

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate is set to resume its business on Monday after a two-day break, with proceedings beginning at 3 p.m. During the session, the House will transact private members' business, during which several bills will be introduced. Moreover, the House will discuss matters of national and international importance.

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Hamas hands over another group of Israeli, Thai hostages

39 Palestinians released under hostage deal return home

JERUSALEM (Reuters): Hamas said on Sunday it had handed over 13 Israeli hostages, three Thai nationals and a person with Russian citizenship who had been held in the Gaza Strip to the Red Cross on the third day of a truce between Israel and the militant group.

The release of some of the hostages captured when Hamas fighters rampaged through southern Israel on Oct. 7 is expected to be mirrored by the Israelis freeing another group of 39 Palestinian prisoners as on previous days in the truce.

The four-day truce is the first halt in fighting in the seven weeks since Hamas killed 1,200 people and took about 240 hostages back into Gaza.

In response to that attack, Israel has vowed to destroy the Hamas militants who run Gaza, bombarding the enclave and mounting a ground offensive in the north. Some 14,800 Palestinians have been killed, Gaza health authorities say, and hundreds of thousands displaced.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday met security forces inside the Gaza Strip and indicated that the campaign was far from

over. "Nothing will stop us, and we are convinced that we have the strength, the power, the will and the determination to achieve all the goals of the war, and that is what we will do," he said, Netanyahu is expected to speak to U.S. President Joe Biden later on Sunday.

The killing of a Palestinian farmer in the central Gaza Strip had earlier added to concerns over the fragility of the truce. The farmer was killed when targeted by Israeli forces east of Gaza's long-established Maghazi refugee camp, the Palestinian Red Crescent said.

On a more positive note, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said there was "reason to believe" a U.S. hostage would be released from captivity in Gaza on Sunday. Sullivan declined to give the hostage's identity.

Thirteen Israelis and four Thai nationals arrived in Israel early on Sunday after a second release of hostages held by Hamas following an initial delay caused by a dispute about aid delivery into Gaza.

Egypt and Qatar acted as mediators on Saturday to maintain the

truce. The armed wing of Hamas also said on Sunday that four of its military commanders in the Gaza Strip had been killed, including the commander of the North Gaza brigade, Ahmad Al Ghandour. It did not say when they had been killed.

Qatar, Egypt and the United States are pressing for the truce to be extended beyond Monday but it is not clear whether that will happen.

Israel had said the ceasefire could be extended if Hamas continued to release at least 10 hostages a day. A Palestinian source had said up to 100 hostages could go free.

Six of the group of 13 Israelis released on Saturday were women and seven were teenagers or children. The youngest was three-year-old Yahel Shoham, freed with her mother and brother, although her father remains a hostage.

Israel freed 39 Palestinians - six women and 33 teenagers - from two prisons, the Palestinian news agency Wafa said.

Some of the Palestinians arrived at Al-Bireh Municipality Square in Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where thousands of citi-

zens awaited them, a Reuters journalist said. Violence flared in the West Bank where Israeli forces killed seven Palestinians, including two minors and at least one gunman, late on Saturday and early Sunday, medics and local sources said.

Even before the Oct. 7 attacks from Gaza, the West Bank had been in a state of unrest, with a rise in Israeli army raids, Palestinian attacks, and violence by Israeli settlers in the past 18 months. More than 200 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since Oct. 7, some in Israeli air strikes.

Saturday's swap follows the previous day's initial release of 13 Israeli hostages, including children and the elderly, by Hamas in return for the release of 39 Palestinian women and teenagers from Israeli prisons.

The four Thais freed on Saturday "want a shower and to contact their relatives", Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin said on social media platform X. All were safe and showed few ill-effects, he said.

"I'm so happy, I'm so glad, I can't describe my feeling at all," Thongkoon Onkaew told Reuters by

telephone after news of the release of her son Natthaporn, 26, the family's sole breadwinner.

The deal risked being derailed when Hamas' armed wing said on Saturday it was delaying releases until Israel met all truce conditions, including committing to let aid trucks into northern Gaza.

Saving the deal took a day of diplomacy mediated by Qatar and Egypt, which President Biden also joined. Al-Qassam Brigades also said Israel had failed to respect terms for the release of Palestinian prisoners that factored in their time in detention. COGAT, the Israeli agency for civilian coordination with the Palestinians, accused Hamas itself of delaying trucks trying to deliver humanitarian aid to northern Gaza at a checkpoint.

"To Hamas, residents of Gaza are their last priority," it said on Sunday.

Saturday also brought hours of waiting for the families of hostages, some of whose joy was tempered by the continued captivity of others.

"My heart is split because my son, Itay, is still in Hamas' captivity in Gaza," Mirit Regev, the mother of

Maya Regev, who was released late on Saturday, said in a statement from the Hostage and Missing Families Forum. The truce allowed some respite for Gazans such as Ibrahim Kaninch, who sat by a small bonfire outside his partially destroyed house, feeding the flames with bits of cardboard as he heated up water for tea.

"We're living days of calm, where we are stealing moments to make tea," he said, his face lit by the glow of the fire in Khan Younis in southern Gaza. Hamas militants were set to release a third group of Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners on Sunday as a delicate truce held in the two sides' seven-week war. The Islamist movement's military wing in Gaza said meanwhile that one of its top commanders and three other senior leaders had been killed during Israel's offensive, which was launched in response to deadly attacks by Hamas on October 7. With a four-day truce deal holding since Friday, there was relief for some families after the second groups of hostages and prisoners walked free despite last-minute disagreements that underlined the fragile nature of the process.

No restriction on any political party for organizing election-related activities: PM

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has said that the nation will hear good news in the coming weeks with respect to economy of the country. In an interview with a private TV channel, he said the government is going to sign Memorandum of Understandings of the projects worth billions of dollars with Kuwait, UAE, Saudi Arabia and other countries.

He lauded the Special Investment Facilitation Council saying that it is ensuring consistency of the economic policy. He said the SIFC has also inked agreements with different countries for investment in Pakistan in multiple fields.

He said the decisions of the SIFC would be the manifestation of the economic stability of the country.

To a query, the Prime Minister said the caretaker government, with support of the state, has successfully halted the cross border smuggling of dollars and other goods that would

continue in future also.

Turning to political scenario of the country, the Prime Minister said general elections would be held on February 8 next year and the Election Commission of Pakistan is making arrangements for holding the elections in free and fair manner.

He said government will ensure transparent elections and there is no restriction on any political party for organizing election-related activities.

Replying to a question about provision of level playing field to the political parties, he said there is no favourite of the caretaker government and the political party which would be mandated by the people, would form the next government.

As regards missing person in Balochistan, the Prime Minister said no institution is involved in enforced disappearance in the country.

Caretaker PM to embark on a bilateral visit to UAE: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq

Kakar on Sunday will embark on a three-day bilateral visit to the United Arab Emirates.

During the visit on Nov 26-28, the prime minister will meet President of the UAE Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed. "This engagement will provide an opportunity to advance bilateral ties in all spheres including political, economic, trade, investment, cultural, defence and people-to-people relations," Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press statement on Sunday.

The visit will include signing of MoUs between Pakistan and the UAE in a range of areas including investment cooperation in the sectors of energy, port operations projects, waste water treatment, food security, logistics, mining, aviation, and banking and financial services.

"Pakistan and the UAE enjoy warm and long-standing fraternal ties that have stood multiple tests of time," it was added.

Nationwide anti-polio drive to begin today

ISLAMABAD (APP): A five-day anti-polio campaign will begin across the country from tomorrow to eradicate the crippling disease. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, more than 7.4 million children up to five years of age will be administered polio drops during the campaign.

Thirty one thousand teams have been constituted to vaccinate the children. Likewise, in Balochistan, more than eleven thousand teams have been constituted for the door to door vaccination drive to inoculate 2.5 million children up to the age of five years. According to the polio emergency operation center, vaccination campaign in Quetta, Pishin and Qilla Abdullah has been continuing since Friday.

Similarly, in the province of Sindh, teams comprising more than 80 thousand polio workers will go door to door to administer the vaccine to over 10 million children of up-to 5 years of age in 30 districts of the province.

Polio campaign again deferred in Chaman due to security fears: The authorities in Balochistan's border city of Chaman have once again deferred the launch of polio campaign for law and order reasons.

Chaman Deputy Commissioner Raja Athar Abbas informed that the polio campaign was postponed in the city for seven days due to security fears.

Three weeks ago, District Administration had decided to postpone seven-day special anti-polio campaign in Chaman district due to the sit-in on the Pak-Afghan border highway. The Chaman DC had then said that the decision was made due to the sit-in, law and order situation and other problems in the area. It may be mentioned here that for the past nine days, thousands of political workers, traders and tribesmen have been protesting against the government's decision to only allow travellers with a passport and visa to enter Afghanistan.

IHC cancels hearing of case against former army and ISI chiefs

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Islamabad High Court has removed the hearing of a case against former army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa, ex-ISI chief Faiz Hameed and two journalists from its cause list.

The petition seeking registration of a case against the former army and ISI chiefs was scheduled for hearing on November 28. According to the Islamabad High Court website, the case was canceled and removed from the list. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq was supposed to hear the petition of citizen Atif Ali on Tuesday.

The citizen has filed an application to register a case in FIA against former COAS Bajwa, ex-spy master Faiz Hameed and two journalists Javed Chaudhry and Shahid Maitla over news reports regarding the ex-military officers' role in politics. Justice Farooq heard the petition on October 4. The

petitioner contended that the interview of ex-Gen Bajwa was conducted in a "reckless" manner and the journalists, Javed Chaudhry and Maitla, did not show any sense of responsibility in publishing them.

The petition claimed the revelations made in the interview(s) were a violation of the Official Secrets Act and tantamount to inciting mutiny and disharmony. The High Court issued notices to the FIA, General Retired Qamar Javed Bajwa and Faiz Hameed on the application of Atif Ali.

Bukhari again voices reservations: PPP Secretary General Nayyar Bukhari has again voiced reservations about PML-N's Ishaq Dar being the leader of the house in the Senate, questioning why caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar did not pick an independent senator for the role.

This is not the first time

the PPP has levelled allegations against the PML-N for having a hidden alliance with current caretaker government. Earlier this month, Bukhari had raised fingers at Dar for holding his position in the Senate.

"With which status, Ishaq Dar is holding the office of leader of the house in Senate. In Senate, leader of the house represents the prime minister," Bukhari had said in a statement. Moreover, state-run APP reported on Monday that caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi had informed the Senate that the premier had endorsed Dar as leader of the house and Senator Saleem Mandviwalla as chief whip.

According to the report, the information minister said that the two would continue to perform their responsibilities as per parliamentary traditions.

ECP to hear Imran Khan's PTI chairman case on Nov 28

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Yet another test for the cornered Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), which is already grappling with so many issues, as the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will take up the case of stripping PTI Chairman Imran Khan off his party chairmanship on Tuesday (November 28).

A five-member bench, headed by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja, will hear the case.

PTI chairman's lawyers, on the occasion, will submit their replies to the bench. Khalid Mehmood Khan, a citizen, who had filed a petition in the election commission, had argued that since Imran was not a convict in the Toshakhana reference; therefore, he be removed from the post of the party chairman. Also on Sunday, Akbar S. Babar, one of the founders of PTI, in his message, urged what he called 'ideological workers of the party' to come forward in order to ensure free, fair, and transparent intra-party elections as ordered by the ECP.

He tried to bring home the fact that in case free and fair elections were not held, the party would not be able to retain its electoral symbol of 'bat', and hence the prospects for it contesting the general elections might be in serious jeopardy. "Therefore, the PTI workers will have to save the party from complete destruction," he said, and announced starting a countrywide mass contact campaign on behalf of the party. Babar was of the view that the workers would have to rise to the occasion so that what he called the party could be saved from getting 'hijacked' again. He also called for the constitution of PTI's election commission, comprising honest and dedicated party leaders and workers, after consultations with each other.

PTI chairman grilled for over 2 hours in £190m settlement case

RAWALPINDI (NNI): A National Accountability Bureau (NAB) team grilled former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman, Imran Khan in £190m settlement case. The team led by Assistant Director Mohsin Ali Khan interrogated the PTI chairman in Adiala Jail for two and half hours. The team is quizzing, the former prime minister in the £190m case from November 15, the

sources said.

The former prime minister is currently in jail in a cipher case and also facing the Al-Qadir Trust case.

It is to be noted that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has approached the Supreme Court for bail in the £190 million case.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had launched an investigation against Imran Khan and his wife

and others for the alleged gain of hundreds of canals of land in the name of Al Qadir University Trust, which reportedly caused a loss of 190 million pounds to the national exchequer.

As per the charges, the former prime minister and others accused allegedly adjusted Rs50 billion — 190 million pounds at the time — sent by Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA) to the government.

Nawaz Sharif to appear in IHC today

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Former Prime Minister and PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif is expected to leave Lahore for Islamabad today morning. He will appear in the Islamabad High Court on Monday, where a two-member bench will hear his appeals in the Al-Azizia and Avenfield references.

According to sources, Nawaz Sharif will be accompanied by his daughter Maryam Nawaz, who is also a party leader.

After the court appearance, they are

expected to stay in Murree for three to four days, where Nawaz Sharif will hold important meetings with the leaders of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the alliance parties.

Sources also said that Nawaz Sharif will meet with his legal team and consult on the announcement of the central parliamentary board of the party during the same week. His brother and former Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif is also likely to join him in Islamabad, sources added.

CM visits MDCAT center at AWKUM

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah paid a short visit to Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan on Sunday to take stock of the arrangements put in place for holding Medical and Dental College Admissions Test (MDCAT) in the centre established in the premises of the University.

Concerned authorities on duty in the centre briefed the Chief Minister about the arrangements made for the MDCAT, and told that fool proof

arrangements in all respects have been put in place for holding the test in a transparent manner. The Chief Minister was informed that a total of 5443 candidates were registered in Mardan centre for appearing in the MDCAT adding that entry of all irrelevant persons into the premises of the centre is prohibited whereas all kinds of electronic gadgets including cell phones, wrist watches etc are banned in the premises.

It was further told that complete body search of all the candidates and

supervising staff has been ensured while mobile service in the area has been suspended through P a k i s t a n Telecommunications Authority.

The Chief Minister was further informed that required strength of supervising staff has also been ensured for conducting the test in the desired manner whereas Section 144 of CrPC has already been invoked by the district administration to ban the use of all kinds of electronic gadgets in the vicinity of the centre.



ABU DHABI: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar is being received by the Minister for Justice of the United Arab Emirates H.E. Abdullah Sultan bin Awad Al Nuaimi at Al Bateen Airport of Abu Dhabi.

Ministry allocates Rs 5.80m

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Housing and Works has allocated an amount of Rs 5.80 million in the current financial year 2023-2024 for electricity bills of Qasr-e-Naz Lodge, South Zone Karachi due to financial constraints.

"Out of the total Rs 5.80 million, only an amount of Rs 0.87 million has been released at the rate of 15 percent in this regard so far," an official source told APP. He said that the Karachi Electric Supply Company bill was Rs 7.26 million for the month of September 2023 along with arrears and the electricity connection had been disconnected in June 2023.

As per the statement of K-Electric, the official said that the electricity connection would be restored after payment of the complete amount along with arrears.

To a question, the official source said that the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) had opened registration to allot plots to the general public in sectors G-12 and F-12, Islamabad in August 2023.

He said the award of land of Sectors F-12 and G-12 was announced by the Deputy Commissioner of Capital Development Authority (CDA) in April and June 1985 under section 25 of CDA Ordinance 1960. The official said the said sectors were allocated by the Federal Cabinet to the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) in July 2020. Since, he said there is no provision for de-notification the award once announced. Neither is there any provision in the Land Acquisition Act 1894, which allows for setting aside of an award.

3 members gang arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested three members gang involved in street crimes during crack-down here on Sunday.

According to police spokesman, Airport Police conducted operation and held three members gang involved in street crimes.

Police have also recovered cash amount of Rs 45,000, motorcycle and three mobile phones from their possession.

The gang leader, identified as Irfan alias Fani, along with Owais and Umar Farooq were apprehended. SP Pothohar Muhammad Waqas Khan appreciated the performance of police team and said that it was the prime duty of police to protect citizens' lives and property. He further directed to intensify action against organized and active gangs operating in the city.

13 wedding halls sealed

LAHORE (APP): A province-wide crackdown on marriage halls violating regulations regarding one-dish policy and operating in late hours is currently in progress.

During the last 24 hours, 13 marriage halls in different districts were sealed and Rs 540,000 fine was imposed on them collectively. Additionally, a case was filed against the halls management. In Lahore division, a fine of Rs 410,000 was imposed on 17 wedding halls while 13 halls were sealed.

CM orders to speed up driving licence making process

LAHORE (NNI): Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi visited police service centers (Khidmat Markaz) of Liberty and Garden Town late at night and inspected the procedure of driving licence issuance system. During the visit of Chief Minister, Inspector General of Police Dr. Usman Anwar was also present.

The CM found that the Internet of the Token Machine of the Police Service Center of Garden Town is broken and citizens are facing difficulties in getting tokens. CM Naqvi met the citizens present at the two service centers and asked questions regarding getting a driving licence while the citizens complained about the delay in the process for getting the driving licences. Chief Minister Naqvi directed to speed up the process of making driving licences. He gave instructions to the IG police in this regard and directed to fix token machine's internet at Garden Town Service Center sooner.

The Chief Minister instructed that there should be no delay in making the driving licence. CM Naqvi also inspected the driving licence manufacturing vans and met the citizens. 12% reduction in crimes recorded during 6 months of Punjab caretaker govt. Over 12 percent reduction in crimes has been recorded in 6 months due to effective policing by the caretaker Punjab government. As per the crime calls statistics of Lahore, a decrease in the incidents of robbery, theft and larceny in Lahore was recorded during 6 months.

Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that the trend of reduction in crime is admirable, but it has to be further reduced.

Naqvi advocates digital transformation for PTV: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi underscores the need for media digitization in a rapidly

evolving landscape.

Addressing an event organized by Pakistan Television Corporation on its 59th anniversary, Naqvi highlighted the imperative for PTV to transition to social media platforms to remain competitive. Recognizing global media's swift progress, he emphasized the necessity for state media to keep pace. Naqvi expressed optimism for PTV's significant progress in the coming years, emphasizing the crucial role of dedicated staff. He extended heartfelt prayers for PTV and its workforce.

CM Naqvi fumed over delay in completion of road projects: Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has sought an answer from the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) on the delay in the timely completion of Bedian underpass sideroads during his visit to Bedian and Cavalry underpasses on Sunday morning.

On the occasion, Chief Minister Naqvi expressed anger over the delay in the completion of the sideroads of Bedian underpass and asked the concerned authority that November 25 deadline has been fixed for the completion of sideroads, why is the work not completed?

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi also visited Cavalry Underpass.

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi reviewed the construction quality of Center Point Gulberg to Defense Mor underpass during his visit. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi also inspected side roads and drainage system around Cavalry underpass.

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi directed Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) to remove soil from sideroads.

Provincial Ministers Aamir Mir, Azfar Ali Nasir, DG LDA, Chief Engineer LDA, Deputy Commissioner and other officials were also present on the occasion.

Illegally constructed compound removed over the govt land

KARACHI (APP): The district administration has removed a compound illegally constructed over the government land in Miithi, district Tharparkar on the court order. The Assistant Commissioner Miithi Muhammad Imran while talking to APP informed that a private Hindu party namely Arun s/o Hareesh had filed a case in an Anti Encroachment Tribunal Mirpur Khas against 08 people belonging to Khatri community for encroaching over a street connecting to his house.

The competent court, after hearing the case and obtained record from the Revenue authorities, declared encroachment as an illegal act and issued directives to the district administration for removing such encroachment on immediate basis, the AC said.

After receiving court orders, the district administration tried to vacate the encroached land but both parties sought time to settle the issue through reconciliation.

The plaintiff, Arun Kumar had again approached the court for execution of its order for which the Court directed the Deputy Commissioner to comply its previous order within 7 days, AC said.

The Assistant Commissioner said after receiving execution order of the competent court, the district administration with the help of police had removed the said compound which was illegally built on the land and cleared the street connecting to the house of petitioner Arun Kumar.

Meanwhile, the Senior Superintendent of Police Tharparkar informed that after decision of the Anti Encroachment Tribunal, the Khatri community also approached the High Court for vacation of said order and cancellation of executions application. Upon which honourable High Court upheld the decision of the trial court and directed local administration for compliance of orders of the Anti Encroachment Tribunal, SSP added.

455 candidates appear in KU VS Admission Test 2024

KARACHI (APP): As many as 455 candidates appeared in the admission test of the Department of Visual Studies, University of Karachi, which was held in 12 examination rooms at the departments of economics and history on Sunday.

The in-charge KU Directorate of Admissions Dr Saima Akhter mentioned that aspiring candidates appeared in the admission test for B. Arch, B. FA, and B. Design, in the disciplines of Architecture, Fine Art, Ceramics and Glass, Islamic Arts, Graphic Design, Industrial Design, Textile Design, Film and Animation of the visual studies department of the University of Karachi. She mentioned that a two-hour long test was started at 11:00 am.

According to her, the KU would inform the candidates about the provisional merit list through email, and SMS, and they would also be able to see their results along with the necessary directives on the official web portal

(www.uokadmission.edu.pk) by December 07, 2023.

Meanwhile, the KU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi, Registrar Professor Dr Abdul Waheed, Dean of Arts and Social Sciences Professor Dr Shaista Tabassum, Dr Saima Akhter, in-charge VS Syed Shamoon Haider and others, Students Advisor Dr Nosheen Raza, Campus Security Advisor Dr Salman Zubair, Medical Officer and the member of KU Syndicate Dr Muhammad Hassan Khan Auj, and others were present on this occasion and monitored the admission test proceedings.

The KU Clinic staff along with an ambulance were also present during the test proceeding. The Watch and Ward Directorate of Admissions staff were also present for the guidance of students and separate waiting areas near the examination classrooms were established for the parents and guardians of the candidates.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali giving away degrees to students during convocation of University of Swabi.

Cycle rally held to create awareness about smog

LAHORE (APP): More than 200 cyclists took part in an anti-smog cycle ride to create awareness among the public about smog prevention and cycling promotion, here on Sunday.

Lahore Divisional Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa participated in the cycle rally and completed the track with other participants. The rally commenced from Charing Cross, Mall Road, and ended at the same point after taking a round of Istanbul Chowk square. The activity is arranged on every Sunday and this is the sixth meet-up of the rally participants and cyclists. This time Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) collaborated with Commissioner's office.

Talking on the occasion, Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa highlighted the positive

impact of cycling in humans' life, saying that cycling was a sports activity in which stamina could be improved, adding that the regular use of cycling would significantly reduce smog. Less use of vehicles that emit smoke would also reduce smog, he said. He stressed the need for adopting cycling as a culture.

The commissioner said that they would make it easier for the citizens to ride bicycles on city roads, adding that administration was taking measures for facilitation of cyclists as it was the sports which was being valued more after the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. He said that historic Mall Road Lahore was closed to all type of traffic on Sunday, only cyclists were allowed to travel on the road.

The decision aims to promote sustainable and eco-friendly transportation alternatives to address the

region's air quality concerns. He added that restaurants had been instructed about giving concessions and discounts to customers coming on bicycle. Cycle tracks are being marked on the main roads of the city and cycle stands are also being built. He added that a green line has been allocated for cycles from Liberty Roundabout to Zahoor Elahi Road. A permanent series of cycling events should be started by including cycling events in the Calendar of the year, he said.

TEPA and traffic police have been instructed to prepare a working plan to create green lines in the city.

Randhawa said that under anti-smog campaign more than 135 intersections of the city are being expanded to eliminate traffic congestion. The participants described the event as healthy and useful.

67 connections disconnected in Punjab, KP and Islamabad

E.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 67 connections while 145 under billing cases processed; Rs 3.1 million fine imposed

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 24 connections on illegal use of gas. The team also imposed fine of Rs 0.003 million against gas theft cases. In Bahawalpur the company disconnected one connection on use of compressor. The regional team

in Multan disconnected 4 connections on illegal use of gas. 49 Under billing cases have been processed. The team imposed fine of Rs 0.06 million against gas pilferers.

In Peshawar and Karak, the company disconnected 18 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 0.47 million against gas theft and under billing cases. The team lodged 2 FIRs against gas theft cases. The regional team in Islamabad disconnected 1 connection on illegal use of gas. The regional team of Mardan processed 60 under billing cases and

booked an amount of 0.10 million against Under billing cases. In Sahiwal, one connection was disconnected on illegal use of gas. In Faisalabad region 10 under billing cases have been processed.

The team of Sheikhupura disconnected 15 connections on illegal use of gas while another two on use of compressor and 26 under billing cases have been processed and amount of Rs 2.51 million booked against Under billing and gas theft cases.

The team of Gujarat disconnected 1 connection on illegal use of gas.

Safe city program still a distant dream for Karachi: Altaf Shakoor

KARACHI (NNI): Safe city program despite its 'soft launch' is still a distant dream for Karachiites, as the traditionally lazy bureaucrats of the are least concerned about bringing modern technology-based changes to the megacity, said Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Altaf Shakoor here Sunday.

He said that the contract signing ceremony of the Integrated C5ISR-based Safe City Project was launched in the past but then there is a complete silence about this much awaited project. Nobody knows about the timeline of C5ISR- command, control, communication, computer, cyber security, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance - program for the megacity. He said there is dire need to introduce artificial intelligence in policing and security matters of our urban centers like Karachi. He said modern technology would lessen the burden on police and improve security and safety of citizens. He said the government should learn from the success of China regarding the integration of artificial intelligence in policing and city security matters.

He said the basic point to make

Karachi a safe city would be purging the local police from political interference. He said dozens of police officers in Sindh are said to be appointed purely on 'political basis', bypassing merits and Sindh Public Service Commission rules.

He regretted that presently the megacity is in the grip of crime and one reason for this is that the city police itself is involved in crimes and robberies. Recently, a DSP Umair Bijari, a blue-eyed political appointee of the previous PPP Sindh government, was arrested red-headed while robbing a house in Orangi Karachi.

It is alleged that previous chief minister of Sindh Murad Ali Shah was involved in political appointment of this officer, who belongs to Bajari tribe of Janghara-Bajara village Sehwan, the political constituency of Syed Murad Shah.

Altaf Shakoor demanded that the higher forum should probe if this appointment was really made on political grounds and if so the said accused and other police officer recruited in Sindh police directly on political grounds, without SPSC recommendations, should be sacked and

those involved in their appointments should be disqualified for any public office in future.

He said with the help of a safe city program we can make Karachi a modern livable city. He said the issues like traffic mess and encroachments could be easily resolved with the help of artificial intelligence and modern surveillance cameras.

He said the lawlessness in Karachi is an issue pertaining to national security as the megacity is the engine of the national economy and crime here would directly affect the national security which is closely linked to the economy. He said the rangers deputed in Karachi should also develop its own artificial intelligence based security monitoring system to augment the efforts of police and local administration. He said the Sindh Safe Cities Authority and NRTC should be woken up from their deep slumber to ensure start of practical work on the safe city project in Karachi on fast track basis as the megacity needs a strong system for better law enforcement and emergency response to deter growing criminal activities in the megacity.

Ignite launches third edition of its Digital Pakistan Cybersecurity Hackathon 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecom Dr. Umar Saif emphasized the paramount importance of safeguarding the cyber boundaries of the country. He highlighted the ongoing efforts within his Ministry to identify and nurture talent capable of thwarting malicious cyber attempts. In his message at the inaugural event of the third edition of Digital Pakistan Cybersecurity Hackathon 2023, organized by Ignite in Karachi, the minister conveyed the progress in establishing the operational readiness of Pakistan's National Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) and the forthcoming institutionalization of a Cyber Security Authority.

The event was attended by CEO Ignite, Asim Shahryar Husain, along with board members of Ignite, Engr.

Prof. Dr. Bilal Ahmed Alvi, Vice Chancellor Nazeer Hussain University Karachi and Prof. Dr. Rabia Enam, Director ORIC SSUET Karachi besides cybersecurity professionals and guests from the industry and academia, said a news release issued on Sunday.

In his welcome address, Asim Shahryar Husain, CEO Ignite, informed that this year, Ignite had organized a series of five-day hands-on training workshops in ten cities of Pakistan to build the capacity of cybersecurity students and professionals before conducting the hackathons. He said that originally designed for approximately 100 participants at each location, these workshops accommodated an impressive 1576 trainees which was 57 percent more than the planned trainees.

The comprehensive training covered various topics of cybersecurity including

Security fundamentals, Penetration testing methodologies, Web application security, Network security, Social engineering, Wireless network security, Cloud Security, Mobile device security, and Incident response. He also informed the audience that three teams from Ignite's cybersecurity hackathons over the past two years, Griffins, Sudoers and Airoverflow, had competed in "Black Hat MEA" in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from 14th to 16th November.

The three teams, sponsored by Ignite, were ranked in the top 35 teams out of 250 global teams with Airoverflow, Sudoers, and Griffins being ranked 27th, 32nd, and 33rd in Blackhat MEA's competition respectively. Team Airoverflow achieved a remarkable feat by cracking a Linux Docker in just 4 minutes and 50 seconds during a challenge presented by the Academy of Learning.



LAHORE: Children enjoying horse riding during a holiday at the Royal Fort.

40,000 participate in MDCAT 2023

PESHAWAR (INP): Students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Sunday once again took the Medical and Dental College Admission Test (MDCAT) 2023 after allegations of cheating marred the previous test conducted on September 10. The test began at 10 am in 11 centres set up by the administration. Over 40,000 students are taking part in the exam which is being re-conducted after allegations of cheating.

Applicants have been instructed to bring along their identification cards and will have to undergo biometric verification as well.

In light of cheating allegations in the last round, mobile phones are completely prohibited in the test centres.

The district administration in Peshawar has imposed section 144. The test had been taken across the country on September 10. At the time, authorities had claimed that they had knowledge about plans of cheating and had foiled them.

However, the results of the test had given rise to complaints of foul play. When the government decided to retake the exam, the matter had even reached the Peshawar High Court which disposed of the petition. The PHC had then ordered that the test be retaken in six weeks.

VC assures provision of financial benefits to ICS



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Vice Chancellor (VC) Islamia College University Dr. Gul Majeed assured redressal issues regarding Islamia Collegiate School (ICS) both administrative and financial on priority basis, on Sunday.

This he committed to a ICS Teaching Staff Association lead by president Kafeel Ahmad and general secretary Muhammad Shahzad along with cabinet members were present during the meeting held at Islamia College University VC Office.

ICS Teaching Staff Association demanded appointment of the school principal which vacant from 8 months. The delegation also demanded recruitment of teachers as well as promotions of the eligible staff.

ICS Teaching Staff Association argued for provision of 40% financial benefits in Self Support Scheme fees to the school as per syndicate decision.

VC Islamia College University Peshawar Dr. Gul Majeed Khan assured redressal of ICS issues on priority basis.

Major problem of world: Zionist economy

Khawaja Wajih u Din

Careful study of chequered history of world after 2nd World War in general and events of 1967 in particular vis-a-vis all what took place in last 5 decades would reveal that zionism stands out like perceptive quill as main major problem being faced by world hampering progress of humanity, because: first, US is fully occupied by Zionism; secondly, might of zionism prevails in Europe, Arab world, South Africa, other continents and even in major parts of Asiatic region; thirdly, to say that China is not impressed from them is misconceived notion; fourthly, Russia does not oppose them too; and fifthly, almost all IMNCs are fully owned-n-possessioned by Zionists.

Ours is an age of economic power. IMNCs provide services, manufacture products and influence foreign policies of powerful states like US, UK, UAE etc.

IMNCs constitute an Octopus with gigantic tentacles by which economy, politics, social structure and even cultural lives of humanity are in grip of these IMNCs. They manage International Political Economy.

This is an effort to unearth the problem at the



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali addressing a public gathering.

Shawarma: a delectable food attract Peshawarties

PESHAWAR (APP): Shawarma, a popular food in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has started attracting Peshawarties due to its delectable taste, energy and time saving merits to beat hunger in winter season.

A visitor could see shawarma's varieties in plenty of food restaurants and bakery shops opened at exterior and inter city of Peshawar known for hospitality worldwide.

Besides other bazaars and markets, shawarma shops could be seen at historic Qisakhwani bazaar, Karinpora, Hashatnagri, Liaquat bazaar and Namak Mandi where the mouthwatering cuisine attract foodies in substantial number especially at night.

The motorists are also seen taking keen interest in the special food believed to be originated from Middle East in these bazaars and markets keeping in view of its rising demand in the wake of increase in chill during night.

"Peshawar is famous for delicious and spicy cuisines worldwide and its shawarma, chapli kabab, sri paye, and chicken corn soup attract food lovers from inside and outside country due to its unique taste and energy perspective," said Manzoorul Haq, former Ambassador while talking to APP on Saturday.

Waiting for his turn at a famous shawarma shop at Qissa Khwani, Manzoor who served as Pakistan's top diplomat at Saudia Arabia and Egypt said shawarma was a popular street food in the Middle East, which originated in Turkey. It is made of spit-roasted layers of lamb, beef or chicken marinated meat that are properly sliced and wrapped in before serving to the consumers.

He said its recipe was later brought and practiced in Indo-Pakistan subcontinent by traders associated with food business and subsequently its shops were opened in Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar after independence of Pakistan.

The shawarma business grew with passage of time and today this business have made deep inroads in food services in Peshawar and other cities and town of Pakistan.

"Shawarma save time and money of the consumers. It is a quick street food that may be consumed even while driving," he said.

Manzoor said it was responsibility of the district administration to ensure that unsafe chicken was not used in shawarma and rice pulao.

Bahar Ali (50), a famous shawarma seller at Pabbi bazaar told APP that he had inherited the business after the death of my father and shifted it to third generation ie sons.

Govt sought services of Safer Ahmed

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has formally sought services of senior Audit and Account Group Officer, Safer Ahmed (BPS 19) for posting in the provincial finance department on deputation.

A formal note has been forwarded to Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (retired) Arshad Hussain Shah to this effect, officials told APP on Sunday.

It has been maintained in the official letter that the move has been necessitated due to unconventional financial crises in the province and other finance related issues.

Therefore, the appointment of senior account officer is required to explore new avenues of revenue generation and ensure acquisition of funds for province. Safer has served as Special Secretary Finance KP and is presently posted as Director Audit in KP.

Additional buses of BRT started

PESHAWAR (APP): TransPeshawar authorities started additional buses of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for candidates appearing in the Medical and Dental Colleges Admission Test (MDCAT) here on Sunday.

The extra buses will provide convenient transportation for candidates to reach the test centers, with TransPeshawar facilitating the travel, said the spokesman of BRT.

As part of this initiative, candidates from Kohat Adda, Charsadda Adda, and Hayatabad will have travel facilities extended up to the University Station, ensuring seamless transportation.



PESHAWAR: Secretary Dr. Muhammad Israr presiding over a meeting regarding anti-biotic medicines.

Pakistan's prosperity, global collaboration: Speakers underscore significance of CPEC

PESHAWAR (APP): Speakers at a seminar on Sunday underscored significance of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) for Pakistan's prosperity and global collaboration and stressed the importance of converting these challenges into opportunities.

Secretary Agriculture Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Javed Marwat has heralded the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a transformative game-changer for both Pakistan and the broader region.

He said that this significant project not only presents challenges but also offers unprecedented opportunities for the nation.

The seminar was organized by the China Window, a Peshawar-based Chinese Cultural Center, in collaboration with the Institute of Management Sciences (IMSciences). A large number of male and female students participated in the seminar.

Javed Marwat emphasized that CPEC presents both challenges and opportunities for the region.

He said that Pakistan needs to improve its industries and generate youth employment through CPEC.

Javed Marwat expressed optimism that the establishment of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) would attract investment not only from China but also from other countries from around the world, including the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

The Secretary of Agriculture underscored the potential for agricultural development.

He pointed out that 1.1 million acres of land in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are currently barren, emphasizing the need to leverage CPEC to cultivate this land.

Javed Marwat suggested that adopting China's successful agricultural model could lead to significant progress in the sector.

Javed Marwat urged the audience to view global conditions as an opportunity to turn challenges into positive outcomes.

He anticipated that the SIFC would attract investors from various countries worldwide, contributing to Pakistan's economic growth.

Professor Dr. Usman Ghani, Director of IMSciences, highlighted that CPEC encompasses not only industrial investment but also educational collaboration between Pakistan and China.

He acknowledged the thousands of Pakistani students benefiting from scholarships to study in top Chinese universities.

He emphasized the positive impact of memorandums of understanding (MoU) signed between educational institutions in Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and their Chinese counterparts.

Dr. Usman Ghani said that the present era requires producing such a batch of students who are skilled in technology and serve in the industry sector.

Adil Salah Ud Din, Chief Commercial Officer of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Management Company (KPEZDMC), provided insights into the provincial government's initiatives to promote industrialization.

He noted the establishment of factories in the Rashakai Economic Zone and the creation of special economic zones in northern and southern districts to attract domestic and international investors.

He expressed confidence that the second phase of CPEC would usher in a new era of economic development. He said that the government is making all possible efforts to attract foreign investments in the country.

While presenting his thesis on Pakistan-China friendship, Professor Dr. Gulzar Jalal, Head of the English Department at Edwards College Peshawar, highlighted the enduring friendship between Pakistan and China.

He said that there is no doubt that China is a long-standing and proud friend of Pakistan, and many other projects, including CPEC, are for Pakistan-China friendship.

He urged Pakistan to learn from China's development model and capitalize on the experiences shared between the two nations.

Earlier, Amjad Aziz Malik, Administrator of China Window, briefed participants on the state-of-the-art Chinese Cultural Center in Peshawar.

He provided a comprehensive overview of its significance in fostering cultural exchange and understanding between China and Pakistan.

He underscored the pivotal role of such cultural initiatives in strengthening the bonds of friendship and collaboration between the two nations.

During the event, shields were distributed among the speakers by Professor Dr. Usman, the Director of IMSciences.



PESHAWAR: Provincial president of PPP's Women Wing Senator Robina Khalid presenting a bouquet to central president Faryal Talpur. — F.P. photo

Kitchen gardening: A productive way to get fresh, organic foods

PESHAWAR (APP): The green grocer was busy arranging vegetables on racks in his shop but his face was worrisome after witnessing dwindling customers ratio mostly affected by exorbitant prices of vegetables and supply due to skyrocketing fuel prices.

The overall situation seemed grim from a business point of view as some vegetables assembled on racks for display were seen losing freshness while some that are used raw for sprinkling like coriander and mint were near to decaying due to shortage of customers in the local market.

"The prices of daily use vegetables are ascending fast with each passing day in Peshawar, Nowshera, Mardan and Charsadda markets and even people belonging to middle class finding it very difficult to purchase them," said Muhammad Arif, a vegetable shop owner at Gulbahar Peshawar while talking to APP. He said the cheapest items like coriander and mint were being sold on double and triple of the previous prices, making these items beyond the reach of customers in the local market.

"The persistent increase in prices of daily use vegetables including potato, tomato, onion, lemons and others have left people with no other option than to set up kitchen gardens on available spaces in homes and even on rooftops to fulfill their families' fresh and organic food demands," he said.

He admitted that availability of proper places for kitchen garden is very difficult in cities but vegetables could be grown on rooftops by introducing innovative agricultural techniques. Vegetables that are grown in kitchen gardens are fresh, healthy, organic and full of nutrients as compared to those that come from farms and markets, he opined and said, "Some of the reasons that affected quality of produce are unnecessary use of fertilizers to improve the yield."

Frequent use of fertilizers to increase crop production have also negatively impacted the nutritional value of vegetables and even their taste, he said and added that most important factor of kitchen gardening is money saving.

Kitchen gardening is also called home gardening or backyard gardening and refers to growing edible plants, herbs, and vegetables in and around home. The practice is adaptable to various spaces, including small balconies, windowsills, containers, or larger backyard plots and allows individuals with limited space to still engage in productive gardening.

"One of the foremost benefits is the ability to harvest fresh and organic produce according to your needs while fruits, vegetables and herbs have higher nutritional value and superior taste compared to items brought from store or vegetable shops," said Qaisar Afridi, a kitchen gardener while talking to APP.

Qaisar Afridi, who resides in New Javid Town and grew a kitchen garden next to his home, said that he was enjoying the exquisite taste of fresh vegetables without spending a penny. "I used natural manure to keep vegetables healthy as compared to factory-fertilizers that are not suited for vegetables of daily use," he told.

He was of the view that engaging in kitchen gardening provides chances of physical activity and outdoor exposure that are needed to live a healthy lifestyle.

"While consuming fresh and homegrown produce contributes to a nutritious diet and supporting overall well-being," he added.

Health experts have termed gardening a therapeutic way to reduce stress and promote mental well-being.

"The act of caring for plants and seen them growing is a calming and rewarding experience for me," Qaisar Afridi said.

"Kitchen gardening provides an excellent educational experience to children as they can learn about plant life cycles, the importance of soil health, balanced ecosystem and the basics of horticulture besides fostering a greater understanding and appreciation for the food we consume," said Sundas Ali, a nutritionist while talking to APP.

She said kitchen gardeners had the freedom to choose the plants they want to grow according to taste and tailoring the garden to their preferences and needs.

"This gives them a diverse range of fruits, vegetables and herbs adding variety to meals. With proper planning and use of new techniques like crop rotation, and greenhouse gardening, individuals can enjoy a continuous harvest throughout the year and even in different climates and seasons," she added.

"Kitchen gardening is also a way to promote sustainability by reducing carbon emission associated with transportation and it also encourages the use of eco-friendly practices," opined Dr. Tauheedul Haq, former Conservator of Forests KP.

He maintained, "Kitchen gardening is a versatile, interesting and rewarding practice in GULF and Central Asian States besides EU that brings numerous benefits by providing fresh and healthy food to fostering a deeper connection with nature and the community."

Jan Muhammad, Director General Extension, Agriculture Department told the news agency that importance of kitchen garden had increased in Pakistan due to rapid population growth that is squeezing agricultural lands keeping in view of the mushroom growth of housing societies.

He said Pakistan's climatic and soil conditions were most suitable for growing almost all kinds of vegetables. The total crop area of Pakistan is about 22.94 million hectares and expansion in it would be required keeping in view the food requirements of rising population bulge.

"Kitchen garden's technique can be highly productive for the country," he added.



In brief

Four killed, several injured

KHAIRPUR (INP): At least four people including two children were killed and several others injured in collision between passenger coach and a truck at Khairpur National Highway. According to details, an over speeding Sukkur bound passenger coach coming from Karachi raked into a truck parked at Ranipur bus stop. As a result of accident four people including two children and two women were killed while several others sustained injuries. The deceased included Muhammad Umar, Muhammad Faizan, Rani Khatoon and another unidentified woman. The bodies and injured were shifted to hospital where condition of some wounded people was stated to be critical.

PFA discards unhealthy crops

SARGODHA (APP): Punjab Food Authority (PFA) enforcement teams discarded thousands of kilograms of unhealthy vegetables by ploughing on two acres of land on Sunday. According to a spokesperson, the PFA has discarded toxic pumpkin and apple gourd crops. The PFA DG informed APP that use of wastewater to irrigate crops causes diseases. He said farmers could cultivate only alternative/non-edible crops like bamboos, jute, indoor plants and flowers with sewage and industrial wastewater. He warned farmers to avoid irrigating crops with sewage, otherwise the PFA would waste crops as per law. "The PFA is vigilantly monitoring to ensure safe food from the farm to the plate," he added.

Furniture shop gutted

FAISALABAD (APP): A furniture shop was reduced to ashes, in the limits of Ghulam Muhammad Abad police station. Rescue-1122 spokesman said on Sunday the incident took place at Milad Road in Bari Unasi where a furniture shop caught fire due to short-circuiting. The fire engulfed the entire surroundings and burnt precious material stored in the shop. Receiving information, fire fighters of Rescue 1122 rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control after hectic efforts of many hours. However, no loss of life was reported in the incident.

Free camp to be organized

HYDERABAD (APP): Kasur Hearing Center (Pvt) Ltd will organize a free camp for patients with hearing loss on 6th December (Wednesday). The camp will be held from 10 am to 7 pm at Sihait Medical Center, Latifabad, Hyderabad, said a statement issued here Sunday.

Seven injure in road mishap

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): At least seven people sustained injuries due to a collision between a tractor trolley and rickshaw near Misali public school on Sunday. According to Rescue officials, tractor trolley and rickshaw collided each other due to over speeding and carelessness near Misali public school in which seven people got injuries. Upon receiving the information Rescue teams rushed to the spot and provided first aid to two minor injured and shifted five others to the district headquarters hospital. The injured included Nazir Hussain, Muhammad Iqbal, Zubaida, Sughran, Azhar, Abdul Sattar and Noreen. Sadar police have registered the case and started legal action into the incident.

Old enmity claims three lives

FAISALABAD (INP): Three people were gunned down over an old rivalry, in the jurisdiction of Chak Jhumra police station.

Rescue-1122 spokesman said on Sunday that police constable Imran Ashiq Goraya (50), resident of Chak No. 186-RB Dogranwala along with his friend Ahsan (35) and gunman Kamran Rasool, resident of Sargodha was returning back after attending a wedding function late Saturday night when their rivals opened indiscriminate fire at them near Wapda City Gate No. 3 on

Canal Expressway.

As a result, Imran Ashiq and Ahsan received serious bullet injuries and died on the spot, while Kamran Rasool (28) succumbed to his injuries at the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital.

Three shot dead by unidentified motorcyclists in Faisalabad

Unidentified armed men gunned down three people over unknown dispute in suburbs of Faisalabad late Saturday night, police said.

According to details, armed men riding a motorcycle sprayed bullets at a

car, carrying three people, returning after attending a wedding ceremony.

As a result of firing, the car ridings sustained critical injuries and assailants sped the scene of crime.

Police and rescue teams reached the scene, rushed the injured to hospital where they succumbed to their wounds.

Police collected the evidences from scene of crime and said that the incident seems to be outcome of personal enmity. A case was registered into the incident and investigations were underway.

Cadet College Swat celebrates 6th parents day

F.P. Report

MINGORA: Cadet College Swat hosted its 6th Annual Parents Day, marked by a solemn ceremony attended by parents, civil and military officials, and diverse members of the community.

Inspector General Frontier Corps North, Major General Noor Wali Khan, graced the occasion as the chief guest. During the event, Major General

Noor Wali Khan inspected the parade, recognizing outstanding cadets with medals, shields, and the prestigious Sword of Honour for their exemplary achievements in academics and sports.

The Chief Guest commended Cadet College Swat for delivering quality education, emphasizing its noteworthy standing among educational institutions in Pakistan. The audience was

treated to a grand march past, gymnastic displays, and athletics performances by the cadets, showcasing their dedication and talent.

Major General Noor Wali Khan acknowledged the management and faculty for the college's success. Established in 2011, Cadet College Swat has become a beacon of educational excellence, with 583 students from across Pakistan, including KPK.

Cadet College Batrasi hosts contest

MANSEHRA (APP): Cadet College Batrasi Sunday organized the 18th martyred Captain Muhammad Usman Ali Inter-Collegiate Declamation Contest where esteemed historian Colonel (R) Azam Qadri graced the ceremony as the special guest.

In the inter-collegiate declamation competition participation from various institutions including Pakistan Scouts Cadet College Batrasi, Military College Murree, Government College University Lahore, Pakistan International Public School and College Abbottabad, Cadet College Wana, Fazl Haq College Mardan, and several others.

The bilingual declamation comprised of the two phases including English and Urdu where all participating students were honored with certificates of merit and shields.

Representatives of the participating colleges were also recognized.

Video messages from the parents of martyred Captain Muhammad Usman Ali were shared, along with a documentary showcasing his life and martyrdom.

Government College University Lahore emerged as the overall winner in both Urdu and English language competitions. Colonel (Retired) Azam Qadri congratulated the successful students, praising the high standard of their speeches. He commended the sacrifices of the Pakistan Army and underscored the importance of youth like Captain Muhammad Usman



Ali, exemplifying courage and audacity.

Colonel Azam Qadri expressed admiration for Cadet College Batrasi, highlighting its unique standing in the educational landscape.

He advised students to cherish education, respect their teachers, stay dedicated to their goals, maintain discipline, and persevere in hard work.

Earlier, Principal Professor Tauqir-ul-Islam, in his welcoming address, expressed gratitude to the special guest and shed light on the college's achievements in both academic and extracurricular spheres. He outlined current and future programs while commending the relentless efforts of students, faculty, and administrative staff. Professor Tauqir-ul-Islam urged the students, deemed the future leaders of the nation, to utilize their abilities to counteract adversaries' designs and contribute to Pakistan's progress.

Illegally stored Urea fertilizer recovered

BAHAWALPUR (APP): The district management has recovered 150 bags of illegally stored Urea fertilizer during a raid conducted in Khanqah town of the district.

On the directives of Deputy Commissioner, Bahawalpur, Assistant Commissioner, Bahawalpur, Adeel Khan along with Assistant Director, Agriculture Department, Dr. Ashfaq Hussain conducted a raid at a godown in

Khanqah town and recovered 150 bags of illegal stock of Urea fertilizer.

The Urea fertilizer was illegally stored to sell it to farmers at higher rates.

On the occasion, the district management offered the farmers to purchase the recovered bags of Urea fertilizer at controlled rates.

On the directions of the Assistant Commissioner, the police have registered an FIR against the owner of

the godown.

Further probe was in process.

PMIU seminar held in Bahawalpur

Under the auspices of the Punjab Monitoring and Implementation Unit (PMIU), a seminar was organized here at a local school.

The seminar was held at the Government Sadique Girls Model School Bahawalpur.

Industrial revival – Experts demand out of box solutions

FAISALABAD (APP): When the world nations are embarking on Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) with ample use of Artificial Intelligence, Pakistan is still struggling to rise up to this challenge from existing 2IR or 3IR.

Amidst persisting economic recession due to issues like power and raw material price hike and interest rate, Pakistan once reckoned among top ten textile countries, is now facing the challenge of its sheer survival.

Experts believe that respective governments and industrialists were collectively responsible for this situation, resulting in shut down of industries or producing costly products, unable to compete in global market.

Political instability, non-consistent policies, use of old technologies and failure in capturing more world markets had been other factors hampering industrial growth.

This tendency also slowed down economic progress giving birth to problems like unemployment and dearth of foreign exchange.

"Revolution is a far cry as by the time we are just struggling to keep our industrial sector alive," remarked Muhammad Shafiq Anjum, Founder President Faisalabad Chamber of Small Traders and Industry. "Our small and medium industries are in real fix with around 70% power looms closed down in Faisalabad."

Similarly, he said, flour mills shrunk to around 50% and same was the case with other industries. "High mark up rate and fuel prices besides other factors had spoiled our industrial sector." He demanded consistent and holistic policies at least for a decade by involving all stakeholders for encouraging local and foreign investors.

Common men like Advocate Rana Mehmood-

ul-Hassan could also feel this pang of recession pleading that political stability was must for industrial revival. "Both the local and foreign investors were fearing to invest as they are uncertain if their investment would be secure in every day changing political situation."

As Dr Sajjad Arshad Senior Vice President FCCI also described the political uncertainty as one the main reasons behind recession besides rising interest rate and fuel prices and use of old technologies.

"Paucity of funds and cost of doing business was skyrocketing making our exportable goods too costly as compared to other countries," he said and mentioned to Bangladesh where the government had directed its banks to allocate major chunk of their loan portfolio for SMEs. "This experiment yielded positive results and their industry started performing better than ours."

He stated that Pakistan could only keep up the pace if it switches to new technologies, ensure easy financing, provide cheaper energy and encourage SMEs. "Hundreds industrial units in Punjab has been closed down and their revival would be an uphill task for any upcoming government. We need revolutionary and out of box solutions to revive this sector."

As most of experts are extremely worried about this situation, they come up with multiple solutions to steer country out of this recession. "Five items are must of industrial revival including stability, long term approach, indigenization, innovation and business eco-system," said Engineer Dr Yasir Nawab Dean Faculty of School of Engineering and Technology at National Textile University.

He said investment is the basic component for industrialization as he mentioned

to investment in Indonesia by many companies of Germany, France and other countries. "Why these countries would not invest in Pakistan if we provide them better opportunities."

But, he regretted, our policy makers and industrialists had bitterly failed to adopt long term approach. "Many small scale industries like cycle manufacturing and other accessories were closed down only for earning a marginal profit from imported goods."

He said unchecked imports badly affected local industry that converted us into a consumer economy instead of a productive economy.

"We need to focus our industrial and agricultural sectors alike to ensure cheaper raw material for industry and easier business environment," he said. "Indigenization is another important factor for industrial revival and we should develop technologies indigenously by expanding

our knowledge base."

He said, "if Germany and Japan could this even after devastating battles, why could not we. What positive we could achieve, if we are still far away from innovation."

Dr Yasir regretted the cold shoulder of authorities when an idea of developing electric vehicles came under consideration. "Nobody tried to further this project conceived by scientists of our own universities."

He said it is dejecting that our experts when proceed abroad contribute valuably to those economies. "But, locally we take least care of their ideas."

Urging congenial atmosphere for businessmen, he said if investors would have to waste their money and time due to red-tapism why they would set up businesses in our country. "Therefore, a coterie of businessmen and technocrats instead of bureaucrats should be created to facilitate investors."

He recommended a clear shift in policies to create business friendly environment was concerned. "This shift could take some time but ultimately it would have far reaching effects."

Mian Zahid Aslam former President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) suggested business friendly investment to revive industrial sector. "Computer interventions in industrial sector had made it an every growing sector. Therefore, for surviving in this atmosphere, we shall have to go beyond the traditional business mechanisms."

He also pleaded for addressing the challenges like financial starvation, lack of technological upgradation and market expansion.

He appreciated the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) role during Covid to support the industrial sector that had provided Pakistan an edge to boost country's exports.



MARDAN: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah reviewing MDCAT during his visit to Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan.

Police storm PTI workers convention

SWAT (PPI): A strong contingent of police stormed the venue where the PTI was holding its workers convention in Swat on Sunday.

The police action scared the participants who swiftly emptied the venue.

The organisers were however adamant to hold the convention but the police made it clear that it won't happen.

The police party stayed at the venue until all the chairs were removed.

In August last, Swat police had also lodged an FIR against 22 workers and leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) for violating Section 144 and organising a rally.

The rally, which took place on August 14, was attended by around 1,500 people including Mingora City mayor Shahid Ali and former MPA Fazal Hakim.

According to the FIR, filed at Banar police station in Mingora, the rally was conducted in clear defiance of the Section 144 imposed by the Swat district administration.

Smog: Six hotels sealed in Sialkot

SIALKOT (PPI): Eight business centres including six hotels were sealed in Silakot, Punjab, over violating smart lockdown amid smog on Sunday.

According to the district administration, so far 52 people have been arrested over violating the lockdown, while a fine of Rs508,000 has been imposed for the violations.

The government has been taking steps to control the increasing threat of smog, while it has also planned artificial rain in the provincial capital in the upcoming week, the sources said.

It is to be noted that the Punjab government has ordered the closure of markets and shops in six divisions of Punjab province, witnessing dangerously high smog levels.

According to a notification, the markets and shops in six divisions of Punjab remained closed on Sunday (today) till 4:00 pm as part of provincial government's efforts to address the increasing levels of smog.

Smog lockdown continues in Sargodha

SARGODHA (APP): A smart lockdown to contain smog was observed across the district on Sunday.

Action was also taken against industrial units, brick kilns, vehicle owners and farmers who caused air pollution and smog. Since April 1, Rs. 5.9 million fines and 61 cases have been registered.

These details were given by Deputy Commissioner Captain (Rtd) Shoaib Ali about the implementation of smart lockdown orders to control smog and steps taken by the district administration.

The DC said that after following the instructions of the Punjab government, educational institutions remained completely closed in all tehils of the district from Friday to Sunday, while shops, shopping centers, hotels and restaurants were allowed to open after 3 o'clock.

He appreciated how the business community in Sargodha had fully cooperated with the district administration. However, the Sargodha assistant commissioner and her team sealed 7 shops during checking in different areas for violating the lockdown.

The deputy commissioner said that teams under the

leadership of ACs remained active in the field to ensure the implementation of the orders. He said that 13 kiln owners had been fined Rs. 91,000 for causing pollution and smog while six cases were registered. So far 12 cases have been registered for burning crop residues while a fine of Rs. 102,000 has been imposed, he added.

A fine of Rs.150,000 was imposed on the owners of smoky vehicles, while five cases were registered against the owners of three industrial units for causing smog and pollution. They were also fined Rs10,000.

Excise dept to launch crackdown

MULTAN (APP): The Excise, Taxation and Narcotics department would launch a crackdown against unregistered loader rickshaws soon as there were 3500 rickshaws in the city sans registration.

Director Excise Abdullah Khan Jalbani told APP here Sunday that they had conducted meetings with rickshaw association and loader rickshaw association to get unregistered rickshaws registered as early as possible. He said that 15 days time had been given to loader rickshaw owners for registration. He said that crackdown against

unregistered loader rickshaws would be launched and vehicles would be confiscated after completion of deadline as per the directions of Punjab government.

Abdullah Khan said that they had achieved 42 percent tax target by collecting Rs 1.25 billion tax so far against Rs 3 billion set target for Multan division this year.

The official stated that the excise teams had given weekly and monthly recovery targets for maximum collection of revenue. He said that the rewards were awarded to employees over

excellent performance and punishments over poor performance.

He said that general hold ups and pickets were being established at entry and exit points against tokenless and non-registered vehicles.

The Excise Director maintained that 'Excise Ap ki dehleez per' service was introduced in Lahore to facilitate taxpayers at their door steps. The service would also be expanded to other districts soon.

He said that the refresher courses were being conducted time to time for the capacity building of the excise staff.

Police conduct raid to arrest journalist's killers

SUKKUR (PPI): Police conducted raid in katcha area of Shah Belo for arrest of the culprits involved in murder of Journalist Jan Muhammad Mahar on Sunday.

Sukkur Police party headed by SSP Irfan Sammu raided house of main accused Sherah Mahar in Shah Belo. After exchange of fire with police, accused fled to thick riverine forest, SSP Sukkur Irfan Sammu said.

The policemen set the homes and bunkers of the accused on fire and chasing

behind culprits.

"It is first time the police reached to the homes of the accused after drop in water level in the river", SSP Sammu said.

Police had earlier conducted raids over houses of the accused in katcha area in which a son of the main accused and an accomplice were injured in exchange of fire.

Police reached to the houses of culprits after over three months of the murder.

Police department has so far arrested nine persons over facilitation and pro-

viding shelter to killers of Jan Muhammad Mahar.

Mahar, a senior journalist and Sukkur bureau chief of a local television network had been murdered by assailants on August 13.

The attackers on a motorcycle opened fire at Mahar inside his vehicle after he left his office in Sukkur at 9:00 am on August 13.

Earlier, SSP Sukkur told the media that three suspects wanted in the murder case were arrested in an operation in the katcha area.



Search underway for 13 missing after ship sinks off Greek island

ATHENS (AFP/APP): A major rescue operation was under way on Sunday for 13 people missing after a Comoros-flagged cargo ship sank in gale-force winds off the Greek Aegean island of Lesbos.

The coastguard said a navy helicopter picked up one crew member from the RAPTOR cargo ship, who was taken to Lesbos General Hospital. "He is in a state of shock", coastguard spokesman Nikos Alexiou told AFP, without providing further details. The fate of the other 13 was not immediately clear.

Five cargo ships, three coast guard vessels, air force and navy helicopters as well as a navy frigate joined the rescue effort.

Authorities said the cargo ship, which was carrying 14 crew members and was loaded with salt, went down 4.5 nautical miles (8.3 kilometres) southwest of Lesbos, near the coast of Turkey, early Sunday.

The 106-metre ship, built in 1984, had sailed from Dekheila, Egypt, heading for Istanbul.

The Athens News Agency (ANA), quoting the vessel's operating company based in Lebanon, said the crew included 11 Egyptians, two Syrians and one Indian.

According to the authorities, the ship first reported a mechanical failure at seven am local time (0500 GMT). At 8:20 am, the captain reported that the ship was listing, and activated the "may-day" distress signal before disappearing from the radar, Alexiou told AFP.



According to ANA, the heavily-laden vessel was believed to have taken on water in the hold due to strong waves, causing it to list and sink. Ships remained docked across several parts of Greece over the weekend, with wind speeds reaching 9-10 on the Beaufort scale, or strong gale to storm force.

An emergency weather warning by the Hellenic National Meteorological Service (EMY) was upgraded on Saturday from "worsening weather" to "dangerous weather phenomena", as Storm Oliver (also called Bettina) moved from the Adriatic Sea toward Greece.

Earlier this month, a historic Greek warship was damaged by gale force winds after repeatedly hitting a dock.

The country has been struck by repeated flooding over recent months after facing a series of storms.

Central Greece was devastated in September by cataclysmic amounts of rain dumped by Storm Daniel, destroying crops and killing tens of thousands of farm animals across a wide area that is the heart of Greece's agricultural production.

Seoul, Tokyo, Beijing to 'expedite' preparations for trilateral summit

SEOUL (AFP/APP): The top diplomats of South Korea, Japan and China on Sunday reaffirmed the need to hold a trilateral summit at the "earliest" possible time, Seoul's foreign minister said following their first three-way meeting in more than four years.

The foreign-minister-level meeting in the southern port city of Busan between Park Jin, Yoko Kamikawa and Wang Yi came as Beijing has been showing growing concern over Tokyo and Seoul's deepening security ties with Washington.

It also comes days after North Korea successfully placed its first military spy satellite into orbit, prompting the suspension of a five-year-old military accord between the two Koreas that was intended to de-escalate tensions on the peninsula. "The three ministers reaffirmed ... to hold the summit, the pinnacle of the trilateral cooperation system, at the earliest, mutually convenient time," South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin told reporters following the talks. "We agreed to expedite the necessary preparations," he added, without giving a specific time frame for the summit. No leaders' summit has been held since 2019, in part due to diplomatic and historical disputes between South Korea and its former colonial ruler Japan.

Legal disputes over Japan's 1910-45 rule over the peninsula persist between the two countries. On Thursday, a South Korean court ruling ordered Japan to compensate 16 women for forced sexual slavery during World War II, overturning a lower-court ruling that had dismissed the case.

At a bilateral meeting with her South Korean counterpart ahead of the three-way talks, Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa called the ruling "extremely regrettable" and requested Seoul to take measures to correct the "violation of international law".

Beijing is Seoul's largest trading partner, but is also North Korea's main ally and economic benefactor.

At a meeting with his Chinese counterpart, South Korea's Park asked Beijing to play a "constructive role" in denuclearising the North, terming Pyongyang's latest satellite launch a serious threat to his country's national security.

Wang said China "has always played and will play a constructive role" in easing the situation in the region, a statement from Beijing's foreign ministry read.

With the increasing threat presented by the nuclear-armed North, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol has moved to strengthen ties between Seoul and long-standing ally Washington. He has also sought to bury the hatchet with Japan, another close US ally.

S.Leone under curfew after military armoury attacked

FREETOWN (AFP/APP): Armed clashes erupted in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown on Sunday in what the government said was an attack on a military armoury, as it imposed an immediate national curfew.

Witnesses told AFP they heard gunshots and explosions in the city's Wilberforce district, where the armoury is located along with a number of embassies.

Other witnesses said they heard exchanges of fire near a barracks in Murray Town district, home to the navy, as well as outside another military site in Freetown.

Video posted on social networks showed groups of men on the streets who were described as escaped prisoners.

AFP could not confirm from the authorities that the prison gates had been opened.

Automatic weapons fire and explosions could be heard on soundtracks posted on social networks.

The streets of the capital were otherwise empty, the witnesses said.

"I was awakened by a loud sound of heavy machine gun (fire) and bombs coming from the Wilberforce barracks around 4:30 am," witness Susan Kargbo told AFP by telephone.

"I was shocked and ... the gunshots continued until this morning, it was like a war," she said.

The government said those attempting to break into the armoury at a major army barracks had been repelled, but the public were asked to stay at home. "The public is assured that the government and our state security forces are in control," Information Minister Chernor Bah wrote in a "public notice".

"To enable the security forces to continue the process of apprehending the suspects, a nationwide curfew is declared with immediate effect across the country," the minister said.

No details were given on the alleged perpetrators of the attack, or their motives. Sierra Leone, an English-speaking country in West Africa, has been going through a political crisis following presidential and general elections in June this year.

West Africa has seen a series of military coups and attempted coups since August 2020.

Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Guinea, which shares a border with Sierra Leone, have all fallen under military control.

Sierra Leone President Julius Maada Bio also offered assurances that calm had been returned to the capital, urging people to stay indoors.

"In the early hours of this morning, there was a breach of security at the Military Barracks at Wilberforce in Freetown, as some unidentified individuals attacked the military armoury," he posted on X, formerly Twitter.

"However, they were repelled by our gallant Security Forces and calm has been restored," said Bio.

"As the combined team of our Security Forces continue to route out the remnant of the fleeing renegades, a nationwide curfew has been declared and citizens are encouraged to stay indoors," Bio said.

He added that the government would "continue to protect the peace and security of Sierra Leone against the forces that wish to truncate our much-cherished stability" and was "resolute in our determination to protect democracy in Sierra Leone."

The US embassy condemned on social media the bid to break into the armoury and offered continued support for those "working for a peaceful, democratic, healthy and prosperous Sierra Leone".

Bio, who was first elected in June with 56.17 percent of the vote -- just over the 55 percent needed to avoid a run-off.

International observers condemned inconsistencies and a lack of transparency in the count, as well as acts of violence and intimidation.

The main opposition All People's Congress (APC) party disputed the results of the presidential, legislative and local elections on June 24 and boycotted all levels of government.

The APC and the government signed an agreement in October following talks mediated by the Commonwealth, the African Union and the West African bloc ECOWAS.

The APC agreed to end its boycott and begin participating in government in exchange for an end to detentions and court cases it said were politically motivated.

But it has had to suspend the brake since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 - which it is allowed to do in the event of "exceptional emergencies" - in order to finance its response.

Since then, further crises have piled up, forcing it to resort ever more to off-budget funds, even as debt has become more expensive with interest rates rising. The court ruling on Nov. 15 against a budget manoeuvre to shift 60 billion euros of unused pandemic aid to a fund for a green transition has suggested Berlin will need to stick more closely to the spirit of the brake going forwards. It also forced the government this week to suspend the brake for the fourth year running - a clear sign reform was necessary, said ING Chief Economist Carsten Brzeski.

"The debt brake was implemented when Europe had a debt sustainability issue and Germany wanted to lead by example," he said. "Now, particularly Germany has a growth and competitiveness issue."

Germany's budget crisis spurs calls to change its borrowing limits

BERLIN (Internews): Germany's budget crisis has given new momentum to reforming self-imposed borrowing limits even among the opposition conservatives, as hunger for sorely needed investment trumps an earlier political obsession with fiscal rectitude. A constitutional court ruling on Nov. 15 against a budget manoeuvre to get around Germany's "debt brake" threw the financial plans of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition into disarray.

It also indicated that his and future governments would have to stick more closely to the spirit of the brake, which limits a government structural budget deficit to 0.35% of gross domestic product, even as spending needs rise.

Business and political leaders fear Berlin will not be able to finance responses to growing challenges, from climate change to the Ukraine war. Europe's largest economy has already suffered years of chronic under-investment, contributing to its current stagnation, economists say.

Calls are growing for reform of the brake, even among conservatives, whose complaint prompted the court ruling. Those in power at state level and having to deal themselves with the consequences of the ruling are particularly open to a new debate.

Billions of euros in state subsidies agreed with U.S. chipmaker Intel (INTC.O) for planned plants in the Saxony-Anhalt - considered key for Germany's transition to a carbon neutral economy - are now up in the air, for example.

"It's about strategic investments - there must be a way (to finance them)," the conservative state premier Reiner Haseloff said. "Otherwise these technologies will go to the United States." German under-investment is already around 300 billion euros over the past decade vis-a-vis other AAA-rating economies, according to Scope Ratings.

Haseloff was one of 10 senior members of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) or its Bavarian sister party the Christian Social Union (CSU) who has come around to the idea of the

need for a reform allowing for greater investment without throwing fiscal caution to the wind.

Others have even started to campaign publicly for reform. "As I have long been saying, we must fear that the debt brake becomes ever more a brake on the future," said Berlin mayor Kai Wegner on social media platform X.

Still, reforming the brake would mean changing the constitution, which requires a two-thirds supermajority in parliament and still looks a long way off.

Federal CDU leader Friedrich Merz, who is reaping the benefit of a government in turmoil, continues to say Germany should stick to the brake.

But so do even the fiscally hawkish Free Democrats (FDP), who are in coalition with Scholz's centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens. A government spokesperson said on Friday reform was not on the agenda for now.

Germany introduced the brake with cross-party consensus in 2009 in the wake of the global financial crisis

and at the dawn of the European debt crisis.

But it has had to suspend the brake since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 - which it is allowed to do in the event of "exceptional emergencies" - in order to finance its response.

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Heat, disease, air pollution: How climate change impacts health

PARIS (AFP/APP): Growing calls for the world to come to grips with the many ways that global warming affects human health have prompted the first day dedicated to the issue at crunch UN climate talks starting next week.

Extreme heat, air pollution and the increasing spread of deadly infectious diseases are just some of the reasons why the World Health Organization has called climate change the single biggest health threat facing humanity.

Global warming must be limited to the Paris Agreement target of 1.5 degrees Celsius "to avert catastrophic health impacts and prevent millions of climate change-related deaths", according to the WHO. However, under current national carbon-cutting plans, the world is on track to warm up to 2.9C this century, the UN said this week.

While no one will be completely safe from the effects of climate change, experts expect that most at risk will be children, women, the elderly, migrants and people in less developed countries which have emitted the least planet-warming greenhouse gases.

On December 3, the COP28 negotiations in Dubai will host the first "health day" ever held at the climate negotiations.

On December 3, the COP28 negotiations in Dubai will host the first "health day" ever held at the climate negotiations.

Pope welcomes Mideast truce, hostage releases

VATICAN CITY (AFP/APP): Pope Francis on Sunday welcomed a truce which has seen some hostages set free in the Middle East and prayed for further releases.

"Today we thank God because there is finally a truce between Israel and Palestine and some hostages have been freed," the Argentinian pontiff said in a statement read by a Vatican official at the weekly Angelus prayer.

"We pray that they all may be (freed) as rapidly as possible and that more humanitarian aid arrives in Gaza and that they insist on dialogue," the 86-year-old leader of the Catholic Church added in response to the release

Friday and Saturday by Hamas to the Red Cross of 41 Israeli and non-Israeli hostages detained seven weeks ago, while Israel freed 78 Palestinian prisoners.

Dialogue "is the only way, the only path to peace. Those who do not want to hold a dialogue do not want peace," Francis concluded.

The truce, a four-day pause to fighting brokered by Qatar, Egypt and the United States, provides for Hamas releasing 50 hostages in exchange for the release by Israel of 150 Palestinian prisoners.

Hamas took about 240 captives from southern Israel in an unprecedented October 7 attack that

Israeli officials say killed around 1,200 people, most of them civilians.

In response, Israel has vowed to eliminate Hamas, which the United States, the European Union and Israel dub a terrorist organisation.

It unleashed an aerial bombing campaign and ground invasion of Gaza that the Hamas government says has killed nearly 15,000 people, also mostly civilians and some 6,000 minors.

Francis had a colleague read his statement as he recited recite Sunday's Angelus prayer from his Casa Santa Marta residence rather than overlooking St Peter's Square as he deals with a mild

Australia on track to achieve 2030 emissions target: climate change minister

C A N B E R R A (Xinhua/APP): Australia is on track to meet its 2030 emissions reduction target, the federal government has claimed. Chris Bowen, minister for climate change and energy, on Sunday released an excerpt of data from the annual Climate Change Statement (CCS) showing Australia is currently on track to reduce its carbon dioxide

emissions by 42 percent from 2005 levels by 2030 - just short of the government's 43 percent reduction target.

The CCS in 2022 projected that Australia was on track for a 40 percent cut from 2005 levels by 2030.

Bowen, who will table the full CCS report for 2023 in parliament on Thursday before traveling

to the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in the United Arab Emirates, told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) that the data shows the Australian government is "getting on with the job."

"The latest emissions projections show what we've always said - our 43 percent target is ambitious but achievable," he said. "As our trading partners ramp up their own transitions, reducing emissions isn't just a climate imperative but critical for keeping competitive - especially creating jobs in the regions, exporting clean energy, products and resources to the world."

Nicaragua bars pageant head after Ortega critic wins Miss Universe

SAN JOSÉ (AFP/APP): Nicaraguan authorities have barred the director of the national beauty pageant from re-entering the country after a Nicaraguan woman seen as a symbol of opposition to the government was crowned Miss Universe, media reports and exiled opposition members said.

Karen Celebertti and her daughter were detained upon their arrival at the Managua airport -- days after seeing 23-year-old Sheynnis Palacios crowned as the first Miss Universe from Nicaragua -- and placed on a flight to Mexico, the opposition-linked La Prensa newspaper reported. The government "blocked" Karen Celebertti, owner of the Miss Nicaragua franchise, and her daughter from entering the country," the Costa Rica-based Nicaraguan daily said on its web site.

It was unclear on what grounds Celebertti, a Nicaraguan national, was barred entry. The government has made no comment on the matter.

The writer Gioconda Belli, who lives in Spain after being stripped of her Nicaraguan nationality by the government, contended that Celebertti was blocked at the orders of President Daniel Ortega's wife, Vice

President Rosario Murillo, despite her success in helping a Nicaraguan win the prestigious contest.

Opposition media also reported that Celebertti's Managua home had been searched Friday and her husband, Martin Arguello, briefly detained. In a statement to AFP, the Miss Universe Organization called on the Nicaraguan government to "guarantee" the safety of those associated with the local affiliates of the pageant.

"We are working to guarantee the safety of all members of the organization, and we call on the government of Nicaragua to guarantee their safety," it said. Since Palacios was crowned Miss Universe on November 18 in San Salvador, she has been widely portrayed as a symbol of opposition to Ortega.

Photos showing her waving the Nicaraguan flag at anti-government protests in 2018 have gone viral, and her victory brought joyful crowds into Nicaragua's streets in the biggest public displays since such gatherings were banned five years ago.

Murillo on Wednesday blasted the publication of such photos as "malicious (and) terrorist communications that aim to transform a beautiful moment of pride and well-deserved celebra-

tion into a destructive coup." The Nicaraguan opposition has portrayed Palacios' victory as a sign of hope. Some in the celebratory crowds waved the blue and white national flag, seen as a symbol of opposition, unlike the partisan red and black flag of the ruling Sandinista Front.

"I'm so happy to see the joy of Nicaraguans and to see them bring out the clandestine blue and white... Thanks to Sheynnis," the writer Belli said on X, the former Twitter.

Opposition sources said that on Tuesday, government officials barred two artists from completing a mural of the new Miss Universe in the northern city of Esteli. Photos of the unfinished fresco have circulated on social media.

"It is impossible to view this inoffensive contest without considering the political and social reality. She has become a national and emotional symbol who has restored hope. And the government understands this," prize-winning Nicaraguan journalist Wilfredo Miranda, who lives in exile in Costa Rica, told AFP.

Many exiles even viewed the outfit in which Palacios was crowned -- a flowing white dress with a blue cape resembling images of Nicaragua's

patron saint, the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception -- as symbolic amid a government crackdown on the Catholic Church.

"Thank you for bringing joy to our suffering people, thank you for giving us hope," Monsignor Silvio Baez, the auxiliary bishop of Managua, wrote on X. He lives in exile in the United States.

A government clampdown on the 2018 protests left more than 350 dead and more than 100,000 in exile. The government has since jailed hundreds of critics.

Palacios rose from a modest upbringing in the city of Diriamba, in Carazo department. She, her mother and grandmother started a business selling Nicaraguan sweet fried dough. Before her victory, a pro-government television presenter had disdainfully nicknamed her "Miss Fritters."

Exiled Nicaraguan media have not forgotten.

Nor have they forgotten that she studied at the Central American University, a Jesuit school closed last August by the government as a "center of terrorism." The new Miss Universe, who left El Salvador on a multi-nation tour, has dedicated her victory to the six million Nicaraguans -- whether in the country or in exile.

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Artificial Intelligence and Power Competition

The race to develop Artificial Intelligence (AI) capabilities has heated up since the breakout launch of the ChatGPT generative chatbot last year, with Russia and China spending billions to rival the United States' dominance in this new arena. Recently, Russian President Vladimir Putin convened an AI conference and declared that Russia would not accept the Western dangerous monopoly over artificial intelligence and Moscow needed to rival biased Western chatbots with its own technology. According to Putin, Western nations do not take into account Russian culture, and simply ignore it, while modern systems are trained on Western data that also flooded the Russian market. President Putin urged Russian Scientists and IT experts to launch a crusade to upturn the West's monopoly in the AI field. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has currently become the next battlefield for global competitors to succeed in establishing their overall supremacy at the global level. In fact, artificial intelligence a sub-set of Machine Learning (ML) technology has the potential to impact nations' security in various ways. So far, the expertise and capabilities in AI have become essential for nations across the globe to defend themselves from this newest threat and compete with their adversaries in this crucial domain. At the same time, the development of modern technologies and the implementation/use of AI through them can facilitate the nations in the achievement of their strategic objectives including economic, industrial, and military superiority over their competitors. After the ongoing race in space and cyberspace, the global competition between the United States, Russia, and China has now entered into the AI domain. The battle for AI development, implementation, and integration with the existing military, and industrial capabilities is currently underway to assert power and project influence globally. Amid the battle to excel in artificial intelligence, the United States possesses a clear advantage as being the birthplace of this newest technology, while Russia and China are currently investing massively in research and development efforts to produce technologies/ capabilities to exploit US vulnerabilities and attain a superior position. Today, AI plays a significant role in modern warfare, contributing to various aspects of military operations. Today's autonomous weapons systems including drones, unarmed aerial and seaborne vehicles, and armed robots all are controlled by AI Applications and soft technologies. Similarly, cyber warfare, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, logistics, and supply chains all are being managed and carried out through AI-powered systems. AI assists commanders in war strategy formulation and decision-making processes through the provision of real-time information, weather forecasts, and critical analysis based on available data and future predictions. Apparently, artificial Intelligence is the future of mankind and whoever excels in this technology will lead the world in the coming days. ChatGPT's success sparked a rush among other tech giants and venture capitalists including Google hurrying out its chatbot and investors throwing cash into all manner of AI projects. All competing nations have acknowledged the critical importance and use of this technology and blindly investing the bulk of resources in its research/development. It is the right time for Pakistani strategists to preemptively initiate an R&D program at the national level that not only aligns already commercial and defence capabilities with this newest technology but to timely neutralizes future challenges to the national security and territorial sovereignty of the country.

The Aftershocks of Rigid Politics

The Pakistan Army has awarded long prison sentences to its two former officers for inciting soldiers to revolt after carrying out their court-martial trial under the Pakistan Army Act 1952. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), both retired officers were convicted and sentenced through Field General Court Martial (FGCM) for the charges of inciting sedition among army personnel from the discharge of duties and violation of the Official Secrets Act, 1923, related to espionage and acts prejudicial to the safety and interest of the state. Historically, radical politics had seriously polarized the Pakistani society and extremist behaviors tore apart the fabric of the community. The May 9 events were the peak of radicalized behaviours during which supporters of a political party weighed aggression against the state and attacked military installations out of love for their party Chief or hatred for the military establishment whom their party accused of masterminding the no-confidence motion against its rule. In fact, the rigid politics not only divided the society but also undermined the institutional discipline and working ethics of the military personnel who are trained on the pure conservative principles of patriotism, jihad, and service to the nation, but a majority of them failed to identify facts from factions and reality from propaganda. This is the reason that the Pakistan Army's inquiry commission constituted in the aftermath of the May 9 riots and accused multiple Army officers of complicity and grave professional negligence during the violence. The Army Command served stern punishments on several individuals including a Lieutenant general, three major generals, and seven Briguiders of the Pakistan Army. Multiple retired seniors and numerous lower-ranking officers criticized the Army leadership for misconduct and sedition out of their political motivation and the party's propaganda. The recently trialled two military officers have played the role of enemy's mouthpiece and anti-state propagandists on social media over the past months. Such incidents provide valuable inputs to policy-makers and highlight loopholes and snags in the process of selection, training, and afterwards, professional growth that recurrent incidents of subversion, complicity, or political/ religious affiliation of senior military officers had occurred over the past years. This situation merits stringent reforms in the selection, and promotion policies so only well-trained, professional and reserving officers reach sensitive and top slots. So, such embarrassing incidents do not occur anytime in the future.

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Israeli society has become more hawkish, which is bad news for peace

Yossi Mekelberg

Conducting public opinion polls during a war is a risky business that can easily lead to the wrong conclusions. The results invariably reflect the specific, present mood when emotions are running at their highest, and respondents are more interested in expressing their anger and frustration than in being reflective and retrospective.

Hence, while findings that Israeli society has turned more hawkish as a result of Hamas' murderous attack of last month and the subsequent war should not come as a huge surprise, it might also be the case that by the end of the conflict many will return to their prewar position, or even go further and reconsider the sustainability of pre-Oct. 7 relations with the Palestinians, or of using disproportionate force in response to the Hamas attack. Still, opinion polls provide us with a current and disheartening picture of the long road toward reaching a lasting peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and the level of persuasion that will be required for this to become a realistic possibility.

At present, a mere 24.5 percent of Israeli Jews support peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, a fall from 47.6 percent who were in favor in September, while 66 percent are against engaging in such negotiations. By contrast, among Palestinians living in Israel, an overwhelming 58 percent support peace negotiations with the PA. Much of this attitude can be attributed to the fact that only 7.5 percent of Israeli Jews believe that talks could lead to peace between the two peoples.

This suggests a quite gloomy prospect to bringing the never-ending Israeli-Palestinian conflict to an end, and even if it is not surprising, it cannot and should not be left to fester unaddressed, otherwise it will become even further entrenched. For too long the Israeli public has been fed the notion that relations between their country and the Palestinians are characterised by some sort of uneasy stability and that in any case there is no partner for peace. This has meant continuation of the occupation and creeping annexation of the West Bank; relying on the PA's security apparatus to cooperate with Israel to ensure its own security; low-intensity conflict and violence; but no intention to enter into negotiations for a peace agreement based on a two-state solution.

Equally, this status quo mirage assumed that the blockade of Gaza was sustainable, and there was no danger emanating from Hamas. When these notions collapsed on Oct. 7, especially vis-a-vis Gaza and Hamas, but also before that in the West Bank when militant groups began to challenge the imposed occupation order, Israelis were both shocked and their attitudes to the Palestinians hardened. Their hawkishness is being expressed not only in terms of any

future peace solution with the Palestinians, but also by their support for the use of excessive force in Gaza.

At a time when most of the world, with few exceptions and including Israel's closest allies, is

One of the most detrimental views among Israelis regarding the resumption of peace talks is that they believe there is no Palestinian partner for peace, and that the two-state solution is neither achievable nor desirable.

Most Israeli Jews believe that Israel's military is employing too little force, and this view is providing a discredited Israeli government a tailwind for continuing the war, and with full force, even though more than 14,000 Palestinians have already been killed and enormous destruction has been inflicted on the entire Strip. One of the most detrimental views among Israelis regarding the resumption of peace talks is that they believe there is no Palestinian partner for peace, and that the two-state solution is neither achievable nor desirable. Hence, they resort to the only response they know, despite it being contributory to the current disaster. While options such as a two-state solution, or one bi-national state in which both Jews and Palestinians have equal rights, enjoy little support (14.6 percent for the first and 2.6 percent for the latter), the preferable "solution," according to the polls, is to continue the current situation; and around 20 percent of Jewish Israelis support an annexation of the Occupied Territories and granting Palestinians limited rights — in other words legitimising and legalizing Israel's current position as an apartheid state. It might be too optimistic, almost naive to expect either side to have a vision of peace when both sides have suffered unimaginable losses, and all that they can see is only the worst of one another. However, as history has taught us, in the darkest of times for humanity, there also emerge new ideas from those who can see the light beyond the present darkness, mainly because they refuse to let despair take over. For now, the peace camp in Israel has been decimated, and there is almost no support for a peace and coexistence discourse. Yet, from the ashes and the collective trauma of this war, there must arise, in both societies, new thinking and fresh leadership that is ready to admit that by not advancing peace and by not accepting that only compromise and mutual recognition of everyone's entitlement to live in security and enjoy the same rights, the extremists have been allowed to hijack and dictate their very existence, and contribute to the implosion we are currently witnessing.

warning Israel that the level of civilian killings is unacceptable, most Israeli Jews believe that Israel's military is employing too little force, and this view is providing a discredited Israeli government a tailwind for continuing the war, and with full force, even though more than 14,000 Palestinians have already been killed and enormous destruction has been inflicted on the entire Strip.

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By the end of such extreme bloodshed, an aftermath of fear and anger, even hatred, is inevitable. It would be pointless and unhelpful to dismiss the mutual negative feelings and perceptions, but they can and should be harnessed to become a transformative experience, into a commitment for this to never happen again, and to the introduction of a diametrically opposite vision. To allay their mutual fear and loathing, both sides need reassurance that their concerns for security and wellbeing are being addressed. This will need new leaderships who are not discredited as the current ones, and solid guarantees from the international community of its active support for such a transformation.

Beyond the deaths and the mountains of rubble left by the war, there must be a recognition of the futility of leaving a conflict to fester without resolution, and that security is not achieved merely by acquiring weapons and ammunition, as sophisticated and deadly as they might be, but through finding an inclusive working formula that involves all segments of domestic and international societies, from grassroots to international diplomacy, in order to convince those who are afraid and outraged by what has happened since Oct. 7, and are mainly skeptical about the future, that there is indeed a viable alternative, one that sidelines the militants not by physically eliminating them, but by ensuring there is a prospect of peace based on fairness, justice, and security that will prove them irrelevant.

EU is doubling down on failed migration policies

Hafed Al-Ghwel

The spate of controversies surrounding Europe's migration policies toward North African countries — chiefly Tunisia, the principal sea departure point for refugees and migrants seeking to cross the Mediterranean to Europe — raises grave questions about the sustainability and ethics of these existing strategies. Worryingly entangled with a precarious political environment and an escalating human rights crisis, the contours of these policies have proven not only ineffectual in curbing the flow of irregular migration but also have significantly contributed to amplifying existing problems — a classic case of doubling down on failing policy, one might argue.

There is no shortage of alarming narratives on flawed migration management in Tunisia, underscoring tactics that veer significantly from the principles of human rights and international law. The assertions of horrific abuses, from indiscriminate expulsions of asylum-seekers to collusion of security forces with smuggling networks, paint a grim picture of a system that is fundamentally flawed on multiple fronts.

Over the summer of 2023 alone, about 86 percent of illegally expelled sub-Saharan Africans reportedly experienced physical violence, with an astonishing 85 percent attributing this violence to the hands of security forces — an alarming series of findings that highlights the severity of the situation. Yet, as accounts of systematic abuses, corruption, and collusion pour in, they consistently fail to perturb the irregular migratory flow, a glaring testament to the gravity of the failure of the EU's deterrence and externalization policies. Add to these the EU's strategic attempts to bottle up displacement along, for instance, the Tunisian coastline have spearheaded a grim spiral of human suffering without signaling any significant dent in the fundamental challenges driving human mobility.

Furthermore, the socioeconomic context of Tunisia, battling underdevelopment, poor governance, and regional insecurity, significantly exacerbates this problem. The government's response, void of any coherent strategy or policy, oscillates between xenophobic rhetoric, abusive practices, and draconian actions. Can these strategies, backed by the EU and the US, be validly defended when they appear to be guided by a culture of impunity and an utter disregard for the rule of law? The humanitarian catastrophe gripping Tunisia is, in large part, a self-inflicted wound born from misguided policies. The situation calls for a radical rethink of the stance on migration cooperation with Tunisia, one that prioritizes safeguarding human security by fostering sustainable solutions over knee-jerk reactions and policies rooted in exclusion and deterrence. Anything short of that would only amount to a doubling down on profound policy failure — an untenable proposition at a time when the stakes could not be higher.

Current approaches are not only ineffectual but also unsustainable and, given the catastrophe they have spawned, highly indefensible. Yet, such assessments appear lost in the fog of Brussels' dogged pursuit of a problematic agenda, specifically, these border externalization strategies conceived in 2021. Under this axiom, the EU has enthusiastically fostered migration cooperation agreements with at least 14 countries. With a war chest swelling into billions of euros aimed at bolstering border controls, laying siege on people smugglers, and stymieing the flood of asylum-seekers and migrants, the policy has largely been unyielding. Implementing this strategy was perceived as a preventive measure to thwart the overall movement of migrants — mainly from the Western Balkans, the Middle East, and Africa — before gracing the EU's external borders. On paper, it seemed a

tenable course of action; however, it has not borne the anticipated outcome. Far from slowing migration, the EU's extravagant spending on border management and fortification has inadvertently expedited the humanitarian crisis.

Even more troubling is the revelations in a letter from European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen that outlines forthcoming plans to institute "new anti-smuggling operational partnerships" with Tunisia and Egypt. The audaciousness of this plan lies in its blatant neglect of well-documented accounts reporting abuses against migrants in both countries. Such malign neglect punctuates a habitual disregard for the proximal determinants of migration, effectively hampering the development of a targeted approach or strategy.

There is simply no appetite, political capital, or even notable civil society advocacy for measures beyond securitization and deterrence by focusing on systemic changes that address the drivers of irregular migration while channeling dramatic increases in emergency support services for displaced people. Instead, what we have is the perpetuation and institutionalization of unfortunate knee-jerk responses from Brussels, borne out of framing migrant surges as a security and political issue rather than admitting it as the humanitarian crisis that it most certainly is. This simplified understanding of a complex phenomenon effectively glorifies a culture of dismissing evident failures as a mere consequence of insufficient funding or security mobilization.

The vicious cycle of misdiagnosis and mistreatment does more harm than good. The conventional wisdom of border controls and migration agreements, while having their place, need to transition toward addressing the root causes that push desperate thousands to risk treacherous journeys, abuse, neglect, and indefinite detention for a chance to make it to Europe. A distinctive tilt toward human-centered policies that underscore key drivers of migration, such as conflict, poverty, and inequality, is not just desirable but an absolute necessity. Until the EU adjusts its stance on this issue, it risks further worsening the humanitarian catastrophe, while simultaneously hemorrhaging resources with trivial, if any, gains to show.

With Europe cannibalizing its budget, diverting development aid and conflict management funding toward building "Fortress Europe," little is left to fund targeted solutions designed to improve living conditions and stem migratory flows from origin states. It is unlikely the current political environment, which is increasingly skewing to the anti-immigrant right, will ever agree to create legal and safe pathways for asylum-seekers and refugees. Nor will boilerplate messaging about upholding commitments to human rights galvanize sufficient public support for alternative approaches to what is quickly snowballing into Europe's next biggest crisis — notwithstanding Ukraine.

While some may understand the EU's bumbling attempts to avert a hybrid crisis, its current approaches are inadequate and, in many ways, counterproductive. What is needed now, more than ever, is a serious course correction in Europe's migration policies.

It can at least begin by ensuring transparency and accountability on migration spending, since the current opacity of funding and lack of precise records make it difficult to assess the cost and efficacy of border externalization. Beyond that, Europe needs to address a discernible vulnerability in how third countries continue weaponizing desperate migrants, turning them into a tool for leverage and geopolitical gamesmanship. Should that dynamic persist, Europe risks becoming a financier and underwriter for the glaring failures and tragic consequences of its doubling down on failure.

EU renews its global green leadership with Canada deal

Since the Inflation Reduction Act was passed last year in Washington, there has been strong focus on the resurgence of US green leadership. However, under the “global radar” also in North America, far less attention is, surprisingly, being paid to Canada’s credentials in this area.

Many miss Canada’s sustainability strengths, but not Europe. Brussels sees in the vast North American country a huge partnership opportunity to help “future proof” its global green leadership as it prepares for the possibility of a second presidency for Donald Trump from 2025 in the US.

No surprise, therefore, that the powers announced a new, stronger green alliance at their annual bilateral summit on Thursday and Friday. It is also no coincidence that the forum was hosted in St. John’s, the capital of Newfoundland and Labrador.

That Canadian province has big plans to establish itself as a hydrogen-producing and exporting powerhouse in the near future, with an eye on European markets, especially Germany, which are key buyers of hydrogen. At the time of writing, the province is considering four major wind hydrogen proposals through its approval process.

These discussions build from a bilateral hydrogen deal that Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau signed with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz last year in Newfoundland, the core of what could become a valuable hydrogen energy partnership. Yet, Newfoundland and Labrador are only one of several areas in Atlantic Canada where companies are vying to build large wind-powered hydrogen and ammonia plants. The goal for most is to transport hydrogen, in the form of ammonia, to Europe, where there is a significant market for greener energy.

The ambitious green

alliance agreement reached with Canada is based on a template that the EU has pursued with other advanced, industrialized countries, inside and outside Europe, such as Japan and Norway. It has also pushed similar initiatives with key emerging markets, including India.

As COP28 approaches, the new EU-Canadian alliance will give a boost to

Andrew Hammond

policy agenda was announced by the European Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen. The 27-member bloc is looking to refashion itself as a global green superpower, and secure a renewed political lease of life to boot — this after several difficult decades that saw the rise of challenges such as growing

economy.

Canada is one of the key Western allies with which the EU would like to build stronger green economy supply chains, including critical raw materials, to help ensure secure and sustainable supply of materials for European industry. This would significantly lower the dependency of the 27 member states on imports from single country suppli-

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As COP28 approaches, the new EU-Canadian alliance will give a boost to the climate summit, and also European green leadership. Since the pandemic and the Ukraine war, the EU has doubled down on the green economy to meet global goals, such as the 2015 Paris climate agreement. This has built growing momentum behind the European Green Deal mega-project. One example of this is the more than 50 major sustainability initiatives announced by Brussels since the signature policy agenda was announced by the European Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen. The 27-member bloc is looking to refashion itself as a global green superpower, and secure a renewed political lease of life to boot — this after several difficult decades that saw the rise of challenges such as growing euroskepticism, and multiple financial crises. However, meeting global green goals cannot be achieved simply by announcing endless, major new political initiatives from Brussels. Growing help from the private sector, and also international allies is key in meeting this agenda too. Hence, the importance of the Canadian deal, which also helps with the wider European goal of “de-risking” from the Chinese economy.
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ers, including China.

So, Canada’s attractiveness to the EU on the green front goes well beyond its hydrogen capabilities. There are wider plans, too, for greater cooperation in areas such as carbon pricing and trading.

Take the example of carbon pricing, where both Canada and the EU have a shared interest in rolling out carbon markets internationally. In 2005, Europe became the first power in the world to introduce such

a system — the EU Emissions Trading System. Moreover, Brussels has welcomed Canada’s carbon pricing system.

To be sure, the EU and Canada are not fully aligned on all elements of the green agenda, including coal and fossil fuel subsidies. Canada’s federal audit highlighted in recent days that the nation is not on track to meet its climate targets due to delays in key measures, including methane regulations, and an oil and gas emissions cap.

However, bilateral relations are fundamentally positive, and cooperative and mutual reliance could only grow significantly in the second half of the decade, especially if Trump wins a second term as US president. Canada-EU ties in the green economy build from a series of agreements since the 1970s, and joint membership of bodies such as the G7 and G20.

Underpinning this is a landmark EU-Canada bilateral trade deal, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. This has driven an increase in two-way commerce, including a 15 percent boost in EU exports to Canada in 2020 alone.

CETA, which covers around a fifth of the global economy, and took the best part of a decade to negotiate, was signed in October 2016. It saw about 98 percent of all tariffs on goods traded between the two powers become duty free, and was then billed as “the most ambitious trade agreement the EU has ever concluded.” Most tariffs were removed when the deal came provisionally into force in 2017.

Taken together, the new EU-Canada green alliance will provide only the latest big boost to bilateral ties. Both Brussels and Ottawa are keen to double down on relations, not only to seize the new economic opportunities on the horizon, but also to prepare for the political trauma of a potential second Trump presidency.

Free grain for Africa: reading Russia’s mind

Dr. Diana Galeeva

and long-lasting breakdowns among global and local players seeking to tackle the origin grounds of regional instability. Given the current geopolitical changes, Africa has become pivotal to many economic and political aims.

The Russia-Africa Summit in July aimed to further develop the narrative of promoting a multipolar world order and fighting “neo-colonialism.” Russian President Vladimir Putin called for a “joint determination to counter neo-colonialism, the practice of applying illegitimate sanctions, and attempts to undermine traditional moral values.” Subsequently, representatives of 49 countries signed a joint declaration aimed at “the establishment of a more just, balanced and stable multipolar world order, firmly opposing all types of international confrontation in the African continent.” The African region is a crucial Kremlin

years moved closer to the West.

Furthermore, the active involvement in Libya of the UAE, Egypt, and Russia, also adds to the growing partnership at the bilateral level with regional actors. For example, at the diplomatic level, in 2020, Russia was “seeking out” Egypt and the UAE for successful talks on the Libyan crisis. In March, Haftar told the Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu that the Egyptian army had agreed to “inform” Moscow of US correspondence. These examples illustrate how at the diplomatic, military, and security levels, all these regions are interconnected, making North Africa strategically essential as a bridge into the Middle East, for Russia’s objectives.

Therefore, Russia’s interest in Africa is not a “new initiative,” as was suggested by some mainstream media outlets during the Africa-Russia forum. From both an established

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Africa is a bridge to another essential region for Russia’s “multipolarity” — the Middle East and North Africa. Russia’s growing influence in Libya is a case in point, evidenced by the fact that in September, Marshal Khalifa Haftar, commander of the Libyan National Army, met with Putin; his talks with Russian officials reportedly included renewal plans for Libya. Meetings with the Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-bek Yevkurov, who traveled to Benghazi in August, lead to discussions on the future role in the country of the Wagner Group, now assimilated into the Russian military after the attempted mutiny in June. Also, Libya is a neighbor of Algeria, which despite Western condemnations of Russia, expressed interest in deepening ties with Moscow, especially in the military sphere. This move also fits the regional dynamics, since Algeria’s rival Morocco has in recent years moved closer to the West.
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ally for multipolarity, significantly driven by Moscow’s linking to “colonialism/neo-colonialism” as part of the narrative.

Africa is a bridge to another essential region for Russia’s “multipolarity” — the Middle East and North Africa. Russia’s growing influence in Libya is a case in point, evidenced by the fact that in September, Marshal Khalifa Haftar, commander of the Libyan National Army, met with Putin; his talks with Russian officials reportedly included renewal plans for Libya. Meetings with the Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-bek Yevkurov, who traveled to Benghazi in August, lead to discussions on the future role in the country of the Wagner Group, now assimilated into the Russian military after the attempted mutiny in June. Also, Libya is a neighbor of Algeria, which despite Western condemnations of Russia, expressed interest in deepening ties with Moscow, especially in the military sphere. This move also fits the regional dynamics, since Algeria’s rival Morocco has in recent

history of involvement with my own experience, mentioned earlier, Russian representatives have found Africa appealing for many reasons and for some time. However, before the Ukraine war, Russia had applied mainly hard power sources for influence there via the Wagner Group; the heavier allocation of military resources into Europe has instead forced Moscow to pursue soft power initiatives more actively.

The region has strategic importance for Moscow’s objectives for a “multipolar” world order, in addition to its geographic strategic location, bridging with other regions, including the Middle East. Therefore, the free grain deal is just a logical continuation of Kremlin policies, if under a softer guise. Finally, these shifts are also interesting to explore, as they are evidence of wider geopolitical changes: As many traditional neighbors and allies within Russia’s sphere of influence are distancing themselves, other regions, including many African countries, are drifting close to Moscow.

Rousing the sleeping giant of climate philanthropy

Badr Jafar

There’s a lot that will be different about COP28 in the UAE, and one of the most prominent innovations will be the inaugural Business & Philanthropy Climate Forum, being held from Dec. 1-2, as part of the World Climate Action Summit. Designed to engage the private sector more effectively in the COP process, the forum will bring 1,000 CEOs and leading philanthropists from all regions of the world together, along with policy heads, to share knowledge, exchange ideas, and agree on better ways of collaborating to address climate change.

The presence of global philanthropists at the forum is not an afterthought. Although a lot has been said in recent decades about the crucial role that government and business must play in the fight against climate change and nature degradation, much less attention has been paid to the increasingly important role that philanthropy plays in this effort. This is despite the fact that well over \$1 trillion in philanthropic capital is deployed around the world every single year. To put this in perspective, this equates to 10 times the

value of all the climate finance provided last year by richer nations to developing nations, and about the same as total global climate finance flows in 2021/22.

Right now, though, only a fraction of this philanthropic capital is allocated to climate-related causes. In fact, according to a recent analysis by ClimateWorks Foundation, philanthropic giving by individuals and foundations focused on climate change mitigation made up less than 2 percent of global giving in 2022. Encouragingly, the same study showed a broadening appetite among strategic philanthropists for funding more diverse approaches to climate change mitigation, even if the total amount of climate-focused philanthropy remains relatively low.

This is an important trend, because it is not just the quantity of philanthropic capital that makes it a transformative resource in the global response to climate change. Philanthropic capital also has several distinctive characteristics that make it a qualitatively uniquely powerful tool for pushing the boundaries of what is possible and achieving urgently required

scale. Among other things, philanthropic funding is often more flexible, risk tolerant and patient than other forms of capital. When strategically deployed at an early stage, de-risking follow-on investments, it can generate a multiplier effect by unlocking even larger pools of government and business capital.

Philanthropy can be a particularly powerful tool in the deployment of nature-based climate interventions — including with reforestation, restoring mangroves, and protecting biodiversity — that may not offer an immediate financial return and have historically struggled to compete for business and government funding. The increasingly recognized reality is that our nature and climate goals are inseparable, with research finding that natural climate solutions could yield one-third of the emissions reductions required to achieve a 1.5 C limit pathway. These reductions will not come cheaply, however. To address biodiversity loss and land degradation alone, it is estimated that nature-positive investments of \$8 trillion is needed

between now and 2050. Philanthropists could play a pivotal role in filling that gap. Which is why a number of sessions at the COP28 Business & Philanthropy Climate Forum will focus specifically on unleashing the catalytic effect of climate and nature philanthropy.

Of course, there are many things that we should already be doing to ensure more philanthropic capital is channeled towards climate and nature-based outcomes. First and foremost, we need to treat philanthropy with the respect that it deserves, and seek to harness it in ways that takes advantage of its unique strengths. Second, we need to listen to and engage with the growing cadre of strategic philanthropists across the Global South, home to three-quarters of the global population, many of whom are already dealing with the all-too-real effects of climate change. Third, we must not overlook the scale and consistency of faith-based giving, and the significant potential that exists for interfaith collaboration to address the universal threat that climate change poses to humanity. Finally, we need to make a sustained effort to facilitate

greater coordination between the sectors of philanthropy, government and business — not just during high-profile moments such as COP28, but also in the precious months and years in between.

Achieving an equitable climate and nature transition by 2050 is going to require an “all hands on deck” response from every part of the global community. For many government stakeholders, that will mean properly raising ambitions and making good on commitments that they and their predecessors have already made. For many business leaders, that will mean making the essential leap from simple pledges and declarations to tangible action and implementation. For many of the world’s philanthropists, that will mean coming off the sidelines and throwing more of their considerable weight and unique attributes behind global efforts to address climate change. More than mere financial donors, I am optimistic that philanthropy can be the glue that binds business, government and civil society together in concerted action to achieve our net zero and nature positive goals.

Maria Maalouf

Congress of Israel’s war against the Palestinians in Gaza.

Moreover, there is a totally different view between the US and China in reference to the character and the political standing of a number of major countries in East Asia. The US considers Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan as allies and friendly states.

China’s leaders, however, view these nations as countries that have had long historical strife with China, and as front-line states whose foreign policies and national security priorities pose a threat to Chinese sovereignty. For instance, there are disputes between China and Japan

over the ownership of several small islands in the South China Sea. In addition, there are long-held claims by the Chinese government that Taiwan is part of a “one-China policy,” and that the island belongs to the People’s Republic of China.

These four Asian countries deserve credit for achieving huge economic growth and becoming viable nations on the world stage. However, their foreign policies frequently rely on seeking help from Washington to defend against an ascendant China.

The best course for the US is to adhere to the old treaties that were signed with these countries and honor its commitments to

them, but also to explain to them and to the Chinese that things in world politics are changing, and such a change could allow for America’s bonds with these big countries in East Asia to evolve in a friendly direction. For instance, the US, China, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan could cooperate to break the isolation of North Korea, and convince Pyongyang to stop its nuclear tests and the firing of ballistic missiles.

The US also must be more responsible in its foreign policy toward China. Washington’s announcements of weapons sales to India and Vietnam will be viewed by China’s leaders as an encirclement strategy designed to undermine their nation.

It is also becoming more common and convenient for many American politicians to blame China for everything wrong in the US, especially alleged technology thefts and the big trade deficit between the two countries. According to a report by the US Department of Commerce, “in 2022, both US exports to China and imports from China continued to grow for a third year in a row. US exports totaled \$153.8 billion, an increase of 1.6 percent (\$2.4 billion) from 2021; US imports from China totaled \$536.8 billion, an increase of 6.3 percent (\$31.8 billion); and the trade deficit with China was \$382.9 billion, an increase of 8.3 percent (\$29.4 billion.)”

There is a tacit understanding that both countries have to find a mutually beneficial formula. The US must give China choices to help them reach good outcomes in world politics. The two nations could conduct serious talks on how to end the war between Russia and Ukraine. COP28 meetings in a few days in the UAE might be a good opportunity to promote bilateral cooperation in fighting climate change. There are many avenues of mutual interests that can bring about benefits to both China and the US. Ultimately, defining Chinese-American interdependence in positive ways will lead to more regional and global stability, and make the world more integrated.

Positive Chinese-American relations can promote global stability

US President Joe Biden’s meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in San Francisco last week was a good opportunity to stabilize and fix American-Chinese relations, and score a few measurable achievements. Yet, America’s foreign policy toward China will be constantly dominated by a sense of rivalry.

Historically, great strategic importance is attached to the US-China relationship. When a US administration tries to adopt a new approach on foreign policy, it is often said that critical decisions will be made regarding the course of American-Chinese relations. Nevertheless, the

relationship between the US and China cannot be based solely on a state of confrontation between Washington and Beijing. It is a complex relationship that entails many areas of competition and the potential for cooperation on many issues. For instance, despite former President Donald Trump’s fiery rhetoric against China during the global pandemic, the two governments coordinated many policies to stop the spread of the virus and save lives.

The essence of Chinese-American politics is the need for a successful management of that relationship, and how to deal with pressing challenges that the two governments must handle at the present moment and in the near future.

As an example, on Nov. 21, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi welcomed foreign ministers visiting his nation from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, and Indonesia, as well as the head of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. This was a mission to follow up the recommendations of the Riyadh Arab-Islamic summit seeking to end the war in Gaza. Wang told the visiting ministers that “the international community must act urgently, taking effective measures to prevent this tragedy from spreading. China firmly stands with justice and fairness in this conflict.” This Chinese diplomatic attitude contrasts with the endorsement of the Biden administration and the US



40% windfall tax on banks' profits faces uncertainty

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) notification imposing a 40% additional tax on banks' windfall profits has been met with uncertainty as it requires approval from the National Assembly by February 19, 2024. The formation of the National Assembly is not expected until after the upcoming general elections, raising concerns about the timely implementation of the tax measure.

The FBR issued SRO 1588(I)/2023 on November 21, 2023, invoking its powers under Section 99D(2) of the Income Tax Ordinance to tax banks' windfall profits. The notification outlines the calculation method and formula for determining the 40% tax. However, Section

99D(3) of the Income Tax Ordinance mandates that the federal government obtain approval from the National Assembly for such a tax measure.

The deadline for submitting the notification to the National Assembly is February 19, 2024.

With the general elections scheduled to take place in the coming months, the formation of the National Assembly is unlikely to occur before the February 19 deadline. This raises questions about the validity of the FBR's notification and the enforceability of the windfall tax.

Industry experts have expressed concerns about the rushed implementation of the tax, suggesting that it may lead to legal challenges and hinder invest-

ment in the banking sector. They urge the government to reconsider the timeline and ensure proper legislative processes are followed.

The uncertainty surrounding the windfall tax has also raised concerns among banks, as they prepare for their financial year-end reporting. The lack of clarity regarding the tax liability could impact their profitability and financial planning.

In light of these developments, the banking sector and the business community are closely monitoring the situation and await further guidance from the government.

The timely resolution of this matter is crucial to maintain investor confidence and promote economic stability.

FBR releases updated Income Tax Rules 2023

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has released an updated version of the Income Tax Rules 2002, incorporating all amendments made up to November 24, 2023. These amendments include those introduced in the current fiscal year's federal budget, as well as any changes made since June 30. The primary goal of issuing these updated rules is to simplify the tax process for taxpayers and eliminate any ambiguities surrounding Income Tax Day.

The updated rules provide taxpayers with clear and concise guidelines on various aspects of income tax compliance, including assessment, collection, and refunds. They also incorporate recent changes in tax laws and regulations, ensuring that taxpayers remain compliant with the latest requirements.

Taxpayers can access the updated Income Tax Rules 2002 on the FBR's website. The FBR encourages taxpayers to familiarize themselves with the updated rules to ensure accurate and timely tax compliance.

Job scarcity forces mass migration

ISLAMABAD (INP): Presidential candidate of Businessmen Panel (BMP) of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram Sheikh has said that lack of employment opportunities in the country due to economic downturn, millions of people are leaving country to work abroad.

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said that workers, scientists, engineers and IT experts were among those leaving the country due to desperation, which has threatened the country's economy.

Atif Ikram Sheikh, who has also served as VP FPCCI, Chairman PVMA and President ICCI said that no one will leave the country if they can get decent jobs in Pakistan.

He informed that jobs can be created by promoting industrialization, which has received little attention from authorities due to which industrialists are also turning to non-productive sectors.

The business leader said that import restrictions were hurting the economy, commodities were becoming expensive, and the dollar volatility was also preventing the market from stabilizing, which needs to be controlled.

He said that due to the strict measures of the caretaker government, the country had been saved from bankruptcy. However, we are still facing severe problems, and investors were shying away from Pakistan.

Atif Ikram Sheikh said that many local and foreign companies need to get raw materials, while there are also difficulties in sending profits abroad, due to which investment has stopped.

The people need sustainable socio-economic development, human security, justice, health, education and other facilities because inflation was increasing continuously, but people's income was not increasing, he said.

People experiencing poverty, the working poor, and the salaried classes were all suffering more than any other class as their incomes have not moved in tandem with inflation nor with devaluation.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor selling fruits at weekly Sunday Bazaar Aabpara in Federal Capital.

Pak-Korea trade ties be enhanced further: Envoy

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Pakistan to Korea Nabeel Munir has said that trade and economic relation between Pakistan and Korea should be enhanced as both countries are potential markets and have the great ability and resources to fulfill each other's needs.

He was talking to APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood, who met with the Ambassador at Pakistan Embassy in Seoul, to discuss important matters related to B2B collaborations, joint ventures, and enhancing bilateral trade between Korea and Pakistan. In the meeting, the Pakistan Embassy in Korea and the All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) agreed to give intra-trade a new boost through joint ventures between the private sectors of the two countries. Several ideas were discussed to bring awareness about opportunities on both sides of the

business communities through regular contact and exchange of information for the businesses of Korea and Pakistan.

On this occasion, Nabeel Munir acknowledged and appreciated APBF efforts and initiatives taken by it for the business community of Pakistan. He observed Pakistan is a very potential market, adding that doing business in country like Pakistan is always very profitable. He said that Korea and Pakistan remain actively engaged in various fields such as climate change, cultural exchange, and information technology. Many Korean investors are also interested in the Pakistani market, investing over \$39 million last year alone. The 13,000 Pakistanis in Korea also contribute invaluable to the Korean economy to further solidify relations.

Korean companies already operate in Pakistan in diverse sectors. Daewoo, Samsung, Lotte, LG,

Hyundai, and Kia are household names in Pakistan. While Korean companies are welcome to invest in any sector, food processing, the automotive industry, I.T., hospitality/tourism, textiles, housing and construction, and logistics are areas in which Korean companies enjoy a competitive advantage.

Speaking on the occasion, the APBF President applauded Nabeel Munir for the efforts being made by him to increase collaboration on both sides between Korea and Pakistan through his diligent working. APBF President assured his full commitment to work closely with his office and Excellency welcomed this with great enthusiasm.

Syed Maaz Mahmood briefed the Pakistan ambassador about the APBF efforts and initiatives to increase bilateral trade, facilitating business community for ease of doing business and promoting the

real and positive perception of Pakistan at every platform.

Syed Maaz Mahmood observed that Pakistan with a \$347 billion economy, a youthful population of 220 million, a location at the crossroads of South and Central Asia and the Middle East, and investor-friendly policies, is open for business.

He said that Korea is an important trading partner of Pakistan. South Korea is the second biggest export destination of Pakistan in East Asia after China. It comes at 14th place among the top importing countries and at 16th place among the top exporting countries for Pakistan.

He said that the 16 designated Special Economic Zones in Pakistan offer lucrative incentives for investors.

Korean companies are welcome to start businesses in established SEZs or develop a Korean SEZ anywhere in Pakistan.

Asim's business strategies integrated into LUISS varsity's curriculum

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Renowned Pakistani fashion designer Asim Jofa's exemplary business resilience and crisis management recently earned him a unique distinction. His adaptive strategies, honed through years of experience, have become a vital case study at LUISS Guido Carli University, an esteemed university based in Rome, Italy. The integration of Jofa's case study into the curriculum stands as a testament to the invaluable insights it provides for future global business leaders, particularly in the fields of business and fashion.

The invitation to incorporate Asim Jofa's case study into the academic curriculum came from Prem S. Menghwar, a distinguished faculty member of LUISS Guido Carli's Business and Management department. Recognizing the exceptional nature of Jofa's business journey, Menghwar sought to impart the entrepreneur's adaptive strategies and crisis management techniques to students, aiming to prepare them for the dynamic challenges of the global business landscape. Asim Jofa then took center stage at LUISS Guido Carli University, captivating students and faculty with his insightful discourse on



business resilience and crisis management. Jofa shared his transformative journey, weaving a narrative of adaptability and success. His compelling talk left an indelible mark, inspiring the next generation of global business leaders and fashion enthusiasts at the prestigious university.

Asim Jofa's foray into the fashion industry began as a breath of fresh air, diverging from the family's established jewelry business. Twelve years ago, he embarked on his journey by establishing the highly exclusive and one-of-a-kind diamond boutique, 'The Diamond Gallery.'

Armed with a design certi-

fication from the prestigious Central Saint Martins, Jofa rapidly made waves in the fashion industry, garnering acclaim for his collections showcased on runways in fashion capitals worldwide. Jofa's accolades include the IAFA International Asian Fashion Awards for the Best Designer Brand in 2012. The same year, he secured the Collection of the Year award at the Pakistan Fashion Awards. Jofa's commitment to improving on perfection is evident, and he envisions a future where he continues to captivate and adorn Pakistani women, all while breaking fashion stereotypes.

The integration of Asim Jofa's case study into the

LUISS Guido Carli curriculum signifies the university's commitment to providing students with real-world insights and practical knowledge.

Jofa's experiences navigating the complexities of the business and fashion realms during times of crisis offer a rich tapestry of lessons for aspiring business leaders.

Jofa's integration into LUISS Guido Carli's curriculum underscores the global impact of his business strategies and positions him as a beacon for aspiring entrepreneurs and future leaders in the realms of business and fashion.

Court Notice

IN the Court of Shafqat Qadeer Civil Judge XIV Bannu. Suit No.310/1. Institution no.08-09-2023 Next date of Hearing 05-12-2023 Case title: Shafi Rahman VS Gul Marjan etc. Notice to (2) Ali Marjan son of Gul Marjan R/o Shamshe Khel Teshil and District Bannu Presently Abroad. Whereas in the above mentioned case the above mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will /shall not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8.00 am on 05-12-2023, the proceedings will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Empowering Youth through ECP: Jubilee Life Insurance marks 5-year milestone



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Jubilee Life Insurance, Pakistan's largest private sector insurance company, proudly celebrated its 5th consecutive year of collaboration with SEED Ventures on the Enterprise Challenge Pakistan (ECP), the country's premier business challenge for school children with an event held at the British Deputy High Commission (BDHC) Karachi, Pakistan. The keynote address at the event was delivered by British Deputy High Commissioner Her Excellency Ms Sarah Mooney. Other speakers at the event included MD & CEO Jubilee Life Insurance Mr Javed Ahmed, and Head of

Marketing and Brand Management Jubilee Life Insurance Mr Usman Qaiser, along with CEO SEED Ventures Ms Shaista Ayesha, ECP Programme Manager Ms Maha Salman.

ECP is an initiative of Prince's Trust International executed by SEED Ventures since 2016 across Pakistan. It is a national competition for 14-18-year-old students that aims to inspire the entrepreneurial spirit within young people and transform them into the job creators of tomorrow.

Jubilee Life's partnership with ECP aligns with its broader vision to alleviate socio-economic challenges by empowering youth and women, focusing on socially including and

embracing those historically excluded.

At the heart of this collaboration is a shared commitment to empowering the next generation of leaders in Pakistan. Jubilee Life Insurance recognizes the significance of investing in young minds, providing them with the tools and opportunities to become impactful contributors to society.

Through ECP, the company has actively engaged with over 4,000 young minds from over 100 schools nationwide over the last five years. The skills gained include confidence, teamwork, problem-solving, decision-making, effective communication, and creative thinking.

Depreciation, borrowing drive record inflation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP), while fearing of a sluggish growth and high inflationary trends in the country, said the massive depreciation, high exchange rates and resultant heavy bank borrowing to finance record fiscal deficits and debt servicing fuelled the spiraling multi-decade high inflation rates. FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that the inflation reading was 41.13pc for the week ending Nov 23, as gas prices stood over 1,100pc higher than a year ago. He asked the government for a sharp fiscal adjustment and decisive implementation of

broad-based reforms to get out of the macroeconomic quagmire, as annual short-term inflation remained above 40 per cent for the second week in a row, mainly driven by a massive increase in gas prices.

Calling for the robust implementation of the real reforms amidst continued fiscal restraint, he said the real GDP growth is projected to recover to 1.7 percent in FY24, estimating the rate of inflation at 26.5pc for the current fiscal year and 17 percent for FY25.

Referring to the latest data, he stated that after gas, other items whose prices increased the most included wheat flour (88.2pc), chilli powder (81.7pc), broken basmati rice (76.6pc), garlic (71pc), Irri-6/9 rice (62.3pc), gents' sponge chappal (58pc),

gents' sandal (53.37pc), branded tea (53pc), gur (50.8pc), and potatoes (47.9pc).

On a week-on-week basis, however, consumer prices were unchanged in the outgoing week in sharp contrast to the previous week's reading when the prices skyrocketed 10pc as the hike in gas prices came into effect.

The short-term, or weekly, inflation is measured by a basket of goods and services called the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), which currently stands at 308.90 compared to 309.09 in the preceding week.

The index, comprising 51 items collected from 50 markets in 17 cities, is computed weekly to assess the prices of essential commodities and services at shorter intervals.

Incentives for overseas can boost remittances, investment: PIAF

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has suggested the government to announce incentives for overseas Pakistanis to further boost up foreign remittances, besides enhancing investment in the country by Pakistani expatriates.

The PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that remittances last month came in at \$2.21 billion and this figure, while an improvement from last month's \$2.09 billion, was significantly lower than market expectations of

\$2.4-2.5 billion. However, on a month-on-month basis, remittances rose by 5.3% but they declined by 11.24% compared to last year, when remittances stood at \$2.49 billion. The market was expecting remittances to improve following a massive crackdown on exchange rate manipulation in the open market, and the subsequent reduction in the premium between the open and inter-bank markets.

The PIAF Chairman said that Pakistanis abroad may choose to send remittances through banks, in which case they would become part of the interbank mar-

ket, or exchange companies, which are part of the open market. Typically, the difference in the rates of the two markets is not very large; under the agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), it cannot exceed 1.25% for more than five days.

However, between August 28 and September 4, the difference in the market rates widened to an alarming extent both in absolute and percentage terms — up to nearly Rs 30 per dollar or 8.5%. And before the crackdown was launched in early September, a significant number of foreign

exchange dealings, including remittances, were either being done 'off the books' in the open market or diverted to the grey market. It all changed, however, once the authorities launched a massive crackdown on illegal foreign exchange trade.

Faheem Saigol said that Pakistan's economic growth is expected to see a decline during next two years. So, foreign remittance flows are the only hope which can support the current account balance, as the GDP growth is not going to decelerate.

Lamenting the gloomy picture of Pakistan's posi-

tion in the region with regard to its GDP growth, he said that upward trend in remittances to Pakistan from overseas workers is a positive news for the country's economy.

Quoting the data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, he said that exports rose by just 1.8 percent to \$15.1 billion, while imports fell 6.1 percent to \$36.6 billion despite imposition of high duties on import. If the government is eyeing \$30 billion in exports revenue in the current fiscal year, it would have to take measures to boost exports and investment, he maintained.

The PIAF Chief said that structural reforms can revive Pakistan's economic growth with major focus on incentives for overseas Pakistanis workers. If government assists overseas Pakistanis and provides them incentives, they can play a pivotal role in boosting Pakistan's economy through their remittances and investments for the socio-economic prosperity, he said. He said overseas Pakistanis can invest in agriculture, transportation, telecom and energy sectors which have huge potential. The government has badly failed to attract foreign investment because the per-

sisting process of approval of projects discourages the investors, he added. He asked the bureaucracy to mould simple procedures by revisiting the existing processes so that the investors could be facilitated. He said that export-oriented industries should be facilitated.

He said that remittances can help not only in financing the deficit in import payments but also in foreign debt repayments, suggesting the government to focus on structural reforms, which can revive Pakistan's economic growth with major focus on incentives for overseas Pakistanis workers.



In brief

Darren Bravo takes a break

JAMAICA (Agencies): West Indies batter Darren Bravo has announced to take a break from cricket for an indefinite period of time after not being named in the West Indies squad for the three-match ODI series against England next month. Bravo, who last represented the West Indies in February 2022, took to Instagram and announced his decision owing to the difficulty of giving his best in current circumstances. "I've taken some time to ponder and wonder what's my next step moving forward as a cricketer," Darren Bravo wrote on Instagram. "At this point in my career, it's not easy or should I say it takes a lot to continue to find the energy, the passion, commitment, and discipline to be able to perform to the best of my ability and put myself in a position to make my return to international cricket." He further stated that he was not communicated about his exclusion, from the West Indies main squad as well as the West Indies Academy squad for the series against Ireland and the West Indies A squad for the unofficial Tests against South Africa. "Without any level [of] communication, I've been left in a very dark place. At the moment, there [are] three teams representing the region in multiple formats/series. That's approximately 40-45 players and if I can't be in any of these teams after competing in our regional tournaments and scoring runs, therefore, they are basically telling me that the writing is on the wall," he added.

Venables dies aged 80

LONDON (Reuters): Terry Venables, the former manager of England's national soccer team and Tottenham Hotspur, has died aged 80 after an illness, his family said on Sunday. Venables guided England to the semi-finals of the 1996 European Championship on home soil before losing to Germany on penalties. "We are totally devastated by the loss of a wonderful husband and father who passed away peacefully yesterday after a long illness," the family said in a statement. In addition to his spell in charge of Tottenham, during which he won the FA Cup in the 1990-91 season, he also took charge of Crystal Palace, Leeds United and Barcelona in a glittering managerial career. During his time at Barcelona, Venables earned the nickname El Tel, winning LaLiga and reaching the European Cup final in 1986. Venables was also responsible for bringing British strikers Gary Lineker and Mark Hughes to the Nou Camp. "The best, most innovative coach that I had the privilege and pleasure of playing for," Lineker, who also played under Venables at Spurs and England, wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter. "He was much more, though, than just a great manager, he was vibrant, he was charming, he was witty, he was a friend." Venables started his professional career as a player with Chelsea in 1960 and played for Tottenham Hotspur, Queens Park Rangers and Crystal Palace before retiring to take over the manager's role there. As a player, he made over 500 league appearances and won the League Cup with Chelsea in 1965 and the FA Cup with Spurs in 1967. He made two international appearances for England.



Max Verstappen celebrates winning the Abu Dhabi Formula One Grand Prix.

Verstappen completes majestic season with record-breaking triumph

ABU DHABI (AFP): Max Verstappen completed a majestic and record-breaking season in familiar style on Sunday when he cruised to a record-increasing 19th win of the year for Red Bull at an action-packed Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. The three-time world champion came home 17.993 seconds ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc whose bold drive was not enough for the Italian team to claim the runners-up place in the constructors' championship. That went, finally, to Mercedes by just three points as although Sergio Perez came home second behind Verstappen on the road he was relegated to fourth with a five-second penalty, for a mid-race clash with McLaren's Lando Norris, which promoted George Russell to third. Norris was fifth ahead of his McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri, Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso, Yuki Tsunoda of Alpha Tauri and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton in the second Mercedes. Verstappen ended the season as the only driver to complete every lap of the season, more than 1000 laps led, and also broke Jim Clark's 1963 record for the highest percentage of laps led in a season. "An incredible season," said Verstappen, who also

paid tribute to retirement-bound Alpha Tauri boss Franz Tost who nurtured his early F1 career. "I felt quite emotional on the in-lap as it's the last time in this car that has given me such a lot. Russell said: "It was really tense at the end as the tyres were dropping off, but it's a massive relief to bring the car home P3. It means a huge amount to so many people back at the factory." Leclerc, who slowed to allow Perez to pass him in the closing laps, said: "He had a penalty and we had to help him finish in front of George with the five seconds... but, unfortunately, it wasn't enough... It's a shame we finished third." The race began in hot conditions, with an air temperature of 27 degrees Celsius and the track cooling rapidly as the sun went down and the floodlights blazed on the Yas Marina Circuit. The top 12 cars started on medium compound tyres. The Dutchman led from pole and fended off three early challenges from Leclerc to open up a one second lead before Drag Reduction System (DRS) was enabled on lap three when Perez swept inside Hamilton for ninth and Norris passed Piastri for third, having already passed Russell. As the leaders all pitted for hards, Yuki Tsunoda took over on lap 18, giving

Alpha Tauri and Tost a memorable moment, only the second time a Japanese driver had led a Formula One race. He stayed there as Verstappen weaved his way back to the front, finally taking control again on lap 23 when Tsunoda pitted, returning in 12th behind Hamilton, who survived an early bump into the rear of Pierre Gasly's Alpine with front wing damage. By lap 30, it was a familiar story. Verstappen led Leclerc by 6.5 seconds with Russell 2.1 behind in third and Norris fourth. Hamilton was eighth and Sainz 14th. As the second stops began, Norris pitted again on lap 34, taking fresh hards. He re-joined 10th. Mercedes responded, bringing Russell in – and he came out in P9 while Hamilton battled Alonso for ninth and Sainz, on an aggressive strategy, rose to eighth. As it stood, it was advantage Ferrari again while, at the front, Verstappen came in again on lap 44, retaining his lead to emerge with a 15-lap cruise to the flag before Hamilton passed Sainz for ninth with 10 laps to go. It was advantage Mercedes again, but when Russell was passed by Perez, for third, the 'silver arrows' hopes hung on the five-second penalty the Mexican was given for an earlier clash with Norris as the flag came out for Verstappen.

Sensational Sinner twice beats Djokovic to send Italy into Davis Cup final

MALAGA (Agencies): Jannik Sinner beat world number one Novak Djokovic twice in one day to send Italy into the Davis Cup final with a 2-1 win over Serbia on Saturday in Malaga. Italy, who won the trophy for the first and only time in 1976, will face 28-time winners Australia on Sunday. Sinner, who has now triumphed three times in four clashes across 11 days against Djokovic, crucially kept Italy in the tie by beating the 24-time Grand Slam winner 6-2, 2-6, 7-5 in the second singles rubber. Sinner and Lorenzo Sonego then defeated Djokovic and Miomir Kecmanovic 6-3, 6-4 in the decisive doubles to clinch victory, after Kecmanovic had dispatched Lorenzo Musetti 6-7 (7/9), 6-2, 6-1 in the opener. World number four Sinner saved three match points as he faced Djokovic in the singles, with the 36-year-old arriving in stellar form. Djokovic, who has won seven titles this year including three Grand Slams, was aiming to send 2010 champions Serbia into the final for the first time in a decade. However Sinner claimed arguably the biggest win of his career, becoming the first man to beat Djokovic in a singles match at the Davis Cup since Argentina's Juan Martin del Potro in 2011, ending a 21-match streak. "Congratulations to Italy for qualifying for (the) finals," said Djokovic. "They deserved it, they played really well, particularly Jannik, in singles

against me and then doubles, as well. "He barely missed the ball the entire match -- so you can only say congrats and hats down for the performance like that." Sinner won the first of their four recent battles in the ATP Finals group stage, but although Djokovic took the second to bag the title, Sinner delivered twice more in front of a full house at the Martin Carpena arena. After easing past Cameron Norrie on Thursday, Djokovic created headlines by rowing with noisy British fans and then showing his fury at being asked to take a doping control test before that match. The Serb was this time unimpressed by rowdy Italian fans in the doubles defeat as he ended a glittering year without the team title he craved. - Subdued Djokovic - Sinner, 14 years the younger at 22, broke Djokovic in the third and fifth games, racing into a 5-1 lead. The Italian finished his superb first set with an ace, hitting 12 winners to the subdued Djokovic's one, in only 38 minutes. With the match seemingly under control he let it slip, double-faulting on the first break point he conceded to fall 3-1 behind. Djokovic ruthlessly capitalised, sealing the set with another break when Sinner whipped a forehand wide. The Serbian had the momentum. Djokovic was on top in the third set with Sinner saving two break points and unable to pres-

sure the Serb's serve. Sinner appeared to crack in the 10th game, giving up three match points, but then won five consecutive points to hold for 5-5. He then broke Djokovic and held comfortably to triumph. "For me personally it's a huge disappointment, because I take the responsibility, obviously having three match points, being so close to win it," added Djokovic. Italy took the first set of the doubles by breaking Djokovic's serve in the sixth game, as the Serbian duo struggled for a connection. Both sides exchanged breaks in the second set, with Italy struggling through four Serbia break points to hold for 3-3. Djokovic responded to crowd noise from Italy fans between the points, sarcastically encouraging them to make more, before waving his hands like a conductor. It was Italy who were on song though and Sonego put them a break up for 4-3 with a smash, Serbia's bid ending when Djokovic pushed a Sinner serve into the net. In the first singles rubber Kecmanovic lost a nail-biting first set to Musetti but responded brilliantly. He swept to victory with a powerful forehand winner, falling to the floor in delight, although by the end of a long day, he was left with the opposite feeling. Filippo Volandri's side return to the final 25 years after their last appearance, facing Lleyton Hewitt's Australia, who ended Finland's fairytale run on Friday.

Bagnaia retains MotoGP title as Martin crashes out

VALENCIA (Agencies): Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia won the season-ending Valencia GP to retain his MotoGP title after his only rival Jorge Martin crashed out early in the race. Pramac Racing's Martin clipped Marc Marquez's Honda in the sixth lap, causing both drivers to crash out and hand Bagnaia the title. The Italian was leading and unaware of the incident but went on to win anyway. Martin needed to win and Bagnaia finish outside the top five in order to claim a first MotoGP crown. The Spaniard, who began the race 14 points adrift of Bagnaia, made a fine start, surging from sixth on the grid to second behind his rival. However, on the second lap he dropped back to eighth after clipping Bagnaia's bike, although he was able to stay in the race. A few laps later a second collision, this time with Marquez, ended his race. The 25-year-old returned to the pitlane where he was consoled by his team-mates after shedding tears. It was six-time champion Marquez's final race for Honda as he prepares to join Gresini Racing for next season. The man he is replacing at Gresini, Fabio di Giannantonio, finished second with Martin's Prima Pramac team-mate Johann Zarco third. Bagnaia received a boost before the race when he was promoted to pole position in place of Maverick Vinales, who was demoted to fourth after failing to leave the track after a black flag was waved at him during the warm-up.

New Zealand bank on WC form ahead of BD Tests

SYLHET (AFP): New Zealand coach Luke Ronchi said Sunday that his side's Cricket World Cup experience in India would help end their barren run in Bangladesh, as they prepare to face the hosts for a two-Test series. New Zealand has largely played on Asian soil this year, with series in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh in various formats, before they played the World Cup in India over October and November. The Kiwis put up a credible show at the tournament, losing to hosts India in the semi-final. "It's definitely going to help us," Ronchi told reporters ahead of Tuesday's match at Sylhet. "I think if we'd come straight from green wickets in New Zealand to the Bangladesh wickets, it's a big change," he added. "But for the majority of our group here, they have been in India. They've been at the World Cup. "They have been practising on different surfaces, slower and turning sort of surfaces. So that hopefully helps us for this Test series."

Before travelling to India, New Zealand ended their 15-year wait to win a series in Bangladesh, beating the home side 2-0 in the three-match one-day international series. The Kiwis have not, however, won a Test in Bangladesh since their three-wicket win in Chittagong in 2008. Their next three Tests, including both matches in a 2013 series, ended in a draw. The visitors, who played with just one spinner back in 2013, named a spin-heavy squad for the upcoming series. This time, Mitchell Santner and Ajaz Patel join Ish Sodhi along with two spin all-rounders, Glenn Phillips and Rachin Ravindra. Ronchi believed spinners from both camps would play a big role. "The quality of spin and pace in both sides is going to be really high," he said. Bangladesh will miss regular captain and experienced spinner Shakib Al Hasan for the series, while pacers Taskin Ahmed and Ebadot Hossain will be out due to injury. Veteran batsman Tamim Iqbal and opener Liton Das are also not available for the series due to injury and a family break respectively. "It's challenging to lose that much of experience from any team, especially for Bangladesh," said coach Chandika Hathurusingha. He said the absences did, however, offer a chance to test other players.

Diamond Paints clinch Patrons Aibak Polo Cup 2023

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Diamond Paints clinched the coveted trophy after beating Remounts 8-6 in the Patrons 47th Aibak Polo Cup 2023 final here at Lahore Polo Club on Sunday. The historic Aibak Cup final drew a large crowd of spectators, including families and children, creating an electric atmosphere at the Lahore Polo Club. The event was graced by Lahore Polo Club President Azam Hayat Noon, the Executive Committee members, and esteemed guests, including Patrons Mir Shoaib

Ahmed, Farooq Amin Sufi, Adnan Jalil Azam, Alman Jalil Azam, Taimur Ali Malik, Mir Khuzaima Ahmed, Qadeer Ashfaq, and other polo enthusiasts. The final match proved to be a riveting contest, with Diamond Paints ultimately securing victory with an 8-6 scoreline against Remounts, earning the historic Aibak Polo Cup trophy. Saqib Khan Khakwani led the charge for Diamond Paints with three goals, supported by Raja Temur Nadeem and Mir Huzaifa Ahmed, who contributed two goals each, while Bilal Hayat

Noon scored one goal. Remounts' efforts were marked by Lao Abelenda's three goals, along with two goals from Mohammad Naeem and one from Omer Asjad Malhi. In the earlier subsidiary final, Team Newage Cables/Master Paints showcased superior polo skills, outpacing Pebble Breaker 6-3. Both teams displayed commendable performances, but Newage Cables/Master Paints demonstrated their prowess, securing a decisive 6-3 victory in the subsidiary final.



DIG Amanullah Memorial Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tennis Champion enters quarter final round

PESHAWAR: DIG Amanullah Memorial Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Open Tennis Championship entered the quarter final round in which Hamza Ruman, Shah Sawar Khan, Saqib Hayat, Aqib Hayat, Shaan Mahmood qualified for the quarter finals of men's singles. Hamza Roman defeated Shahid Afridi by six fours, six threes, Shah Sawar Khan defeated Muhammad Khan by six one six threes, Saqib Hayat defeated Zakirullah by six in the quarter-final matches of the ongoing

championship at Qayyum Sports Complex Peshawar. Aqib Hayat defeated Hazrat Ali by six one six one, Shaan Mehmood qualified for the quarter finals by defeating Jawad Khan by six one six two. Defeated by one six two, Hasan Khan defeated Arham Amjad six one six, Mohammad Daniyal defeated Ahmed Khalil six three six one and qualified for the second stage. In U-18 Shahwar Khan beat Jawad six three six two Junaid Khan defeated Saifullah six four six four, Arsalan Khan defeated Abdul Samad six one six

two Shayan Afridi defeated Ikhtsham Khan six one six one Muhammad Uzair defeated Abdul Rahman six three six three and Uzair Khan qualified for the quarter finals by defeating Hazrat Ali six three six two. On this occasion, Senior Vice President of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tennis Association Dr. Farhat Abbas, Cardiologist, was the special guest along with General Secretary of Provincial Tennis Association Omar Ayaz, Khalil, coaches Ruman Gul, Nauman Khan, Zakirullah, Shehryar, Shah Hussain and Shahid were present.



Root joins Stokes in skipping next year's IPL

NEW DELHI (AFP): England batsman Joe Root has pulled out of next year's Indian Premier League, joining his red-ball skipper Ben Stokes in sitting out the glitzy Twenty20 tournament. Root, who had made his IPL debut for Rajasthan Royals earlier this year, opted out a day before the deadline for franchises to announce their releases and retentions ahead of the auction on December 19. "Joe Root has opted out of IPL 2024. The dressing room will miss you, Rooty," Royals said late Saturday in a post on X, formerly Twitter. Root became the second player from England to opt out of the IPL after Stokes announced his withdrawal last week in order to manage his workload and fitness. Royals said in a statement on their website that they "respect" Root's decision. "Even in a short span of time, Joe was able to create such a positive impact on the franchise and the players around him," said Kumar Sangakkara, Royals' director of cricket. "His energy around the group and the experience he brought to the Royals will be missed. We respect his decision totally and

wish him success in everything he does," Root was signed up by Royals for his base price of \$121,000 in the IPL auction this year. He played three games but batted in just one, scoring 10 against Royal Challengers Bangalore in Jaipur. The IPL remains the most popular and lucrative Twenty20 league in the world. But it is a lengthy and demanding tournament, posing a risk of injury, fatigue an burnout for players who face an increasingly packed international schedule. Archer released by IPL's Mumbai ahead of auction NEW DELHI: England's Jofra Archer has been released by his Indian Premier League team Mumbai Indians ahead of the auction, as franchises on Sunday announced the names of retained players. Gujarat Titans have kept Hardik Pandya on the list of retained players despite reports the all-rounder will move to his former franchise Mumbai. England stars Ben Stokes and Joe Root have been released by their teams Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan

Royals after the two pulled out of the 2024 season. All 10 franchises listed their retained and released players on Sunday's deadline as teams prepare for the auction on December 19. Pandya stays on with Gujarat, but according to reports could move to Mumbai in the trading window open till December 12. Australia fast bowler Josh Hazlewood has been released by Royal Challengers Bangalore and Sunrisers Hyderabad parted ways with England batsman Harry Brook. Archer's release remained the most surprising since five-time champions Mumbai got the pace star in the 2022 season for \$1.06 million despite his unavailability due to an elbow injury. "The two other interesting releases are Jofra Archer, who @mipaltan had nurtured and were optimistic about," veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "And Josh Hazlewood at @RCBTweets which I suspect could be an indication that he may not be available." The 28-year-old Archer returned to the team last year only to play five matches and take two wickets before being ruled out to injury.



In brief

IRSA releases 91,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 91,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 45,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1501.88 feet and was 101.88 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 22,400 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1180.00 feet, which was 130.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 6,200 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 58,400, 43,500, 39,900 and 14,400 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

ICT admin posted seven new ACs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory administration has posted/transferred seven Assistant Commissioners against vacant posts after issuance of notification from establishment division. In this regard Islamabad administration has issued orders for postings and transfer of new assistant commissioners. According to notification Abdullah Khan Swati has been posted Assistant Commissioner Secretariat Circle, Nihal Hafeez Assistant Commissioner Shalimar, Aneeq Anwar Assistant Commissioner Potohar, Kamran Asghar Assistant Commissioner Rural, Farwa Batul Assistant Commissioner Industrial Area, Aziz Khan Assistant Commissioner Nellore and Farhan Ahmed Assistant Commissioner City.

Two members of robbers gang held

RAWALPINDI (APP): In an efficient operation here Sunday, the Civil Lines police have arrested two members notorious gang of robbers involved in a jewelry shop heist. Police have also recovered 11.5 tons of gold jewelry, 1.1 million cash and weapons from their possession used in the crime, informed police spokesman. The arrested gang was identified as Qasim and Haider who had previously been involved in cases of robbery and burglary in the twin cities. SP Pothohar praised the Civil Lines police team emphasizing that the culprits would face legal action based on solid evidence, asserting that those attacking citizens' lives and property cannot escape the law.

World Sustainable Transport Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): The first-ever World Sustainable Transport Day was observed on Sunday to highlight the crucial role of secure, cost-effective, accessible and environmentally sustainable transportation systems. In his message on the occasion, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said there is an urgent need for a transformative shift towards more sustainable transport, emphasizing the importance of cleaner energy to combat climate change, said a news release issued here. The UN adopted a resolution earlier this year to designate November 26 as World Sustainable Transport Day.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor selling Dates at weekly Sunday bazar Aabpara in the Federal Capital.

Govt to enhance standard of medical education

ISLAMABAD (APP): The quality of medical and dental education will be enhanced at par with international standards, considering local needs and ground realities.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Medical Education and Patient Care and Minister of State Prof. Dr. Aamir Bilal said that while chairing a high-level meeting at Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) head office for the promotion of medical education and quality health care in the country.

He said there will be no compromise on the minimum standards and quality.

The minister said that PMDC has a pivotal role in ensuring the quality and

standardization of medical and dental education, professional practice, and ethical standards in the country.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Medical Education and Patient Care and Minister of State Prof. Dr. Aamir Bilal said that all necessary steps will be taken to revise existing rules and regulations of PMDC including the syllabus for MDCAT, curriculum for undergraduate medical dental education, and accreditation standards for the accreditation of medical and dental institutes.

He emphasized that it will be ensured to standardize the MDCAT, NRE and NEB exams to stringent quality assessments, updated curricula, and

modern teaching methodologies to produce competent and globally competitive healthcare professionals which are safe for society.

The meeting was attended by PMDC council members, the Federal Special Secretary for Health, President CPSP, members of the task force and sub-committees, nominee of HEC, nominees of the provincial health departments, present and former vice-chancellors, deans, experts in the field, representatives of nursing council from across the country.

The meeting was also attended by Federal Secretary Health Itikhar Ali Shallwani and Prof. Dr. Rizwan Taj President of PMDC.

Crackdown on drug dealers

ISLAMABAD (APP): A nationwide crackdown against drug dealers is underway as the government's law enforcement agencies so far recovered 38,226 kilograms of narcotics, arresting 469 people since September this year.

"From November 12 to 19, around 4,302 kg of drugs were seized across the country, whereas 44 cases were registered against people involved in drug dealing and arrested 34 individuals", according to PTV news on Sunday.

Similarly, 4,155 kg of drugs from Balochistan, 40 kg from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 8 kg from Gilgit, 65 kg from Punjab, and 32 kg narcotics were recovered in Sindh. The narcotics included 651kg of charas, 9kg Meth, 28 kg of opium, and 189 kg of heroin.

Saudi-Pakistan friendship agreement marks 72 years

ISLAMABAD (APP): The friendship agreement inked between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in November, 1951 continues to yield positive and evolving impacts on both nations in a testament to enduring brotherhood. On the occasion of the 72nd anniversary of this significant milestone in the diplomatic relations between two fraternal nations, Saudi Press Attaché Dr. Naif Al-Otaibi shared the momentous development on his social media account on 'X'.

He said this historic accord, signed by the then Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Abdulaziz, and Pakistani Plenipotentiary Minister Abdul Sattar Sait, laid the foundation for a robust and lasting alliance. He, in an exclusive interview with APP, said the agreement laid the groundwork for a deep and enduring friendship that had stood the test of time. Since its inception, he said Saudi Arabia and Pakistan had enjoyed a relationship characterized by mutual respect, cooperation, and shared values.

He said the positive impacts of this longstanding friendship were particularly evident in the economic realm as both countries had engaged in fruitful collabora-

tions, with Saudi Arabia emerging as a key investor in various sectors of Pakistan's economy.

He mentioned that the signing of numerous economic agreements and the establishment of joint ventures had further strengthened economic ties, contributing to the prosperity of both nations. Dr. Naif said the strategic dimension of this friendship had also played a pivotal role in maintaining regional stability.

He said collaborations in defense and security had been paramount, with joint military exercises and the exchange of expertise enhancing the capabilities of both nations. He said this cooperation had not only ensured the security of each country but had also contributed to broader efforts aimed at fostering peace and stability in the region.

Dr. Naif said beyond the realms of politics and economics, the Saudi-Pakistan friendship had fostered rich cultural exchanges and people-to-people ties. He said the cultural affinity between the two nations had been celebrated through various events, promoting a better understanding of each other's traditions, customs, and heritage from time to time.

PR accelerates efforts to retrieve 13,972 acres land

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has accelerated the efforts to retrieve the major portion of around 13,972 acres of land worth billions of rupees found under the illegal occupation of private individuals and different government departments across the country.

"Around 5,809 acres were occupied in Punjab, 1,181 acres are under encroachment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,948 acres in Sindh and 1,034 acres land occupied in Balochistan," an official in the Ministry told APP.

He said the category of land under illegal occupations included commercial, residential, agricultural and various persons or departments.

Giving details of the land, the official said that around 769 acres were commercial in all the provinces, 3,309 residential, 5,512 acres agricultural and 4382 were under encroachment of various persons or departments. The official said the department had also decided to

accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups, and even business organizations which were using it for residential, commercial and agriculture purposes for decades.

"The joint procedure orders have been issued to all Divisional Superintendents of Pakistan Railways to retrieve the railway land from encroachers," the official added.

Accordingly, he said the anti-encroachment operations for retrieval of encroached Railway land all over the Railway network are being initiated by the concerned divisions and notices are issued to encroachers under the Possession Ordinance 1965 for vacation of Railway land/structure within 14 days.

The official said that Pakistan Railway Police, District Administration and law enforcement agencies are informed of necessary assistance in anti-encroachment operations.

‘UN FAO’s 40 ambitious projects to revolutionize agriculture in Pakistan’

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) has unveiled a dynamic portfolio of 40 diverse projects strategically dispersed across various regions of Pakistan.

These initiatives, with varying scopes, financial parameters, and target audiences, underscore the FAO's commitment to fortifying the agriculture and food security sectors in the country. In an exclusive panel interview with the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), Country Representative Florence Rolle and Assistant FAOR (Programs) Dr. Aamer Irshad highlighted the proactive role of the FAO in numerous initiatives and programs aimed at strengthening Pakistan's agriculture and food security sectors. These initiatives span a spectrum, including enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability, supporting livestock and fisheries development, and implementing food security programs to alleviate hunger and malnutrition.

Rolle outlined FAO's 2023-2027 priorities with Pakistan: enhancing food availability, strengthening climate-responsive planning, and improving agricultural value chains. The focus includes nutrition policy, climate frameworks, support for enterprises, disease control, and women's empowerment in agriculture. She explained that project selection is based on a thorough consultative process, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023-2027. The FAO's Country Programming Framework (CPF) for 2023-2027 involves consultations with relevant ministries, departments, academia, UN agencies, and resource partners at both federal and provin-

cial levels.

The FAO's involvement extends beyond traditional agricultural support. The organization actively engages in sustainable natural resource management, providing humanitarian assistance during emergencies, and collaborating closely with the Pakistani government on policy development. Additionally, the FAO supports research and innovation while helping Pakistan adapt to the challenges posed by climate change. Highlighting the FAO's commitment to accountability, Rolle underscored the presence of a robust monitoring and evaluation system with units in Islamabad and across provinces. This system plays a pivotal role in shaping program effectiveness by providing guidance based on lessons learned.

Discussing assessment methods, Dr. Aamer Irshad emphasized the efficiency and accuracy of modern scientific tools, particularly satellite technology, in evaluating crop damage. Rolle acknowledged challenges in assessing areas adjacent to large riverine regions and reiterated the FAO's advantage in utilizing satellite technology in such scenarios.

As a UN agency, the FAO collaborates closely with governments worldwide, operating primarily in partnership with government entities at federal and provincial levels. The organization also engages with academic institutions, research organizations, and NGOs, employing a versatile approach tailored to the specific context and needs of each project.

Aamer discussed the Living Indus initiative, a government-backed endeavor where the FAO serves as the technical lead. In addressing threats to the Indus basin, she empha-

sized the pivotal role of mass involvement, particularly among the youth, in mobilizing support and creating awareness.

Touching upon the crucial role of youth in agriculture, Rolle emphasized their significance in driving economic growth. She highlighted the need to attract educated youth to the agriculture sector, noting the sector's evolution toward precision farming, digital technologies, satellite monitoring, and research-based practices. Dr. Aamer Irshad emphasized the necessity of modernizing the sector to make it more appealing to the younger generation.

Despite agriculture contributing 22% to the country's economy, she stressed the need for strategic reduction without compromising productivity. Large farms benefit from supportive government policies, while smallholder farmers face challenges due to insufficient profits and a lack of business acumen. The UN representative proposed a comprehensive plan involving specialized education, financial incentives, rural infrastructure improvement, awareness campaigns, and technology adoption to make agriculture more attractive to educated youth.

In a broader perspective, Rolle highlighted FAO's contributions to all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those closely related to six key sub-sectors within agriculture: zero hunger, water resources, fisheries, climate change mitigation, livestock management, gender, and food losses. As the FAO continues to spearhead initiatives in Pakistan, its comprehensive approach aims at transforming the agriculture landscape and contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.



ISLAMABAD: People busy in selecting and purchasing used warm clothes at weekly Sunday bazar Aabpara.

SAPM Malik underlines need for strengthening Pak-Saudi skills development cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): A Pakistani delegation led by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD), Jawad Sohrab Malik, visited the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh on Sunday.

The delegation included Ambassador of Pakistan Ahmad Farooq, Director General of Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment (BEOE) Akram Khawaja, Joint Secretary Emigration Aurangzeb, and Community Welfare Attachés, said a press release.

The Saudi side was represented by Deputy Governor Eng. Abdulrahman Almarwani, Director General of International Cooperation Eng. Sultan Alsunaya, Supervisor at the Deputy Governor Office for Training and Quality Policies, Dr. Khaled Al-Othman, and International Cooperation Specialist at the Directorate of International Cooperation, Khaled Alshehri.

The Deputy Governor of the Technical and Vocational Training

Corporation (TVTC) welcomed the Pakistani delegation. The meeting was held in a very cordial manner.

The Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) team gave a detailed presentation on the working of TVTC. SAPM, Jawad Sohrab Malik appreciated the great role of the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) in the skills development of Saudi nationals. Both sides discussed ways to strengthen cooperation in skills improvement for workers.

It is pertinent to note here that Navtec and Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) will soon sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in this regard.

The visit of the Pakistani delegation to the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) was a positive step forward in strengthening cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in the field of skills development. Both sides are committed to working together to create new opportunities for Pakistani workers in Saudi Arabia.

Amnesty launches drive

KABUL (Khaama Press): The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Amnesty International has launched a dedicated 16-day campaign to address the critical situation faced by women and girls in Afghanistan. Amnesty International's campaign aims to amplify the voices of human rights activists, politicians, artists, protesters, and teachers, uniting a diverse range of perspectives to combat violence against women and girls in Afghanistan.

EU provides aid

KABUL (Ariana News): The European Union has provided 10 million to Afghanistan through the World Health Organization to combat infectious diseases and strengthen healthcare services. The World Health Organization has stated that this latest budget aims to improve preparedness for disease outbreaks and healthcare in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The organization has mentioned that more than two million people are expected to benefit from these contributions.

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 11, 1445 — Monday, November 27, 2023

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

Water rights: Afghanistan, Iran form working group

KABUL (Ariana News): Iranian media reported that for the first time a joint working group of environmental officials of Afghanistan and Iran was formed to follow up on the issue of water rights from the Helmand River.

According to Iran's state news agency IRNA, for several years now, water has not reached Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan from the Helmand River in Afghanistan, and it has caused problems for the livelihood of the people of

the region.

According to the water treaty between the two countries, Iran is entitled to 820 million cubic meters of water from the river annually, but Iranian officials have said it only received 27 million cubic meters in the past year.

After the Iranian officials claimed that the Islamic Emirate was not committed to ensuring water rights, Kabul allowed a delegation from Iran to closely evaluate the water level in the Helmand River.

A technical delegation of Iran visited the Deh Rawood hydrometric station and found the level of water to be lower than normal due to drought.

During his recent trip to Iran, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, deputy prime minister for economic affairs, said that the recent droughts have had a bad effect on water resources in the region, especially in Afghanistan. He said surface and underground water levels have decreased significantly.

Bilal Karimi appointed as ambassador

KABUL (Khaama Press): Bilal Karimi, the Deputy Spokesperson of the Taliban administration, has been appointed as the Ambassador of the de facto administration to China.

Sources from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Taliban in Kabul have confirmed that Bilal Karimi has been appointed the group's ambassador to China. Karimi previously served as the deputy spokesperson for the Taliban. However, the Taliban has not made any official statement on this matter.

According to a report, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Taliban in Kabul confirmed on Sunday that Bilal Karimi has arrived in Beijing and is set to begin his work soon.

This comes as no country in the world, including China and some countries with close relations to the Taliban administration, has officially recognized the Interim administration so far.

Following the fall of the Afghan Republic and the establishment of the Taliban administration in Afghanistan in 2021, this is the first time that the Taliban administration has sent its official ambassador to another country.

China has not officially recognized the Taliban government but maintains close trade and political relations with this group.

After the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, China, following Pakistan and Russia, became the first country to host Taliban diplomats.

Until now, political representations of Afghanistan in various countries have been managed by ambassadors appointed during the Republic or interim heads appointed by the Taliban administration.

Acting FM meets Russian ambassador to Kabul



KABUL (Ariana News): Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi met with Dmitry Zhirnov, Russia's ambassador to

Kabul where the two sides discussed bilateral, political and economic relations between Kabul and Moscow, deputy

spokesman of the ministry, Hafiz Zia Ahmad Takal said on X.

At the meeting, Acting Foreign Minister Amir

Khan Muttaqi and Zhirnov also discussed issues in the region and abroad, along with educational and cultural issues, Takal said.

Muttaqi temporarily to assume some duties of Deputy PM

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, has temporarily taken on the task of regulating the Islamic Emirate's internal and external policy, which was one of the duties of the Prime Minister's political deputy.

The Islamic Emirate's spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, told TOLONews that Muttaqi will temporarily take over for Political Deputy Prime Minister Mawlawi Abdul Kabir due to his illness.

"Following up on domestic and foreign policy have been entrusted to the minister of foreign affairs, and the head of the political deputy PM's office should carry out the other work and activities," Mujahid said.

It has been almost three months that the political deputy of the Prime Minister has not been present in meetings and visits with officials from other countries.

"We hope that he will return to his duties in the

coming days. He participates in consultations and gave advice to the government, but he did not visit his office because the physicians had urged him to take a rest," said Hassan Haqyar, head of the media directorate of the political deputy of the PM.

Some political analysts said that the Islamic Emirate's leaders' presence is important in meetings, and urged that the current government provide an explanation for the officials' attendance and

absence.

"I hope the Islamic Emirate shares with the nation every issue, including changes and meetings, travel abroad and inside... so that some propaganda and worries will be removed," Kamran Aman, a political analyst, told TOLONews.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir most recently met on September 4, 2023, with the former Turkish ambassador. However, he did not have any formal meetings following that.

Iran deporting Afghans who have passports and visas: Herat officials

HERAT (TOLONews): Local officials of Herat said that the Iranian government has started the process of deporting those Afghan immigrants who have passports and visas.

According to them, the Iranian police tore the passports and visas of some Afghan immigrants and violently expelled them from this country.

Abdullah Qayoumi, the head of immigration affairs at Islam Qala port in Herat, said that a large number of legal immigrants deported from Iran enter the country through this port every day.

"They deport our immigrants who have legal documents and go there to find employment. Passports are not valid for them. They are saying in the media that we are deporting those immigrants who do not have passports and legal documents, while this is not true," Qayoumi said.

Meanwhile, some

Afghans deported from Iran said that even though they have Iranian visas, the police arrested them and deported them.

"We told them that we have passports, they said that here your passport does not work. They tore our passports," Khairullah, Afghan immigrant deported from Iran told TOLONews.

"When we told them that we have valid documents, the soldiers told us to shut your mouth," Mohammad Naser, another Afghan immigrant deported from Iran told TOLONews. Human rights advocates believe that Iran violates international rules and norms when it expels foreigners who have valid visas.

"Afghan immigrants have always been treated politically, and Iran does not care who is legal and who is not. Iran has always pursued its own political priorities," said Sayed Ashraf, a human rights



activist.

According to local officials in Herat, the process of expelling Afghan immi-

grants from Iran has doubled over the past month.

Based on the figures of Herat refugee department,

up to 4,000 Afghans deported from Iran entered the country through Islam Qala port.

GIZ suspends operations in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): German media have reported that four local employees of The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) have been arrested in Afghanistan.

According to the reports, the GIZ provides development and stabilization assistance to the people in Afghanistan, but has now decided to temporarily halt its activities in the country.

"GIZ was a technical German organization which was cooperating with different technical schools in Afghanistan and sometimes with the Afghan chamber of commerce and investment. We want the continuation of the organization, Afghanistan has more investment

opportunities compared with other countries," said the deputy head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI), Mohammad Younus Momand.

In the meantime, economic analysts believe that the presence of such organizations is crucial in Afghanistan and that the Islamic Emirate should provide facilities to them.

"The Islamic Emirate should strive to provide facilities so that the humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan can operate," said Abdul Naseer Reshtia, an economic analyst.

Even though the Islamic Emirate has not commented on the arrest of German Agency for

International Cooperation (GIZ)'s local employees and the suspension of operations, the Ministry of Economy said that all foreign aid organizations can operate in Afghanistan as for as they protect the national interests of the country.

"Support for aid organizations and providing them operational facilities are the top policies of the Islamic Emirate, but their operations should not be in violation of the national interests of Afghanistan," said Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of Economy.

Earlier, the ministry had said that more than 220 local and foreign aid organizations stopped operations in the past one year.

Prices stay high despite afghani's rise, says residents of Kunar province

ASADABAD (Pajhwok): Some residents of eastern Kunar province complain that despite the rise in the afghani's value against the US dollar, prices of food and other daily-use items remain high.

Sangar Rahmani, a resident of the Damkali area of Asadabad, told Pajhwok Afghan News although the dollar's rate had been slumping, no change had been seen in prices of essential commodities.

"Previously, traders would say they conducted transactions in dollars. Now that the greenback's value has fallen, prices should also come down," Rahmani added.

He urged the government to control rates of basic items in the market and ensure commodity sales on the basis of the price list displayed at shops.

Rahmanullah, an inhabitant of the Karhali area of the provincial capital, grumbled the prices of food and non-food items were so high that commoners could not afford to purchase them.

"We are poor and cannot buy essential items at prohibitively high prices. A 50-kilogram bag of flour that cost 1,450 to 1,500afis is now sold for 1,700afis. Per seven



kilograms of beans used to cost 400afis, but now it the price has jumped to 600afis. If we don't have money how can we purchase these things?" he asked.

Meanwhile, trade union representatives in the province linked unchanged price of basic items to their high transportation cost.

Haji Syed Azim, head of the trade union in Asadabad, argued after the closure of the Salang highway and delays in the transfer of commercial goods via Torkham, prices had increased.

Azim explained: "Since the closure of Salang, we have been transporting trade goods through the

Shebar route. That's why prices of commodities have gone up especially flour."

He recalled they used to transport a tonne of commercial goods from Peshawar via Torkham for 100,000 rupees. But currently the cost has tripled to 300,000 rupees.

He added the prices of fuel and food items had also gone up, with the drop in dollar's rate having no impact on them.

Qari Ziaullah, the head of the Chamber of Commerce in Kunar, also tied the spike in prices to the closure of Salang highway and non-fixing of prices at ports.

The government should fix and control the prices of goods when they were transported from ports and transferred from one province to another, he suggested.

Maulvi Atiqullah, the mayor of Asadabad, said that although they controlled the prices through a special commission, the main reason for the surge was the delay in goods clearance in Torkham and the closure of the Salang highway.

In recent months, the value of one US dollar has dropped from 80afis to 66afis. However, it has not brought about a decline in prices.

5,000 women killed by relatives in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Women's Division released a shocking report on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, stating that in the year 2022, a staggering 48,800 women worldwide were killed by their partners and close relatives.

This organization released this report on November 22nd, before the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. According to this report, 48,800 women have been killed by their intimate partners and family members, including fathers, mothers, brothers, and uncles.

The heart of this report reveals that 133 women or girls are killed by their family members and loved ones worldwide. The highest number of gender-related killings in 2022 underscores that the

world has fallen short in preventing such events.

Femicide: A global challenge

Femicide, or gender-related killings, like all forms of violence against women and girls, is a serious issue that has impacted countries worldwide.

According to a United Nations report, the continent of Africa recorded the highest number of female and girl homicides in 2022, with a figure reaching 20,000 women in one year. Following that, Asia documented 18,400 cases, the Americas reported 7,900 cases, Europe recorded 2,300 cases, and Oceania documented 200 cases of female and girl homicides.

The scale of femicide likely higher than UN figures

The United Nations Women's Division has emphasized that while the figures mentioned for each continent reveal a stagger-

ing number of femicides, it is likely just the tip of the iceberg.

According to this report, a significant number of femicide or gender-related killing victims remain uncounted. The organization attributes this challenge to national variations and research methodologies.

The UN report highlights that certain groups of women and girls are at greater risk. It emphasizes that women in the public eye, such as women politicians, human rights defenders, and journalists, face both offline and online threats that often lead to their killings.

It is worth noting that Afghanistan is recognized as one of the worst places for women, as the rise of the Taliban administration has turned it into a perilous place, resulting in the near destruction of women's achievements over the past 20 years.

PTV has come long way during past 59 years: Solangi

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Sunday that Pakistan Television, the national broadcaster of Pakistan had come a long way during past 59 years. This he said while delivering his speech at PTV's 59th anniversary celebration ceremony here.

Congratulating the employees of PTV on the 59th anniversary of the founding of Pakistan Television, Murtaza Solangi said 59 years ago in Lahore, his teacher Aslam Azhar started broadcast of PTV trans-

mission by pitching a tent in the lawn of an old building. Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi himself had been a broadcaster and journalist, who had seen this journey himself, Murtaza Solangi remarked.

Appreciating the performance of the caretaker set up of Punjab, he said due to the changes in Punjab, Mohsin Naqvi was now looking like a benefactor to everyone. He said that Punjab had witnessed so many changes during his tenure as he would become "Sher Shah Suri" of the province.

Solangi commends staff on PTV's 59th anniversary: In a celebra-

tion hosted by Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) for its 59th anniversary on Sunday, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi lauded the staff for their contributions.

He highlighted the beginning of a renaissance period for PTV, honoring the legacy of its first Managing Director Aslam Azhar. Solangi expressed gratitude to the dedicated PTV team, acknowledging their pivotal role in the television network's successful 59-year journey.

The event concluded with a ceremonial cake cutting, joined by Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi.



Interpol to be moved against those working on anti-Pakistan agenda: Jan Achakzai

QUETTA (NNI): Balochistan Caretaker Information Minister Jan Achakzai on Sunday said those involved in anti-Pakistan propaganda would be brought back to the country through Interpol.

Achakzai said steps had been taken to establish state writ in the country, adding that Adil Raja and Haider Mehdi – the two former army officers – betrayed the nation and the martyrs.

The armed forces were the nation's pride, he remarked in an obvious reference to an organised campaign launched by the two individuals, who have now been sentenced, to create discord among the rank and file, especially before and after the May 9 violence carried out by the PTI leaders

and supporters. .

Addressing a press conference, he also said that elements acting against Pakistan had been receiving support in Afghanistan, which was a matter of grave concern – an issue highlighted by Islamabad repeatedly, including Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar.

The Afghan soil is being used for carrying out terrorism activities in Pakistan and housing the terrorists, Achakzai told media persons in Quetta, adding that not a single driver would be allowed to enter the country from Afghanistan without visa. The provincial minister said each of the illegal migrants living in Pakistan would be deported, promising not to tolerate any obsta-

cle in achieving the aim.

Around 250,000 fake computerized national identity cards (CNICs) were issued in Balochistan while NADRA had blocked 2,700 bogus passports, he said. About 130,000 illegal Afghan migrants had so far been sent back to their country and the numbers would reach one million by January, he said, in a clear message there would be no change in the government policy despite the objections raised by some circles.

The caretaker provincial minister told reporters that the government was hoping to complete the process by March, adding that the total number of illegal [Afghan] migrants was estimated around 1.7 million.

Pakistan can revive Kazakhstan's \$1 bln soft loan offer: envoy

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan can revive US\$ 1 billion soft loan offered by the Kazakhstan some two years ago, for a 15-year railway project, said Honorary Consul General of Kazakhstan Rao Khalid.

Talking to APP on Sunday, he said the loan which lapsed unused in the past, carries a nominal markup percentage. Khalid suggested that by leveraging Kazakhstan's advanced railway standards, Pakistan could modernize its railway system. He highlighted the potential for mutually beneficial cooperation, citing cultural similarities, shared Muslim populations, and vast business

opportunities.

Khalid underscored the Kazakhstan's rich energy resources, proposing that Pakistan could meet its energy needs through collaboration. Notably, Kazakhstan seeks agricultural workers, presenting an opportunity for Pakistani labor, he said and added that efforts were underway to export Pakistani tractors to Kazakhstan, capitalizing on Pakistan's high standards of agricultural production.

The Honorary Consul General emphasized the potential for business-to-business, government-to-government, and people-to-people cooperation between the two nations.

Responding to a query, Khalid mentioned that Kazakhstan's provision of medical education at economical rates, with approximately 1800 Pakistani students enrolling in Kazakh universities in the last two years. He said the prospect of trade through a barter system was being explored, and there's an opportunity for Pakistani entrepreneurs to establish fertilizer factories in Kazakhstan, utilizing its abundant gas resources.

Kazakhstan offers agricultural lands on a 30-year lease, presenting an avenue for Pakistani agriculturists to benefit from the opportunity, he added.

ECP appoints 32 RMCs for effective election monitoring

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) appointed 32 Regional Election Commissioners (RECs) as Regional Monitoring Coordinators (RMCs) to ensure effective monitoring of the 2024 General Elections.

As stated by the ECP spokesperson, the appointed Regional Coordinators will play a crucial role in guaranteeing comprehensive monitoring at the division level. They are also responsible for guiding and supervising the monitoring teams within their respective districts during the upcoming General Elections. The ECP will establish four-tier monitoring control rooms, with Provincial, Divisional, and District Monitoring Control Rooms operating under the supervision of the Central Monitoring Control Center in Islamabad.

Legal action will be initiated by the monitoring teams for any violations of the code of conduct in the upcoming elections.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) conducted a one-day online training workshop for Regional Monitoring Coordinators (RMCs), where all Regional Election Commissioners in Pakistan were equipped with the necessary skills for their roles as RMCs.

The training workshop covered the Election Commission's monitoring framework and the creation of monitoring rooms at provincial, divisional, and district levels.

Following this training, Regional Monitoring Coordinators/Regional Election Commissioners will be responsible for training District Monitoring Officers and Monitoring Teams in their respective divisions.

RMCs had already undergone a two-day training session at the Election Commission Secretariat in Islamabad two months ago.

Family stands united, says Bakhtawar

LAHORE (NNI): Bakhtawar Bhutto-Zardari, the daughter of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari has asked people not to pay heed to the headlines, stressing that the family stands united.

After Zardari called his son, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, an "inexperienced" politician, speculations were rife that there were rifts between them — and the ex-foreign minister's departure to Dubai further fueled them.

Bakhtawar shared an image with her family — including Zardari, Bilawal, and aunt Faryal Talpur. All of them seem in a happy mood. Although her sister Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari wasn't in the image, she was the one who had captured it.

"Don't believe the headlines - we're only & always about family first," Bakhtawar captioned the image, around half an hour after Bilawal had posted a similar image on his Instagram handle.

The PPP leaders were on television channels and making statements on social media platforms that the reports of rifts between the top PPP brass were "baseless" and that there were only differences on some issues.



GAZA CITY: Residential buildings, destroyed in Israeli strikes during the conflict, lie in ruin, amid a temporary truce between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in southern Gaza City.

IPP leaders unveils ambitious plans for progress in Pakistan

KAMOKE (NNI): Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) chairman Jahangir Tareen has declared a commitment to transform Pakistan into a thriving nation.

Addressing a worker's convention in Kamoke on Sunday, he asserted that it is time to focus on the future instead discussing the past events. Tareen emphasized the need to propel Pakistan towards progress, particularly spotlighting the elevation of the business community for collective success.

The IPP chairman pledged to endeavor efforts to improve the lives of ordinary citizens. Tareen advocated for a shift in the socio-economic landscape. Highlighting the significance of the agricultural sector, Tareen vowed to shape Pakistan into an agricultural powerhouse, showcasing a model that the world would admire. He referenced the party's manifesto, aligning every effort with the goal to bring about a transformative change in Pakistan. He also committed to creating jobs and fair wages for the people.

Tareen emphasized that the key to national improvement lies in fulfilling promises. He drew a distinction between political entities making commitments without sincere intentions and IPP, which he pledged would turn promises into reality.

He also envisioned state-of-the-art government hospitals, inviting people to witness the improvements firsthand. Addressing the gathering, IPP president Aleem Khan vowed to turn Kamoke into a model city if his party comes into power. Addressing the issues facing Punjab, Khan outlined his plans for significant improvements, promising a transformative agenda for the future. Aleem Khan criticized the previous government's handling of Punjab's affairs. He lamented the appointment of unsuitable chief ministers for both Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the past.

Alleging financial mismanagement in Punjab, Khan pointed out that funds intended for district commissioner appointments were continuously being diverted elsewhere.

The consequence, according to him, has been the neglect of essential services and the deterioration of government hospitals in the province, where multiple patients share a single bed. Criticizing the prevailing corruption, Aleem Khan pledged to eradicate corruption hotspots like police stations and 'thanas' to ensure justice for the common man.

Aleem emphasized the need for a government that adheres to the principles of the 'Madina state.' He called for a political landscape that prioritizes the welfare of the people over personal gains. Acknowledging the sacrifices of the armed forces, Khan asserted that they symbolize the true spirit of patriotism by laying down their lives for the nation. Khan encouraged the younger generation not to lose faith in the country.

Khan's vision extends to the agricultural sector, where he pledged to build a prosperous Pakistan that the world would admire. He emphasized the need for comprehensive efforts to bring about positive change.

Feb 8 to be 'day of mourning' for political parties: Sirajul Haq

LAHORE (NNI): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Emir Sirajul Haq said on Sunday that February 8 will be the "day of mourning" for all the political parties.

Expressing his thoughts in Lahore, Haq said: "The three political parties and generals had remained in power for 75 years. Now a days, the country is facing situations of economic woes, injustice, violence, inflation, and the agricultural and industrial sectors' downfall."

"The rulers focus on increasing their bank balance and properties when they are in power," he added.

He recalled, "I am ready for self-accountability. Nawaz Sharif, Asif Ali Zardari, and Shehbaz Sharif should also be ready for self-accountability." Haq urged the need to vote for his party during the general elections. Haq assailed the political opponents on Wednesday, asserting the rulers are carrying on the "legacy" of the East India Company.

Addressing the convention in Peshawar, Haq took a swipe at former prime minister Nawaz Sharif,



Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari. "The PPP had ruled the country for four terms."

"The PML-N had come to power on a regular basis," he added. Speaking about self-accountability,

ty, Haq said, "I am ready for self-accountability in 2023. Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz, and Asif Ali Zardari should also be ready for self-accountability."

"Those who had put the burden of loans on the masses are now once again trying to impose themselves on the masses," Haq said.

Sikh pilgrims from India to join Guru Nanak's birthday celebrations

LAHORE (NNI): Three thousand Sikh pilgrims who have arrived here via Wagah will join 554th birthday celebrations in Nankana Sahib on Sunday.

The three-day celebrations commenced on Saturday and Sikhs from India will be taken to Farooqabad by special buses amid tight security to pay homage to the founder of the Sikh religion. They will be brought back in the evening and

stay here at Gurudwara Janam Asthan. The celebrations which started on Saturday with the ritual of Akhandpat will conclude on Monday with the Bhog. The Nagar Keertan rally will also be taken out tomorrow.

Meanwhile, the pilgrims met caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi here on Sunday. They thanked the chief minister for hospitality and arrangements for the pilgrims. They were grateful

Police conduct raid in katcha area to arrest journalist's killers

SUKKUR (NNI): Police conducted raid in katcha area of Shah Belo for arrest of the culprits involved in murder of Journalist Jan Muhammad Mahar.

Sukkur Police party headed by SSP Irfan Sammu raided house of main accused Sheral Mahar in Shah Belo. After exchange of fire with police, accused fled to thick riverine forest, SSP Sukkur Irfan Sammu said.

The policemen set the homes and bunkers of the accused on fire and chasing behind culprits. "It is first time the police reached to the homes of the accused after drop in water level in the river", SSP Sammu said.

Police had earlier conducted raids over houses of the accused in katcha area in which a son of the main accused and an accomplice were injured in exchange of fire. Police reached to the houses of culprits after over three months of the murder.

Police department has so far arrested nine persons over facilitation and providing shelter to killers of Jan Muhammad Mahar. Mahar, a senior journalist and Sukkur bureau chief of a local television network had been murdered by assailants on August 13.

Karachi shopping mall fire Builders, KE named in 'manslaughter' FIR

KARACHI (NNI): The K-Electric (KE), builders and other departments were named in a first information report (FIR) registered after nearly a dozen people were killed in a massive fire inside RJ Shopping Mall at Karachi's Rashid Minhas Road the previous day.

At least 11 people died while five others sustained burn injuries after a fire erupted inside the RJ Shopping Mall a day earlier because of a suspected short circuit, as per the officials. The fire began on the fourth floor and later engulfed other floors. The officials claimed that the deaths occurred because the building had no ventilation. Today, the FIR was registered at Sharae Faisal Police Station by Sub Inspector Sadaruddin Mirani.

It invoked Sections 322 (manslaughter), 436 (mischiefs by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy), 427 (mischiefs causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees), 288 (negligent conduct with respect to pulling down or repairing buildings), 285 (negligent conduct with

respect to fire or combustible matter), 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC).

The FIR was registered against the shopping mall's builders, those who approved the map of the building, those who issued the no-objection certificate (NOC), the incumbent management of the shopping mall, K-Electric and the relevant fire station for failing to fulfil their duties.

It stated that an inspection of the site revealed the six-storey building did not have an emergency exit or a fire alarm system, and it was suspected that the blaze erupted due to a short circuit.

The FIR added that after the fire broke out, people stuck inside the building tried to flee using stairs and lifts, resulting in suffocation.

Earlier in the day, the Karachi administration sealed the RJ shopping mall on Rashid Minhas Road.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister retired Justice Maqbool Baqar ordered a safety audit of all

commercial buildings, public spots and offices, saying fire eruption incidents were taking place because the inspection system had been abandoned in the city.

The CM directed the Sindh Building Control Authority, Provincial Disaster Management Authority, Civil Defence, and deputy commissioners/assistant commissioners concerned to carry out safety audits of all public and commercial buildings, educational institutions, and government offices and submit their report along with recommendations. Karachi, the country's economic hub with a population of 20.3 million, is home to a vast network of factories and towering high-rises, but the city's fire-fighting infrastructure is inadequate to deal with its frequent fires. This past week, urban planners and engineers at a symposium said that about 90 percent of all structures in Karachi — residential, commercial and industrial — lacked fire prevention and firefighting systems.