been ensured.

Asia extends global rally

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Equities surged Wednesday and the dollar struggled after slower-than-forecast US inflation was seen as all but putting to bed any chance of another interest rate hike, and even allowed traders to bet on a series of cuts in the new year.

Investors built on a strong performance on Wall Street -- where US Treasury yields also sank -- fuelled by a sense of relief sweeping through markets that more than a year of painful tightening may have finally come to an end.

The 3.3 percent reading in the October consumer price index was well down from the 3.7 percent seen in the previous month and 0.1 percentage point below what was expected. Core inflation was also below estimates. Several Fed officials have lined up in recent months to warn that while inflation has come down from the multi-decade peaks of last year, it remained too high to give up on their rate-hike campaign for fear of prices reflating.

But the latest figures will embolden traders, who are sceptical that the central bank will act on any hawkish instincts for fear of tipping the economy into recession.

Data suggests they are now betting on as much as a one percentage point cut in rates through next year. "The fact that the US Fed seems to be done with rates and inflation is behind us for now is definitely a positive for all risky assets," Pooja Malik, of Nipun Capital, told Bloomberg Television, but she warned of the possibili-

ty of more volatility over the next 12-18 months. After Wall Street's rally that saw the Nasdaq jump more than two percent and the S&P 1.9 percent, Asia picked up the baton.

Tech giants helped push Hong Kong more than two percent higher, Tokyo added two percent, while Sydney, Seoul, Wellington, Taipei and Jakarta were all up more than one percent.

Shanghai, Singapore and Manila were also in positive territory.

And the dollar remained under pressure, having dropped against its major peers, though the yen's rally was tempered by news that Japan's economy shrank more than forecast in the third quarter.

The greenback was down two percent against the South Korean won, Australian dollar and South African rand, while it was also well off versus the Mexican peso, Canadian dollar, Thai baht and Chinese yuan.

"The last of investors not convinced the Fed is done are likely 'throwing in the towel'," Bryce Doty, of Sit Fixed Income Advisors, said. Still, Fed officials remain cautious, with Chicago boss Austan Goolsbee saying that "progress continues, though we still have a way to go". He added: "There are always some bumps in the road as inflation comes down."

However, he was increasingly hopeful the economy could be on track for a soft landing, where inflation is brought to heel and the economy remains healthy.

Richmond chief Thomas Barkin was "just not convinced that inflation is on some smooth glide path down to two percent", which is the bank's target.

Meanwhile, Jamie Dimon, the head of JPMorgan Chase, added that while the figures were good, he thought inflation was a little more sticky than they showed.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity reported at the port where five ships namely, MSC Nassau, Maersk Denver, MSC Medelaine, Southern Robin and Milaha Raslaffan carrying Container, Palm oil and LNG berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, and Engro Elengy Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, another ship 'Blue Majesty' also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port to load 3,550 tonnes of

Bitumen on November 15. A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, Maersk Denver, MSC Nassau, Clemens Schulte and Al-Berta are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 203,577 tonnes, comprising 148,868 tonnes imports cargo and 54,709 tonnes export cargo carried in 4,985 Containers (2,905 TEUs Imports and 2,080 TEUs export) was handled

Pakistan Pavilion inaugurated

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi on Wednesday inaugurated the Pakistan Pavilion at the China Outbound Travel and Tourism Market (COTTM) Expo-2023, held at the China National Agriculture Center in Beijing.

The inauguration of the Pavilion was part of a series of activities aimed at celebrating year 2023 as the "Year of Tourism and Exchange" between Pakistan and China.

While commending the efforts of the exhibitors and tourism companies for the promotion of Pakistan's tourism potential, Ambassador Hashmi noted that Pakistan was bestowed with a rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes and unique cuisine.

He encouraged Chinese tourists, academics and entrepreneurs to visit Pakistan and explore the country. He added that the tourism exchanges between China and Pakistan held immense significance for strengthening the bilateral relationship.

Ambassador Hashmi hoped that COTTM would serve as an excellent platform for networking between the tourism companies of China and Pakistan, which would contribute toward further enhancing the people-to-people exchanges between the two countries.

Tractors sales surged

ISLAMABAD (INP): Tractor sales in Pakistan have witnessed a significant annual increase during the first four months of the current financial year, driven by strong demand from the agricultural sector.

According to data from the All Pakistan Automobile Manufacturers Association (APAMA), a total of 7,105 units of AGTL tractors and 10,191 units of MTL tractors were sold in the country between July and October 2023. These figures represent a 56% and 117% increase, respectively, compared to the same period in the previous financial year.

The robust growth in tractor sales is attributed to several factors, including favorable weather conditions, improved agricultural productivity, and government initiatives aimed at promoting mechanization in the farming sector.

In October 2023 alone, sales of AGTL tractors reached 2,202 units, while MTL tractor sales stood at 3,004 units. These figures reflect a 5% and 4% decrease, respectively, compared to September 2023.

Despite this slight dip in October sales, the overall trend remains positive, indicating continued demand for tractors in the Pakistani agricultural sector.

Pakistan's exports to Turkiye dip 4.97 per cent

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's export of goods and services to Turkiye witnessed a decrease of 4.97 per cent during the first three months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

The overall exports to Turkiye were recorded at US \$90.272 million during July-September (2023-24) against exports of US \$94.998 million during July-September (2022-23), SBP data revealed.

On a year-to-year basis, the exports to Turkiye also dipped by 9.70 per cent from \$32.026 million in September 2022, against

the exports of \$28.917 million in September 2023.

Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to Turkiye decreased by 3.16 per cent during September 2023 as compared to the exports of \$29.863 million in August 2023, the SBP data revealed.

Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed a decrease of 4.96 per cent in the first three months, from US \$ 7.385 billion to US \$ 7.018 billion, the SBP data revealed.

On the other hand, the imports from Turkiye into the country during the months under review were recorded at US \$ 105.157 million against US \$108.622 million last year,

showing a decline of 3.18 per cent in July-September (2023-24). On a year-on-year basis, the imports for Turkiye however increased by 30.97 per cent from US \$27.659 million in September 2022, against the imports of US \$36.227 million in September 2023.

On a month-on-month basis, the imports from Turkiye into the country surged by 3.06 per cent during September 2023, as compared to the imports of US \$35.151 million during August 2023, according to the data. The overall imports into the country witnessed a decrease of 23.81 per cent, from \$16.355 billion to US \$ 12.460 billion, according to the data.

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Tokyo stocks close higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed sharply higher on Wednesday after rallies on Wall Street as US inflation data fuelled hopes of an end to interest rate hikes.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 2,52 percent, or 823.77 points, to 33,519.70 while the broader Topix index ended up 1.19 percent, or 27.93 points, at 2,373.22.

The dollar stood at 150.66 yen, against the 150.37 yen seen Tuesday in New York.

US inflation eased to 3.2 percent in October, fuelling market hopes that the Fed has stopped hiking interest rates.

Japanese shares "extended gains significantly" as a result, Iwai Cosmo Securities said.

"Today potentially lays the groundwork for the Fed to adopt a much less hawkish position -- especially compared with September -- and markets are now seemingly convinced the tightening cycle is over," senior market analyst Craig

Erlam at OANDA said.

Shortly before the opening, government data showed Japan's economy contracted a worse-than-expected 0.5 percent in the three months to September.

Among major shares in Tokyo, SoftBank Group surged 5.19 percent to 6,003 yen, Sony Group rose 5.02 percent to 13,220 yen, and chip-testing equipment maker Advantest surged 7.48 percent to 4,797 yen.

Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing added 3.56 percent to 36,900 yen.



Babar steps down as all-format captain



LAHORE (APP): Babar Azam has decided to step down as all-format captain of the Pakistan Men's cricket team in the aftermath of the poor performance of team in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 in India under his command.

According to a PCB press release on Wednesday, Babar Azam was offered to continue as Test team captain by the Chairman PCB's Management Committee to which the maestro batter declined and expressed his

desire to continue to serve as a batter in all formats for the team.

The PCB press release said, "PCB Chairman Management Committee Zaka Ashraf and Babar Azam met at the PCB headquarters in Lahore today and had a cordial meeting to discuss various aspects and the World Cup performance. Babar was asked to continue as Test captain, while he has been relieved of captaincy in white-ball cricket for him to focus on

one format. After consultation with his family, Babar decided to step down and PCB stands behind his decision."

PCB respects his decision and continues to support him as a player. Chairman PCB Management Committee Zaka Ashraf said: "Babar Azam is truly a world-class player and we want him to continue to thrive as a player."

He is one of the best batters Pakistan has ever produced. He is our asset, and we will continue to support him. His batting prowess is a testament to his dedication and skill. He is a role model for the present generation.

"We want to see him grow as a great batter and now without his additional burden of the captaincy, he can focus more on his performances to reach even greater heights. We respect his decision and will continue to back him." Babar has featured in 49 Tests and scored 3,772 runs which includes nine centuries and 26 half-centuries.

Similarly, the PCB has also decided to appoint new coaching

staff for the upcoming test and T20I series in Australia and New Zealand. The PCB further said, "The PCB has changed the portfolio of the entire coaching staff including Director Cricket Mickey Arthur. All coaches will continue to work in National Cricket Academy while PCB will announce the new coaching staff in due course for the upcoming series in Australia and New Zealand."

Shan Masood, Shaheen Shah Afridi appointed test, T20I captains

LAHORE: The PCB has appointed Shan Masood as the Test captain of Pakistan Men's Cricket Team, while Shaheen Shah Afridi has been named T20I captain.

34-year-old Shan has featured in 30 Tests, scoring 1,597 runs, which includes four centuries and seven half-centuries. Shan has been appointed captain till the end of the ICC World Test Championship 2023-25. Shan's first assignment as captain will be a three-match Test series

against Australia in Australia starting from 14 December.

Meanwhile, left-arm pacer Shaheen Shah will lead Pakistan Men's Team in the T20I format and his first assignment as captain will be the five-match T20I series in New Zealand from 12 to 21 January. 23-year-old Shaheen has bagged 64 wickets in 52 T20Is. Shaheen has also captained Lahore Qalandars in HBL PSL and has helped the side win the tournament twice in two years in the 2022 and 2023 editions.

Shan and Shaheen were appointed captains after Babar Azam today stepped down from all three formats of the game. Pakistan's captain in the ODI format will be announced in due course.

Hafeez replaces Mickey Arthur as Director Men's cricket team

LAHORE: The PCB on Wednesday appointed former test captain Mohammad Hafeez as Director of the Pakistan Men's cricket team replacing Mickey

Arthur who is likely to be re-assigned some coaching role at the National Cricket Academy (NCA).

The change has come in the aftermath of the poor performance of the Pakistan cricket team in the ICC Men's ODI Cricket World Cup 2023 in India where the team won four matches out of nine and finished fifth on the points table. Captain Babar Azam has already stepped down as all-format captain of the team while the PCB has decided to change portfolios of the coaching staff which will work at the NCA.

Mohammad Hafeez has featured for Pakistan in 55 Tests, 218 ODIs and 119 T20Is and has scored 12,780 runs and has taken 253 wickets. Mohammad Hafeez recently served on the PCB Cricket Technical Committee. The former all-rounder was part of Pakistan Men's team which won the ICC Champions Trophy in England in 2017. The PCB will announce the new coaching staff for the upcoming series in Australia and New Zealand in due course.

In brief

Ahsan makes it to World C'ship final

ISLAMABAD. (APP): Pakistani cueist Ahsan Ramzan has reached the final of the IBSF World 6 Red Snooker Championship 2023 at Doha, Qatar on Wednesday. In the semi-final Ahsan downed Ali Alobaidli of Qatar by 6-4. Meanwhile in the second semi-final Michael Georgiou of Cyprus beat Pakistan's Muhammad Naseem Akhtar by 6-5. The final would be played between Ahsan and Michael.

Pakistan Cup 1st semifinal today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The first semifinal of Pakistan Cup 2023 will be played between Peshawar and FATA at Pindi cricket Stadium Rawalpindi on Thursday. The second semifinal of the tournament will take place on Friday wherein Karachi Whites will face Multan at the same venue. The final of the event will be played on Sunday. The 50-over Pakistan Cup 2023, comprising 31 matches had commenced on November 1. Eight teams took part in the Cup with each team part of the single round-robin format in the group stage. The teams include Lahore Region Whites, Lahore Region Blues, Karachi Region Whites, Peshawar Region, Faisalabad FATA, Region, Multan Region, and Rawalpindi Region.

Haidari Club wins championship

FAISALABAD (APP): The Haidari Club won the Inter-Club Boys' Athletics Championship, organized under the aegis of District sports Department in Firdous Colony Jhang Road, here on Wednesday. A spokesman for the administration said that 13 events were arranged in the championship including 100-metre race, 200-metre race, 400-metre race, 1500-metre race, 4x100-metre relay race, 100-metre hurdles race, long jump, high jump, javelin throw, shot put, discus throw, etc. According to results, Haidari Athletics Club grabbed first position with 75 points, whereas Rana Naem Club stood second with 58 points. District Sports Officer Sajida Lateef was the chief guest at the championship and she distributed medals and trophies among the position holders.

National Basketball C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) would be holding the National Basketball Championship for Men 2023 at the Government College University, Lahore from November 20 to 24. According to the Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) Secretary General Khalid Bashir, top eight teams from around the country will be in action in the national men's basketball championship organised by Punjab Basketball Association and all arrangements have been completed for the successful five-day championship. He said top eight teams were divided into two groups as Pool A comprises defending champion Pakistan Army, Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF), Pakistan Air Force (PAF), Faisalabad while Wapda, Lahore, Navy and Islamabad are included in Pool B. Bashir said four matches would be played everyday during pool round matches in the championship as well as the top two teams of each group will qualify for the knockout round. The semifinals would be held on November 23 while final of the championship on November 24.

Beckham says Messi at Inter Miami is 'our gift to America'

MUMBAI (AFP): David Beckham told AFP in an interview on Wednesday that his Inter Miami franchise signed Lionel Messi as "our gift to America and the MLS". Former Manchester and Real Madrid midfielder Beckham, speaking on his first ever visit to India and in his role as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, admitted he still has to pinch himself when he sees the Argentinian World Cup winner on the teamsheet in Florida.

"It's still hard to believe that when someone turns around to me and says Inter Miami have Lionel Messi in their team, you know," he said. "It's a very proud thing for me to have as an owner, to have a player like that, the best player in the world, in our team. "We always knew that bringing Leo to America, not just to Miami, it was our gift to America and the MLS. "Because someone like that changes the game. You know, someone like that inspires another generation of soccer players. "And that's why we wanted to bring Leo

to the team. Of course, we want to win championships. Of course, we want to be the best team in the league.

"But one of the reasons why we bought him was to also inspire the next generation of soccer players in America. "To want to be soccer players. So bringing him does that and it's an important thing for us." Former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain star Messi shocked the football world when he shunned stratospheric offers from Saudi Arabia and elsewhere to join Inter Miami in July, seven months after he had led Argentina to World Cup glory in Qatar. The 36-year-old went on to light up Major League Soccer with some stellar performances but was unable to carry Inter Miami into the playoffs this season.

'Faces light up' Beckham, 48, who has turned a successful playing career that included captaining England and winning the Champions League with Manchester United into a high-profile role as a rights advocate and style icon, is

the co-owner of Inter Miami.

He was speaking to AFP in Mumbai before attending the start of the Cricket World Cup semi-final between India and New Zealand, in an interview for which questions had to be vetted in advance. Beckham explained that his first contact with the UN children's charity began when he was a teenager. "My first involvement with UNICEF was when I was 17 years old in Thailand when I was there with Manchester United, and I went to a women's care centre," he said.

"But obviously with my travels over the years, I've seen how young girls are getting left behind, they're not getting the same rights and the same equal opportunities as the boys. "So our focus has really been on girls in the last five to 10 years and that is the same here." Beckham said he was convinced sport could play a key role in children's lives, as it had in his own. "It gave me the foundation to have leadership, teamwork, discipline, focus. And just to have that confidence," said the father of four children.

Inter-College Girls Tchoukball Championship begins

PESHAWAR (APP): Inter-College Girls Tchoukball Championship under the aegis of Higher Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa got under way here at City Girls College Gulbahar on Wednesday.

Principal of the City Girls College Gulbahar Professor Tahira Dar was the chief guest on this occasion who formally inaugurated the Championship in which a total of four colleges teams are taking part.

Organizing Secretary Miss Najma Qazi, Deputy Director Sports Higher Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Arshad Hussain, Chief Referee KP Tchoukball Association Jalal Khan, Miss Afshen of Girls College Bacha Khan, Miss Saeeda Khan of Govt Girls Degree College Nahaqi, and Miss Sadaf of Frontier College for Women, players and officials were also present.

In the first match Govt Girls Degree College Bacha Khan recorded a thumping victory against strong team and host City Girls College Gulbahar by a close margin of 50-49. The matches started on a fast tempo and both the teams raided each other's territories with some fine

moves and shooting on each other's goal-posts.

In the first quarter Bacha Khan was leading by 9-8 and in the second quarter City Gulbahar took the lead with a 14-15 margin. It was the third and last quarters when Bacha Khan got the lead and raced up to 22-19 but in the meantime City Gulbahar succeeded in leveling the tally 24-24.

After giving the extra-time of seven minute, both the teams again tied at 32-32 and 7 minute more was given in which Bacha Khan won the match by 50-49. Sadia, Umbareen, Javeria and Hina were the top shooters for Bacha Khan Girls College while for City Gulbahar Sana was the perfect shooter with Maria, Shabeena and Ruqaya Khan.

In the second match Frontier College for Women recorded victory against Govt Girls Degree College Nahaqi in another thrilling match by 44-41. Both Frontier College for Women and players of Govt Girls Degree College Nahaqi played well and gave each other a tough fight.

The final will be played between Govt Girls Degree College Bacha Khan and Frontier College for Women on Thursday. Talking to APP, Organizing Secretary

Miss Najma Qazi said that soon after the final, the Netball event would be organized at Frontier College for Women where in different eight colleges will be taking part.

Tchoukball is an indoor team sport, played by teams of 7 players. It was developed in Switzerland in the 1970s, and is most popular in Singapore, Switzerland and Taiwan, but has become an international sport with national federations in over 60 countries including Pakistan.

It is governed by the International Tchoukball Federation (FITB), which was founded in 1971. The game is also gaining roots in Pakistan including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and part of the Inter-Schools and Inter-College Games wherein boys and girls are actively participating in the Tchoukball.

It is usually played with a ball on an indoor court with a small elastic rebounder on each end. Teams score by bouncing the ball against the rebounder and getting it to bounce on the floor of the court without being intercepted by the defending team. The sport was designed to limit injuries, and physical contact between players is prohibited.



MUMBAI: Virat Kohli celebrates his 50th ODI hundred.

Ahmed Nael advances to ITF Juniors C'ship semifinal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ahmed Nael Qureshi is the only Pakistani, who moved to semifinals of the Boy's Singles event ITF Pakistan J30 World Junior Tennis Championships-II 2023 at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex here on Wednesday.

Nael comfortably beat Toki Adachi of Japan 6-2 6-3 in a straightforward manner. He played consistently well throughout the match and never let his Japanese opponent take control.

In the Boys Doubles event, Pakistan's Salar Khan and M. Hamza Aasim caused upset when they defeated third seeds compatriot pair of Hamza Roman and Ahmed Nael Qureshi 2-6, 6-4 (10-4) in a closely fought fixture.

Following are the complete results:

Boys Singles Quarterfinals: Ahmed Nael Qureshi (PAK) bt Toki Adachi (JPN) 6-2, 6-3; K a m o n p a n y a k o r n Thadapong (THA) bt Hamid Israr (PAK) 6-3, 6-3; Yoshito ODA (JPN) bt M. Hamza Aasim (PAK) 6-1, 6-2; Zaidh Zihar (SRI) bt Asad Zaman (PAK) 6-2, 6-2

Girls Singles Quarterfinals: Sajidda Razick (SRI) bt Phitchayapak Srimuk (THA) 4-6, 6-2, 6-1; Bahar Kilic (TUR) bt Saina Jayesh Vaida (SGP) 6-2, 6-2; Anastasia Melnikova (RUS) bt Madina Omarova (KAZ) 2-6, 6-1, 6-1; Victoria Sedova (RUS) bt Hinata Wada (JPN) 6-0, 6-0;

Boys Doubles Quarterfinals: Toki Adachi (JPN) bt Yoshito ODA (JPN) bt Hamid Israr/ Bilal Asim (PAK) 6-4, 6-1; Salar Khan / M. Hamza Aasim (PAK) bt Hamza Roman / Ahmed Nael Qureshi (PAK) 2-6, 6-4 (10-4); Aahil Kalil (SR) / Zaidh Zihar (SRI) bt Amir Mazari / Kashan Tariq (PAK) 6-2, 6-1

Girls Double Quarterfinals: Fatima Ali Raja / Zainab Ali Raja (PAK) bt Aashnika Kasturi (AUS) / Zara Khan (PAK) 6-1, 6-0; Bihar Kilic (TUR) / Saajidda Razick (SRI) bt Sheeza Sajid / Soha Ali (PAK) 6-1, 6-0; Victoria Sedova (RUS) / Anastasia Melnikova (RUS) bt Madina Omarova (KAZ) / Hinata WADA (JPN) 6-4, 6-3; Venuli Senari (SR) / Srimuk (THA) bt Amna Ali Qayum (PAK) / Saina Jayesh (SGP) 2-6, 6-4 (10-2).

Virat Kohli scores record 50th one-day int'l hundred

MUMBAI (AFP): India's Virat Kohli scored a record 50th one-day international hundred when he reached three figures in the World Cup semi-final against New Zealand in Mumbai on Wednesday, hailing the landmark as being "like a dream".

Kohli, 35, reached his century -- his third of the tournament -- with a two off fast bowler Lockie Ferguson, having faced 106 balls, hitting eight fours and a six, to break the record of 49 ODI hundreds he had shared with Sachin Tendulkar.

He did so on his former India team-mate's home ground, with Tendulkar among those applauding at the Wankhede Stadium as Kohli bowed towards his childhood hero and fellow 2011 World Cup winner.

"It feels like a dream. Too good to be true," said Kohli at the innings break

after India piled up 397-4.

This was Kohli's 279th ODI innings, with the former India captain having also scored a further 71 fifties in addition to his 50 hundreds. Dropped on 107, Kohli was eventually out for 117 when he pulled Tim Southee low to Devon Conway at deep square leg.

"For me the most important thing is to make my team win. I've been given a role this tournament and I'm trying to dig deep," added Kohli. "That's the key to consistency - play according to the situation and play for the team."

Tendulkar, whose previous record of 49 had been equalled by Kohli 10 days ago in the group stage win over South Africa, hailed his compatriot's "passion and skill". "The first time I met you in the Indian dressing room, you were pranked by

other teammates into touching my feet. I couldn't stop laughing that day," Tendulkar wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

"But soon, you touched my heart with your passion and skill. I couldn't be happier that an Indian broke my record. "And to do it on the biggest stage - in the World Cup semi-final - and at my home ground is the icing on the cake."

Kohli said he was overjoyed to achieve the record in front of his wife, Anushka Sharma, and Tendulkar "Sachin was there in the stands, my hero. My life partner and all these fans at the Wankhede," said Kohli.

India, bidding to win a third World Cup title and second on home soil, were also boosted by Shreyas Iyer's 105 and 80 from Shubman Gill.

KP DIG Amanullah Memorial Open Tennis C'ship from Nov 23

PESHAWAR (APP): The eight edition of the DIG Amanullah Memorial Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Open Tennis Championship will start from November 23 at Peshawar Sports Complex for which arrangements have been completed well in time.

This was stated by known cardiac surgeon of the country Dr. Farhat Abbas, who is also Senior Vice President Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tennis Association, while addressing a press conference here on Wednesday.

Dr. Farhat Abbas, accompanied by Secretary General KP Tennis Association Umar Ayaz Khalil, said that all arrangements in this connection have been completed for the smooth conduct of the eighth edition of the DIG Aman Ullah Khan Memorial Open Tennis Championship here at the synthetic courts of the Peshawar Sports Complex.

He said Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tennis Association and known plastic surgeon Dr. Muhammad Tahir, President KP Tennis

Association DIG Saleem Marwat other veterans players would also be there during the opening ceremony.

"We have also made a request to Pakistan No. 1 Aqeel Khan to appear in the Championship as guest players in order to encourage the upcoming Tennis players, hailing from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Farhat Abbas said.

Senior Vice President of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tennis Association and known Cardiologist Dr. Professor Farhat Abbas said that our main focus is the upcoming new lot so that they could be provided competitive exposures like we had for present top ranking players in the past.

He also appreciated Dr. Tahir, who recently represented Pakistan in the ITF Election held in Mexico and informed about the talent that we have in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular in Pakistan in general. He thanked President Pakistan Tennis Federation Salim Saifullah Khan for his dedicated efforts in bringing

international matches including Davis Cup ties to Pakistan. Through such events, players would be able to make their ranking more high at the international level while participating in the international tournaments under International Tennis Federation (ITF).

He said Hamza made history but no one from the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa even called him and encouraged the young Hamza who won prestigious events for Pakistan internationally. "Sports in Pakistan could only be promoted so we should encourage our international ranking players," Dr. Farhat Abbas said.

Dr. Farhat Abbas said that the players would compete in U9, U13, U18, main Single and Double. About the players, Dr. Farhat Abbas said that more than two 250 players will participate in the Championship as part of the Khyber Tennis Association annual calendar. The last date of entry is till the evening of November 20, he informed.



In brief

IRSA releases 94,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) released 94,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 50,700 cusecs on Wednesday. The data released by IRSA stated that water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1510.69 feet and was 110.69 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 25,800 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1189.70 feet, which was 139.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 7,000 cusecs and 32,000 cusecs respectively. According to the data, the release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 63,900, 48,700, 41,500 and 7,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 4,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Commissioner visits Asghar Mall road

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chhatta here Wednesday visited Asghar Mall Road and reviewed construction work of the road being constructed from Murree Road to Chungi No 4. The Commissioner on the occasion said that after completion of the construction work, smooth flow of traffic could be ensured in this area. Liaquat Ali Chhatta said, the road construction work should be completed within shortest possible time frame after the sewerage lines on the side of the road are completed. "If the sewer lines are not properly constructed, the road would be destroyed after a few months," he added. Substandard work would not be tolerated under any circumstances, he warned. He directed the relevant authorities to complete the road project as soon as possible to facilitate the citizens. The RDA plot on Asghar Mall Road should be vacated immediately, he ordered. Liaquat Ali Chhatta directed the relevant officials that no one should be allowed to encroach the open space outside the houses in residential areas of Asghar Mall.

Railways Police arrest 3,843 accused

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways Police claimed to have arrested a total of 3,843 accused due to their involvement in violations of rules and laws and also registered some 3,563 cases against them in eight Railways divisions over one year. "Around 641 cases were registered in Peshawar Division, 561 in Rawalpindi, 1,037 in Lahore, 321 in Mughalpura workshops, 389 in Multan, 206 in Sukkur, 343 in Karachi, and 65 in Quetta Division," official sources in the Ministry told APP. They said the Railways Police Help Desks had been established at all the major railway stations across the country and the performance of Railways Police is quite satisfactory during the last year. "The Railways Police has handed over 199 missing boys and 73 girls to their heirs and 267 boys, 159 girls, and 47 women who ran away from home to their parents/siblings and the welfare organizations," they added. The sources said the lost luggage worth about Rs14.21 million of 2,267 passengers was handed over to them. Besides, 11,213 passengers were also provided with other facilities like first aid, wheelchairs, and stretchers.



RAWALPINDI: Students showing solidarity with the children of Palestine during march at Charing Cross Chowk, Main Peshawar Road.

IIC grants conditional approval for women to perform hajj without mahram

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Islamic Ideological Council has granted conditional permission for women to undertake the Hajj pilgrimage without a Mahram.

This decision was conveyed in a written response to an inquiry from the Ministry of Hajj, addressing various schools of Islamic jurisprudence.

According to the council, Fiqh Jafaria, Maliki, and Shafi'i schools maintain that a woman can perform Hajj without a Mahram. However, the council specified that this allowance is subject to cer-

tain conditions.

The council outlined that, according to Hanafi and Hanbali jurisprudence, Hajj is not obligatory for a woman if a Mahram is not available. The scope of a woman's Hajj without a Mahram, as per the council, is contingent on meeting specific conditions.

It further detailed that, according to the jurisprudence of Jafaria, Maliki, and Shafi'i, a woman can undertake Hajj if she is accompanied by reliable women. However, the permission from the husband or the woman's par-

ents is mandatory in the case of marriage.

The council asserted that a woman, unafraid of travel and Hajj without any safety concerns, can embark on the pilgrimage without a Mahram. In instances where a woman chooses to go on Hajj with a group without a Mahram, the Ministry of Religious Affairs is directed to conduct an investigation. The council emphasizes that the woman is only allowed to proceed with Hajj without a Mahram after the group members are satisfied, ensuring the safety and well-being of the pilgrim.

15 outlaws arrested, stolen motorbike, drugs recovered

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police apprehended 15 outlaws from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered stolen motorbike, drugs and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directions the Secretariat police team arrested an accused namely Nazakat and recovered 240 gram heroin from his possession. The Shalimar police team arrested an accused namely Rizwan and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession.

Likewise, the Golra police team arrested an accused namely Umar Farooq involved in illegally refilling gas cylinders.

The Shams Colony police team arrested two accused namely Zahid and Hasnain Shabbir and recovered two 30 bore pistols from their possession.

Similarly, the Noon police team arrested an accused namely Khan Afzar and recovered one 09mm pistol from his pos-

session. The Khanna police team arrested two accused namely Bilal Khan and Muhammad Naeem and recovered two pistols from their possession.

Moreover, the Humak police team arrested three accused namely Shahbaz, Zubair Ahmed and Masood Hussain and recovered 760 gram heroin and one 30 bore pistol from their possession. The Phulgran police team arrested an accused namely Habib Ur Rehman involved in illegally refilling gas cylinders.

Furthermore, the Nilore police team arrested an accused namely Mohib Satti and recovered 170 gram heroin from his possession. The Shahzad town police team arrested two accused namely Siraj Sabir and Adeel Khan and recovered 545 gram hashish and one stolen motorbike from their possession.

Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

ICCP Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan directed the police officials to further intensify the crackdown against the criminal elements. "Safety and security of the citizens is our foremost priority and no laxity will be tolerated in this regard", he maintained.

House maid arrested; stolen gold ornament

recovered: Islamabad Capital Police Karachi Company police team arrested a house maid involved in house burglary and recovered stolen gold ornaments from her possession, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directions, the Karachi Company police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a house maid involved in burglar activities in the area of the Karachi company police station jurisdiction. The housemaid was identified as Mandleeb. Police team also recovered stolen gold ornaments worth 1.9 million rupees from her possession.

Case was registered against the nab accused and further investigation is underway.

ICCP Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in criminal activities and ensured the safety of lives and property of citizens on priority basis.

112 children taken into custody during last two months

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Child Protection and Welfare Bureau (CPWB) Rawalpindi had taken 112 neglected children into protective custody during October and November.

District Officer CPWB Rawalpindi Ali Abid Naqvi said that on the instructions of Chairperson Sara Ahmed, the rescue operation team filed 13 cases against the anti-social elements and mafia who used children in begging activities. He further said that the children taken into protective custody were used to begging in the streets, intersections and prominent commercial centres of Rawalpindi city and were also involved in other such heinous activities.

Out of the children taken into protective custody, 45 children were involved in begging, 32 children were collecting paper and garbage, 26 children were begging under the guise of selling various items and nine children were being used in other undesirable activities. Ali Abid Naqvi said that rescue operations were continued daily as per the schedule to take the beggar children into protective custody.

According to the district officer, since January this year, a total of 788 children have been taken into protective custody from Rawalpindi. He added that presently 71 children were under CPWB Rawalpindi Centre custody and were provided the educational, psychological, medical and recreational facilities.

18 absconders involved in heinous crime held

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police have arrested 18 absconders and proclaimed offenders involved in heinous crime from various areas of the city, 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. During the crackdown, the Islamabad Capital Police Sabzi Mandi, Aabpara, Kohsar, Shalimar, Golra, Nilore, Koral, Ramna, Noon and Secretariat police stations teams have arrested 18 absconders and proclaimed offenders involved in heinous crime from various areas of the city.

Education-sector reforms hold key importance to tackle emerging challenges: Sami

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Muhammad Sami Saeed has said that reforms in education sector hold key importance to tackle the emerging challenges. Talking to Bahria University Rector Vice Admiral (R) Asif Khaliq, who called on him here on Wednesday, he also shared several initiatives taken by the ministry for improvement in the education sector.

During the meeting, they discussed various matters related to education, profes-

sional training and skill enhancement, a news release said.

Sami Saeed reaffirmed the government's commitment to provide full support in improving the education sector.

The Rector highlighted the key initiatives and achievements of Bahria University. It may be noted that this was the first time in the country's history that the budget of the Higher Education Commission has been increased from Rs40 billion to Rs70 billion in the current fiscal year.

President PMDC attends medical regulation conference

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The President of the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) Dr. Rizwan Taj has attended the 15th annual conference on medical regulation held in Bali. The esteemed gathering, a premier event in the medical community, brought together regulatory leaders, healthcare professionals, and experts to deliberate on critical issues shaping the landscape of medical regulation.

The conference, a pivotal platform for sharing insights and fostering collaboration, featured a diverse range of discussions, workshops, and presentations. President PMDC Dr. Rizwan Taj actively participated in various sessions, contributing valuable perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing medical regulation in Pakistan. President PMDC, in his discussion, emphasized on the importance of effective regulation in ensuring the highest standards of healthcare delivery.

He emphasized the need for continuous advancements in regulatory frameworks to keep pace with the evolving landscape of medical science and technology. The President PMDC engaged in dialogues with international counterparts, foster-



ing global cooperation in addressing shared regulatory challenges.

The exchange of ideas and best practices is expected to enhance the PMDC's commitment to safeguarding public health and upholding professional standards in the medical field.

The event served as a platform for the delegation to showcase Pakistan's achievements in medical regulation and

learn from global experiences.

The 15th annual conference on medical regulation reaffirms PMDC's dedication to staying at the forefront of advancements in medical regulation. By actively participating in such forums, the council demonstrates its commitment to fostering a regulatory environment that ensures the highest quality of healthcare for the people of Pakistan.

WAPDA supplied 15b power units to national grid from July to September

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) provided over 15 billion units of hydel electricity to the national grid from July to September 2023 registering an increase of 1.788 billion units.

The increase in hydel power generation helped the national exchequer save Rs 50 billion, which, otherwise, would have been spent in generating the same quantum of electricity through expensive imported residual furnace oil (RFO), official sources told APP on Wednesday.

They said improved hydrology, efficient operation and maintenance of WAPDA's hydel power stations and resumption of electricity generation from the Neelum Jhelum

Hydel Power Station in August 2023 were the major contributing factors for increase in the hydel power generation during the said period.

Giving the break-up, the sources said the Tarbela Hydel Power Station contributed 6839.27 million units, Tarbela 4th Extension 2859.67 million units, Ghazi Barotha 2229.24 million units, Mangla 1113.45 million units, Neelum Jhelum 707.62 million units, Warsak 317.66 million units and Chashma Hydel Power Station 270.27 million units. Some 664.97 million units were cumulatively generated by other hydel power stations of WAPDA, they said.

"The WAPDA's hydel generation is the most affordable and environ-

ment-friendly electricity in the country, as its generation cost stands at about Rs. 3.51 per unit, against the uniform national average determined tariff, which is Rs. 42.95 per unit for the consumers above 700 units," the sources said.

At present, WAPDA owns and operates as many as 22 hydel power stations including Neelum Jhelum.

WAPDA is vigorously implementing a least-cost energy generation plan to double its installed power generation capacity from 9500 MW to about 19500 MW by 2029 with phased completion of the under-construction mega projects including Diamer Basha Dam, Mohmand Dam, Dasu Hydropower Project and Tarbela 5th Extension Project etc.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi addressing during the prize distribution ceremony of "FBISE Annual Sports" at Pakistan Sports Complex.

ANF foils eight bids to smuggle drugs; arrests five

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) managed to foil eight bids to smuggle drugs and recovered 29 kgs of narcotics besides arresting five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He told that on information from intelligence sources about drugs smuggling, ANF personnel started special surveillance and managed to recover total 29 kgs drugs in eight operations.

Five drug smugglers were also sent behind the bars, he added.

About 400 grams Ice drug concealed in two shampoo bottles was recovered from a courier office in Rawalpindi. The parcel was booked from Rawalpindi to Bahrain.

In another operation at Allama Iqbal International Airport, 79 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a passenger. An accused, resident of Sahiwal, was leaving for Bahrain by flight number GF-676.

A passenger traveling to Qatar via flight number QR-621 was also arrested at

Allama Iqbal International Airport. Over 1.5 kgs Ice drug was recovered from the trolley bag of the accused, resident of Bahawalnagar.

In an operation at Sialkot International Airport, 2.3 kg Ice hidden in the passenger's trolley bag was recovered. The accused, resident of Sargodha, was leaving for Bahrain by flight number GF-769.

10 kgs hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused, resident of Sajawal netted from Mohammadi Chowk, Hyderabad. About 10 kgs heroin was recovered from secret cavities of a truck intercepted near Ali Masjid, Torkham. Drugs were being smuggled from Khyber to Punjab.

Five kgs hashish concealed for smuggling was recovered from an uninhabited area of Zakhakhel Khyber, the spokesman said. "Separate cases have been registered against all the accused under the Anti-Narcotics Act while further investigations are under process," he added.

Shahidi to auction off his bat

KABUL (Ariana News): Hashmatullah Shahidi, who captained Afghanistan at ICC ODI World Cup 2023 in India, met with returning refugee families on Wednesday and said he will auction off the bat he used in the match, which his team won. Shahidi announced the move while distributing cooked meals to thousands of refugees returning home. He hoped to travel to the United States and England soon to seek help from the refugees that have been pushed out.

Fly Dubai flights resumed

KABUL (TOLOnews): Fly Dubai Airlines resumed flights to Kabul on Wednesday, 24 Aqrab, after stopping for two years and four months. According to flydubai.com, the daily flights occur at 9:30 and 14:55. Afghanistan Time. Haji Obaiddullah Sader Khail, head of the Afghan Business Council in the UAE, told TOLOnews that the company will increase its flights, and soon another airline, Air Arabia, will also start flights to Kabul.

Afghan miner killed in northern Turkey

KABUL (Ariana News): An Afghan man who was injured while working at an illegal coal mine in northern Turkey was not taken to a hospital but was beaten to death to prevent the authorities from learning of the activities of the illegal mine, the Gazete Duvar news website reported.

The body of the Afghan miner, a father of four identified as Vezir Mohammad Nourtani, 50, was found in a forested area in the Black Sea province of Zonguldak on Nov. 11. His body had been burned when it was found. An autopsy revealed that the man actually died

on Nov. 9 and that his body had been taken to the forested area.

Six people including the owners of the mine have been detained in connection with Nourtani's death.

One of the suspects, Serkan Kayabas, said during interrogation that when he saw Nourtani lying unconscious on the ground, he notified the mine's owners, Enver Gideroglu and Hakan Kornos, while another miner tried to resuscitate Nourtani.

When Kornos arrived at the mine, he refused to take the Afghan man to a hospital but put him in his car

when the other miners insisted he get medical help.

Kayabas said the owners of the mine threatened them not to tell anyone about the incident or else they would be killed.

According to Gazete Duvar, Nourtani was beaten to death and his body was taken to a forested area to be burned by the suspects, who reportedly admitted to killing the man in their testimony so that authorities would not know about the illegal mine.

Nourtani, who had begun to work in the mine a month ago, was buried in Zonguldak.

Dealing with expelled Afghan migrants major challenge: OCHA

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator's Office in Afghanistan reports that since mid-September, more than 327,000 undocumented Afghan migrants and refugees have been expelled from Pakistan.

The office has emphasized that while the devastating earthquake in Herat remains unaddressed, dealing with the expelled migrants from Pakistan presents a significant challenge for them.

Daniel Endres, the coordinator of aid for Afghanistan, says in a video message: "I am at the Torg-hundi border crossing witnessing the return of thousands of migrants. They are in dire conditions, with some saying they have no shelter for this winter season." He urges the international community to provide immediate assistance to address the challenges in Afghanistan.

According to Mr Daniel, all equipment, such as tents and blankets, has been sent to the earthquake-affected people in Herat, and now the aid is insufficient for the expelled migrants.

It is worth noting that following the announcement of the expulsion of over a million undocumented Afghan migrants by the Pakistani government, the Taliban administration has established a commission to address the issues of the expelled migrants. The expelled migrants are currently residing in temporary camps.

Meanwhile, neighbouring countries such as Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey have escalated their efforts to expel Afghan migrants, further exacerbating the already dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

Turkmenistan's new CG meets with Muttaqi



KABUL (Ariana News): Turkmenistan's new consul general in Herat has submitted his letter of credentials to Afghanistan's foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. Batyr Yolov, submitted his credentials to Muttaqi in Kabul.

Foreign ministry of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), says that at the event, which was attended by the Ambassador of Turkmenistan Khawaja Awadov, Muttaqi

welcomed the new consul general of Turkmenistan and wished him success in his new mission. Muttaqi described the 30-year relations of the Islamic Emirate with Turkmenistan as positive and assured the ambassador and consul general of Turkmenistan that all IEA institutions are ready to fully cooperate in bilateral projects.

Muttaqi expressed the readiness of Afghanistan with full enthusiasm in

relation to the start of practical work of TAPI and TAP projects.

Also, the acting Foreign Minister thanked Turkmenistan for its assistance to the affected citizens due to the recent earthquakes in Herat.

The new consul general of Turkmenistan thanked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and promised to work closely with the local government of Herat province on related issues.

The Ambassador of Turkmenistan in turn called the relations between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan friendly and expressed hope that the leaders of the Islamic Emirate will visit Turkmenistan in the near future.

Awadov also said his country is working on many options regarding the TAPI and TAP projects, which will eventually be shared with the Afghan side.

Acting Minister meets Turkish Charge d'Affairs



KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqub Mujahid, the acting Minister of National Defense, met with Cen

Unal, the Turkish charge d'affairs to Kabul.

The meeting was held in Kabul, and the two sides discussed some important

issues including the strengthening of relations between the two countries and recent regional developments.

SIGAR reports a large percentage of US aid being diverted to IEA

KABUL (Ariana News): The US Inspector General for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan (SIGAR) John Sopko said Tuesday the Islamic Emirate is diverting or otherwise benefitting from a considerable amount of US assistance.

Testifying at a hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs US House of Representatives, Sopko shared how US funds have been provided to or diverted by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) since the collapse of the former government in August 2021.

He said: "SIGAR has found that Taliban (IEA) officials routinely pressure US partners to hire Taliban allies, insist that US partners contract with Taliban-affiliated companies, dictate which Afghans should receive US aid, demand payoffs from US partners before a project can begin, divert US food aid to Taliban soldiers, and tax recipients of aid once it is delivered."

"This interference in and diversion of US assistance is worrying and presents multiple risks," Sopko said.

He stated however, "over the last 12 years, SIGAR documented extensive diversion of US assistance by the prior Karzai and Ghani regimes. Similarly, experts have noted that diversion and interference are common



among other autocratic regimes the US government has sought to bypass to get aid directly to vulnerable populations. Nevertheless, the diversion of humanitarian assistance by the Taliban (IEA) is of particular concern given the humanitarian crisis the populace face as well as the Taliban's terrorist ties."

"Unlike with the prior Afghan governments, diverted funds now may fund terrorist activities in addition to enriching the pockets of corrupt officials," he said.

Meanwhile in his opening speech to the House, at the same hearing, Michael McCaul, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, criticized the Biden administration for its policies on Afghanistan and said there had been no

plans in place to support the Afghan people nor to secure enduring peace post withdrawal.

He called the IEA "terrorists" who "oppress" the Afghan people, adding that "they steal humanitarian aid from starving Afghans."

He also criticized the IEA for the edicts against women and girls.

"What troubles me is that the Biden administration is pursuing a policy of engagement at all costs and has failed to hold the Taliban (IEA) to account for their crimes."

"The Biden administration meet with the Taliban (IEA) frequently, praise the Taliban often, and haphazardly send billions of taxpayers dollars to Afghanistan."

"Through these policies the Biden administration

has all but recognized the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan."

He also claimed the IEA had equipped Taliban with weapons left behind by the US, and that the Taliban is "increasingly conducting terrorist attacks while al-Qaeda remains" safely in Afghanistan under Taliban (IEA) protection."

However, the Islamic Emirate rejected Sopko's statements that the IEA is either benefiting or diverting US aid and said the claims were baseless.

"America and Western countries do not cooperate with and help the Islamic Emirate, and regarding the [special] inspector general of the United States of America for the reconstruction of Afghanistan that you mentioned, neither does it have any official office in Afghanistan, nor does it coordinate with the officials of the Islamic Emirate, so neither their statements nor their claims have any validity," said Bilal Karimi, the IEA's Deputy Spokesman.

The Islamic Emirate also rejected McCaul's statements on the the IEA having close ties with terrorist groups including the Taliban and al-Qaeda and said officials do not have any documents nor evidence to prove their statements, and that the claims were merely propaganda.

KABUL (ANI): People who lost their homes in last year's earthquake the Gayan district of southeastern Paktika province in Afghanistan continue to remain without a roof over their heads, reported TOLO News.

The devastating earthquake of 6.1 magnitude in June 2022 destroyed an estimated almost 7,000 buildings in the region and caused widespread damage.

While over 2,700 buildings are still under construction and that work is planned to begin on 800 houses in the future, 850 houses have

already been repaired and more than 3,000 houses remain unfinished, TOLO News reported.

"7,461 houses were completely destroyed in the earthquake, about 8,500 houses were built and handed to the people; more than 2,700 houses are being worked on, and another 800 houses are on the UNHCR list, and the remaining houses still remain without any construction," Khaama Press quoted Mohammad, deputy of the Gayan district, as saying.

People in the district are

pleading with the present administration and its allies for assistance in building the last few homes.

They said that a number of elderly and children perished in the winter months as a result of a lack of shelter.

"Last winter many people lost their lives due to the cold weather," said Abdullah Jan, a Gayan resident, according to Khaama Press.

"I am asking the organizations to take action before the arrival of winter, otherwise if we face heavy rain, it will be difficult for

us," said Zarif Jan, another Gayan resident.

In addition to building shelters, people living in the Gayan Paktika district have urged the government to focus on building roads, health facilities, and other aspects of their life.

Since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, the country's economic situation has deteriorated. The Afghans have repeatedly complained of lack of basic amenities under the interim government and the country is now heavily dependent on humanitarian aid.

Returning Afghan refugees say mistreated by Iranian forces

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): A number of Afghan refugees, who arrived in western Herat province via Islam Qala port after being expelled from neighboring Iran, complain Iranian security forces mistreated and harassed them.

Syed Hussain, a resident of Kabul and one of the refugees returning from Iran, told Pajhwok Afghan News that he was doing construction work, but he was arrested by security forces in Iran and he was deported.

He added: "Iranian security forces treated us inhumanly and beat us."

Mustafa, another returnee from Iran, a resident of Takhar province, also claimed that the harassment of Afghan refugees in Iran had reached its peak and advised the Afghans to return to their country and live with dignity.

He urged the government to create jobs for unemployed people in



order to put the immigration crisis to an end.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Qayoumi, an official of the Refugees and Repatriation Department, said that a total of 375, 881 people had returned to the country through Islam Qala this year.

He said that 73,000 deserving persons had been

introduced to IOM and War and Child for assistance.

However, Maulvi Abdul Rahman Rashid, deputy minister of refugees and repatriation, during a visit to Herat province said the Islamic Emirate had established security in the entire country and returning refugees return faced no

problem in their daily life activities.

He said: "As winter is about to sets in, we ask neighboring countries hosting Afghan refugees to stop expelling refugees until the end of the winter so that the Islamic Emirate can make necessary preparations in this regard."

US firm on Taliban sanctions as experts call for easing, normalization

KABUL (VOA): The US State Department says it has no intention of easing sanctions or normalizing relations with de facto Taliban authorities in Afghanistan until the Islamist regime improves the grim human rights situation in the country.

"The United States' firm position is that there will be no significant steps toward normalization unless and until the fundamental rights of all Afghans are upheld," a State Department spokesperson told VOA.

The Department's remarks follow the release of a new United Nations assessment that suggests cautious normalization and increased international

engagement with Afghanistan's de facto authorities.

The assessment, submitted to the UN Security Council last week, recommends an expansion of international assistance, allowing for more regular development aid, infrastructure projects, and technical dialogue and cooperation. It also emphasizes the need for increased engagement to occur "in a more coherent, coordinated, and structured manner."

Despite the Taliban's assumption of control over Afghan diplomatic missions in various regional countries, including China and Russia, and its continuation of bilateral relations

with several governments, the group has not been allowed to take up Afghanistan's seat at the United Nations.

Many Taliban leaders, including Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, face travel restrictions due to UN sanctions.

Apart from political sanctions, economic sanctions imposed on Taliban entities by the United States, the European Union and other nations have severely impacted the Afghan economy, exacerbating extreme poverty in the landlocked country.

Experts argue that the isolation of Afghanistan has dire consequences for its people, many of whom depend on humanitarian

assistance.

"The main reason why the world should seek a viable pathway towards normalizing the status of Afghanistan is that the Afghan people themselves suffer the consequences of isolation," Graeme Smith, a senior consultant at the International Crisis Group, told VOA. "Airlines, banks, traders, investors and all kinds of ordinary Afghans would flourish if the country remains at peace and rejoins the international community."

US-Taliban agreement
When negotiating a safe military withdrawal from Afghanistan, the United States pledged to delist the Taliban by August 2020

from its sanctions and the Rewards for Justice programs.

Under the US-Taliban agreement, widely known as the Doha agreement, the US also committed to diplomatic efforts aimed at removing the Taliban from the UN sanctions regime within six months after the start of intra-Afghan talks.

The talks started in September 2020 after some delay but were disrupted by the unexpected collapse of the former Afghan government in August 2021.

"The Doha agreement has not been fully implemented, including lifting sanctions if the Taliban met certain specified conditions," Zalmay Khalilzad, the most wanted terrorist by

the former US ambassador who negotiated and signed the agreement with the Taliban, told VOA.

"The stalling of those aspects of the agreement and the resultant continuation of sanctions is causing Afghanistan to face many challenges. It also affects the international community, including the United States." The United States and the Taliban blame each other for the incomplete implementation of the Doha agreement.

Despite the Taliban's commitment not to shelter terrorists that threaten the US and its allies, in July 2022 a US drone strike killed Ayman al-Zawahiri, the most wanted terrorist by

the US government, in Taliban-controlled Kabul.

The State Department did not comment on a VOA question about the validity of the Doha agreement, particularly since the Taliban seized power outside a political settlement through intra-Afghan talks.

Experts say the parties need a new agreement to address both the unfulfilled elements of the Doha agreement and other issues that have arisen over the last two years.

"It is broadly agreed that the current international engagement has not been effective, and a new approach is needed," said Khalilzad.

"Such a road map would

deal with all the major issues of concern, including implementation of articles on terrorism and the Specially Designated Global Terrorist list, given positive steps taken by the Taliban on the issue."

While acknowledging the Taliban's counterterrorism efforts against the Islamic State terrorist group, US officials have kept decades-old terrorism-related sanctions on the Taliban regime.

Senior US intelligence officials have also said that al-Qaida has been reduced to its historic nadir in the region with limited capacity to launch imminent attacks against the United States.

Cabinet okays levy of 40% tax on banks' windfall profit earned during 2021-22

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Cabinet in its meeting chaired by Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq on Wednesday, accorded approval, upon the recommendation of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), to impose 40 percent tax on windfall profit earned by banks on the foreign exchange transactions during the years 2021 and 2022.

The Finance Act, 2023 introduced a new section 99D in the Income Tax Ordinance 20121 which would enforce the imposition of tax on windfall income profits and gains of the banks. The cabinet also approved amendments in the Hajj Policy 2024 under which the government and private unutilized sponsorship schemes quota would be returned to the Saudi Government, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Besides, in accordance with the Saudi government's laws, a foolproof monitoring system over the financial arrangements of Hajj group organizers would be enforced whereas under the new Hajj policy, children below the age of 10 years would be able to perform the religious obligation. For the pilgrims above the age of 80 years, conditions for keeping an assistant/helper would be relaxed, however, the Hajj group organizers would enter into agreements with the Hujjaj (pilgrims) in that regard, enabling them to enlist the services of local supporters during their stay in Saudi Arabia.

The condition would be inserted in the agreement for the provision of

services and its violation would lead to imposition of fine and black listing of the relevant Hajj group organizer, it was added. The meeting also sanctioned a reduction in the hardship Hajj quota. A total of 50 percent quota of hiring local supporters would be dedicated to those Pakistani students who are studying in different universities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and their deployment would be made as welfare staff.

The cabinet in its previous meeting had constituted a committee to bring improvement in the Hajj Policy 2024 and under its recommendations the above-mentioned amendments were made. The meeting also approved the holding of negotiations on Bilateral Investment Treaties with Saudi Arabia and Qatar on the recommendation of the Investment Board.

Upon the proposal of Ministry of Trade, the cabinet sanctioned the constitution of a committee with regard to hearing of appeals against orders of Trade Organizations Regulators, exemption and flexibility in the provisions of Import Policy Order 2022 and Export Policy Order 2022. The minister for trade would act as convener of the committee whereas ministers for law and planning would be the other members. The cabinet, upon the recommendation of the Interior Ministry, also approved the inclusion of Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Kyrgyz Democrat in the business visa list.

It also allowed the removal of the names of 18 persons from the Exit Control List (ECL), and placing nine other names in the list on the advice of the interior ministry. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, it approved the Jammu and Kashmir State Property Budget for the fiscal year 2023-24. For the current year, its budget is earmarked at Rs 267.590 million.

The meeting approved the signing of Hong Kong International Convention 2009 for the safe and environment sound recycling of ships and preparation of draft Instrument of Accession in that regard on the suggestion of Ministry of Maritime Affairs. Under the convention, Pakistan would legislate over recycling of ships and training would be imparted to the relevant staff, besides enhancing their capacity.

Moreover, for the disposal of any hazardous wastes/materials in the recycling process, availability of the relevant technological instruments would be ensured. The safety of labourers linked with the recycling industry would be ensured. It would hugely benefit ship recycling industry in Pakistan. Upon the advice of Cabinet Secretariat, the cabinet also granted exemption to the Trading Corporation of Pakistan from the Rules 8, 13, 35, 38 and 40 of the Public Regulatory Authority Rules 2004, for the procurement of 200,000 metric ton urea from the international market.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf exchanging views with Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam, Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan.

30 killed in bus crash in held Kashmir

SRINAGAR (AFP): At least 30 people were killed in Indian-occupied Kashmir on Wednesday when a passenger bus skidded off a mountainous road and plunged into a deep gorge, police said. The accident took place on a remote road in the Doda area, about 200 kilometres (124 miles) southeast of the region's capital Srinagar.

"Thirty passengers have died in the accident, caused by the driver's negligence by hitting the crash bar of the road," senior police officer Sunil Gupta told AFP. "The bus tumbled down the mountain some 250 metres (800 feet)," he said, adding that more than 25 people were also injured in the crash. A video clip from the site showed a grisly scene of several dead bodies, as rescuers tried to help the injured.

Police said they feared the death toll could rise, with many badly hurt. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the accident was "distressing" and offered his "condolences to the families who have lost their near and dear ones." "I pray that the injured recover at the earliest," he said on social media, adding that government compensation of more than \$2,400 would be offered to the next of kin of those killed, and \$600 to those injured.

Home Minister Amit Shah said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, that he was "deeply anguished to learn about the loss of precious lives." "The local administration is conducting the rescue operation in the gorge where the bus had the accident," Shah added. Accidents are common on India's vast network of roads, which are often poorly maintained.

The country accounts for 11 per cent of the global road death toll, despite having just one percent of the world's vehicles, according to a World Bank report released in 2021. The same report estimated 150,000 car crash fatalities in India annually — or one every four minutes — causing road crashes that cost the Indian economy around \$75 billion each year, the report added. Medical expenses and loss of income push many accident survivors into poverty.

In May, at least 21 people died when a bus veered off a bridge in India, reportedly after the driver fell asleep at the wheel. In July, 25 people were killed and eight others injured in western India when a bus crashed and caught fire on an expressway.

PHC reserves verdict against LG amends

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprised Justice Abdul Shakoor and Justice Syed Arshad Ali reserved judgement on writ plea against amendments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act, on Wednesday.

The counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate argued that amendments were made in 2022 for second times which had curtailed jurisdiction of Local Government elected representatives.

Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javed argued that interim government had limited jurisdiction and added that suspension of amendments will jeopardize the executive due to unavailability of provincial assembly. However, the counsel argued that petitioners' want to reinstate of 2019 amendments because elections were held under it. PHC's divisional bench comprised Justice Abdul Shakoor and Justice Syed Arshad Ali reserved judgement in this regard after conclusion of arguments.

SC adjourns Faizabad sit-in hearing

Govt forms new inquiry commission

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court Wednesday adjourned the hearing of the Faizabad sit-in review case till January 22, 2024, after the top court was told that a new inquiry commission has been formed to probe the Faizabad sit-in. A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, and comprising Justice Aminuddin Khan and Justice Athar Minallah conducted the hearing on the matter.

During the hearing of the case, CJP Isa expressed hope that the newly formed commission will live up to the expectations of the nation. "The commission will either throw dust in [our] eyes or it will write a new history; we hope the inquiry commission will conduct an independent and transparent investigation," the CJP remarked.

During the last hearing of the case on November 1, the CJP-led bench rejected the government's initial fact-finding committee, ordering the Attorney-General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan to form a new inquiry commission to ensure the implementation of the apex court verdict in the Faizabad sit-in case. At the hearing today, AGP Awan presented before the court the notification on the reconstitution of a three-member inquiry commission to probe the implementation of the verdict of the Faizabad sit-in case.

The federal government formed the new inquiry commission hours before presenting it before the apex court. According to the notification, the commission will be headed by former KP inspector general of police Akhtar Ali Shah, and consists of ex-IG Tahir Alam, and Interior Ministry Additional Secretary Khushal Khan. The notification also contains the terms of reference (TORs) of the commission which stated that the commission will submit the report on the matter within two months of its establishment.

"The inquiry commission will probe illegal financiers of the Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP)," the notification read. It added that the commission will recommend action against those who issued statements in favour of the sit-in. This legal saga began on April 15, 2019, when the then-federal government, along with entities like the Defence Ministry, Intelligence Bureau, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Muthahidda Qaumi Movement (MQM), and the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra), among others, filed review pleas contesting the apex court's judgement delivered by the incumbent CJP Isa regarding the Faizabad sit-in case. Earlier on February 6, 2019, a two-member bench

of the apex court comprising the now-CJP Isa and Justice Mushir Alam recommended that persons, issuing an edict or fatwa to harm another person or put another person in the harm's way must be dealt with iron hand and prosecuted under relevant laws. It also ruled that the intelligence agencies must not exceed their respective mandates. Later, the bench disposed of a suo moto case regarding the 2017 Faizabad sit-in staged by the TLP.

The 43-page verdict issued by the two-judge bench and published on the apex court's website read: "Every citizen and political party has the right to assemble and protest provided such assembly and protest is peaceful and complies with the law imposing reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order. The right to assemble and protest is circumscribed only to the extent that it infringes on the fundamental rights of others, including their right to free movement and to hold and enjoy property." In November 2017, the top court took suo moto notice of the three-week-long sit-in, which was held against a change in the finality-of-Prophecy oath, termed by the government as a clerical error, when the government passed the Elections Act 2017. The sit-in was called off after the protesters reached an agreement with the government.

World unified approach to save humanity: President

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has urged the global community to adopt a unified approach to save humanity from the violence of the powerful, wars and conflicts resulting in the massacre of innocent people.

Speaking at the Annual Margalla Dialogue 2023 on Wednesday, the President said, "Power of intellect should be the world order taking precedence over the violent forces which quash the spirit of humanity and justice." The event themed "Evolving world environment: Charting the course of our future" gathered diplomats, thinkers, and intellectuals from various countries.

Dr Arif Alvi said dehumanizing people had become a norm in the world where vested interests prevailed over humanity. War, he said, was not a solution to resolve any conflict and always resulted in a never-ending vicious cycle of violence. He pointed out that using the right of veto against the cessation of war questioned the ethical standards of the countries concerned. In Gaza, he said the massive killings of Palestinians committed by Israel needed urgent attention by the international community to act and play its role in stopping the bloodshed. He said Israel, in its justification to eliminate Hamas was "killing the Palestinians like savages" and calling the colossal deaths as collateral damage.

The president mentioned that the world after several war-related deaths in Europe arrived at the culmination of peace treaties and bodies like the League of the Nations and the United Nations (UN). He emphasized the role of the UN in waging peace initiatives to prevent disputes from escalating into conflicts and an effective mechanism to stop wars. Besides conflicts, he said, the world faced several threats affiliated with climate change, artificial intelligence, negative social narratives, unequal wealth distribution, and dissatisfied mankind.

"The realistic solutions to these challenges need international cooperation requiring the adoption of viable systems and also embedding ethical morality into approach," he said. President of IPRI Dr Raza Muhammad said as the world grappled with both natural and man-made disasters, it was time for a collective approach to save humanity from emanating the risks involved. He highlighted the need for a global focus on conflict resolution, the economy, and climate change. Earlier, President Dr Arif Alvi and the guests in attendance observed a one-minute silence for the innocent people of Palestine who faced the barbaric acts of Israel.

Nawaz lists a prosperous country, not govt, as his goal

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday said they didn't want government and were aspiring for a prosperous Pakistan. He wondered where the promised "change" was, asking the people to question those who were making tall claims about it.

It was a clear reference to the PTI's slogan which reflected a claim that there would be a comprehensive economic, social and political change in the country when the party came into power.

Speaking at a convention of PML-N workers in the provincial capital, Nawaz — who has served the country thrice as prime minister — mentioned that hatred, abusive language and jealousy had ruined the society. He addressed the gathering after chairing a meeting that reviewed the preparations made by the PML-N for elections as well as the steps being taken to strengthen party in the province for making it an effective political force.

The event was part of the PML-N supremo's visit to Balochistan — the first since 2017 — which saw Jam Kamal and other prominent

politicians joining his party in a massive boost before the February 8 elections. Nawaz is making concrete efforts to make inroads in the political landscape of Balochistan and Sindh through seat adjustment with other parties and persuading political leaders to join the PML-N.

Separately, Nawab Lashkari Raisani at a joint press conference with former premier Shehbaz Sharif earlier in the day said that Nawaz "knows and understands" the challenges faced by the country. Nawaz said many people had promised a heaven on earth but did nothing practical, he said, but it was the PML-N, which focused on Gwadar, Quetta, Zhob and all the other regions. "There is certainly a difference between those people and us".

"We developed a road network in Balochistan and constructed dams. We provided Rs50 billion for the construction of Kachhi Canal," the former prime minister reminded his party leaders and workers. The road link between Quetta and Islamabad was supposed to be completed in 2018, but the project hadn't been materialised yet, he regretted and noted that the students from Balochistan

had a right to study in the country's top educational institutions.

Nawaz asked the audience to inform their children, relatives and friends who had served Balochistan. "I am talking about Gwadar ever since I became the prime minister for the first time." About the future plans, the PML-N supremo said they wanted to rescue the people who were paying inflated electricity bills.

"We will introduce a scheme under which we can supply solar panel to the people," he said, listing solar energy as their primary focus. In her speech, Maryam Nawaz — PML-N chief organiser who — said Balochistan would experience a complete change in three to four years, as she talked about ensuring equal rights for the children of Balochistan.

"Quality education is a right of children in Balochistan. They must be access to it," she stressed, adding that equality would lead to a prosperous future for them. Maryam, the political scion of Nawaz, also promised that they would focus on Balochistan just like Punjab and noted that the youth had a massive potential and passion.



QUETTA: PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif addressing a press conference.

PHC orders establishment of anti-encroachment cell at CBP

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan and Justice Waqar Ahmad ordered the Cantonment Board Peshawar to remove encroachment as well as for establishment immediately a permanent Anti-encroachment Cell to ensure that no encroachments are made on the footpaths and roads in the premises of Cantt while directing Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Traffic to deploy personnel for smooth flow of traffic.

The writ pleaded that illegal encroachment made on Fakhra-e-Alam Road, Peshawar Saddar being posh area of Peshawar cantt as a number shopkeepers have

illegally occupied the footpath and roadside, which causes inconvenience for the inhabitants of the locality and pedestrians.

The plea argued to declare illegal parking on government property/roads especially Saddar Fakhra Alam Road, Kalabari road, Saddar Cant Peshawar as illegal and ineffective upon the rights of petitioner and general public. To direct respondents for demolition of illegal encroachment permanently made by the shopkeepers on roads.

The respondents to regularly perform their duties and to deploy the lifter/traffic police for removing illegal encroachment for smooth running of traffic, the writ pleaded. The petitioner requested shopkeepers for removal of encroachment on

footpath and roadside however, he was warned by some of the shopkeepers hence, forced to report the matter on Pakistan Citizen Portal for compliance but to no avail.

The pictures clearly show that they are roughly using the roads for their business activities and the respondents are receiving extra financial benefits from the shopkeepers hence, they are not taking any action against them. The Saddar area fall in the territorial jurisdiction of Cantonment Board Peshawar (CBP) but they are reluctant to take action against encroachers, the judgement stated.

The drug-addicts are using garbage and places of raw materials for their activities which has resulted so many reported unpleasant scenes which can't be ignored.