

KARACHI (NNI): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Sunday officially declared a bank holiday on November 9, 2023, to commemorate Allama Iqbal Day. This decision has been made in compliance with the previous statement issued by the Government of Pakistan. The State Bank of Pakistan said in a circular that "the State Bank of Pakistan will be closed on Thursday, November 9, 2023.



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Gaza evacuations suspended; Palestinian president presses US to secure Gaza ceasefire

GAZA/RAMALLAH (Reuters): Efforts were under way on Sunday to resume evacuations of injured Gazans and foreign passport holders through the Rafah crossing to Egypt, suspended since Saturday after a deadly ambulance attack, Egyptian, U.S. and Qatari officials said.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas demanded an immediate Israeli ceasefire at a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Ramallah, while Gaza's health ministry said dozens died in a strike on a refugee camp overnight.

Blinken, who has dismissed the idea of a ceasefire by Israel for fear it would benefit Hamas, was making an unannounced visit to the occupied West Bank as part of efforts to prevent the Israel-Hamas war spreading.

The Rafah crossing to Egypt's Sinai peninsula is the only exit point from Gaza not controlled by Israel. Aid trucks were still able to travel into Gaza, two Egyptian sources said.

Evacuations began on Wednesday under an internationally brokered deal. More than 300 Americans have left Gaza, but some still remain, Jonathan Finer, deputy national security adviser, said. "We believe it will (reopen) this afternoon," a senior U.S. State Department official said, speak-

ing on condition of anonymity. "Don't hold me to it," the official added.

At the Maghazi refugee camp refugee camp in Gaza, people searched for victims or survivors.

"All night I and the other men were trying to pick the dead from the rubble. We got children, dismembered, torn apart flesh," said Saeed al-Nejma, 53, adding that he had been asleep with his family in their house when the blast hit his neighbourhood.

A spokesman for the health ministry in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip said the Israeli military had struck the camp overnight, killing at least 47 people. In a separate attack, 21 Palestinians from one family, including women and children, were killed in Israeli strikes overnight, the health ministry said.

Reuters could not independently verify these accounts.

"We demand that you stop them from committing these crimes immediately," Abbas told Blinken, urging an "immediate ceasefire" from Israel.

"There are no words to describe the war of genocide and destruction to which our Palestinian people are being subjected in Gaza at the hands of the Israeli war machine, without regard to the rules of international law," Palestinian news agency WAFA

quoted Abbas as telling Blinken.

Foreign ministers from Qatar, Saudi, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates met Blinken in Amman on Saturday and also urged him to persuade Israel to agree to a ceasefire. Pope Francis joined calls for peace. "Stop in the name of God," he said, calling for humanitarian aid and help for the injured in order to ease the "very grave" situation in Gaza. But Blinken says a ceasefire would benefit Hamas, allowing it to regroup and attack again. Instead, the U.S. wants localised pauses in fighting to allow in humanitarian aid and for people to leave Gaza.

"The Secretary reaffirmed the United States' commitment to the delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance and resumption of essential services in Gaza," spokesperson Matthew Miller said. Israel says it is targeting Hamas, not civilians, and that the Islamist Palestinian group is using residents as human shields.

Gaza health officials said on Sunday more than 9,770 Palestinians have been killed in the war, which began when Hamas launched a surprise attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,400 people and taking more than 240 hostage.

Israel continued to strike the Gaza

30 killed in Israeli bombing on Al-Maghazi camp in Gaza

GAZA STRIP (AFP/APP): More than 30 people were killed in an Israeli bombing on a refugee camp in central Gaza late Saturday, the Hamas-run health ministry there said, amid ongoing fighting between Israel and Hamas militants.

"More than 30 (dead) arrived at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir Al-Balah in the massacre committed by the occupation in Al-Maghazi camp in the central Gaza Strip," health ministry spokesperson Ashraf Al-Qudra said in a statement.

Hamas said in a statement posted on Telegram that Israel had "directly" bombed citizens' homes, adding that most of the dead were women and children. "An Israeli air strike target-

ed my neighbours' house in Al-Maghazi camp, my house next door partially collapsed," said Mohammed Alaloul, 37, a journalist working for the Turkish Anadolu Agency.

Alaloul told AFP his 14-year-old son, Ahmed, and his 4-year-old son, Qais, were killed in the attack, along with his brother. His wife, mother, and two other children were injured. An Israeli military spokesperson said they were looking into whether the Israel Defense Forces had been operating in the area at the time of the bombing. Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas in punishment for its brutal October 7 attack on communities and military outposts near the Gaza border, which it says killed more than 1,400 people, mainly civilians.

Strip by air, sea, and ground overnight. Gaza health officials said Israeli air strikes destroyed houses in the Maghazi refugee camp. Asked for comment, the Israeli military said they were gathering details.

Mohammad Al-Aloul, a photogra-

only daughter, were martyred," Al-Aloul told Reuters. The Palestinian Red Crescent said there was also intense bombardment, violent artillery explosions, and air strikes in the vicinity of the Al-Quds Hospital in Gaza's Tal Al-Hawa area. U.S. special envoy David Satterfield said in Amman on Saturday that 800,000 to a million people had moved south, while 350,000 to 400,000 remained in and around Gaza City.

Living conditions in Gaza, already dire before the war, have deteriorated. Food is scarce, residents are drinking salty water and medical services are collapsing. The U.N. humanitarian office estimates that nearly 1.5 million of Gaza's 2.3 million people are internally displaced.

Qatar's foreign ministry said that without a "period of calm" in Gaza its mediators would not be able to secure the release of Israeli hostages held in the enclave. The Gulf state has, in coordination with the U.S., led mediation talks with Hamas and Israeli officials over the release of hostages since the Oct. 7 attack. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu disciplined a junior member of his cabinet who voiced openness to the idea of Israel carrying out a nuclear strike on Gaza.

Thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters march across Washington

WASHINGTON (APP): Tens of thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters -- some of them chanting 'Allah-o-Akbar' -- marched through Washington Saturday in what was called the biggest US demonstration since Israel began its bombardment of Gaza, stepping up pressure on President Joe Biden to end U.S.' support of the Jewish state.

Similar protests were also held in cities across the United States that denounced Israel and called on the Biden administration to pressure Israel to stop its genocide of Palestinian people, according to US media reports.

In Washington, raising slogans such as 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,' and donning black and white keffiyehs while holding Palestinian flags, the protesters, predominantly young individuals, gathered on the street leading to the White House.

The protesters also splashed red paint at the gates of the White House, symbolizing the blood of Palestinians being ruthlessly killed and besieged Gaza, and attempted to scale the fence around the president's residence early Sunday morning, according to footage shared from the scene.

Protesters also placed Palestinian flags and signs on monuments around the city. Organizers representing or endorsed by dozens of pro-Palestinian groups directed marchers to Freedom Plaza in the nation's capital before looping past the White House. "Now is the time to stand with the besieged people of Palestine! Gaza is being bombed by the hour. Its people are denied food, water and electricity by Israel. Tens of thousands more people are likely to die. We must ACT!" the Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (ANSWER) coalition said on its website.

The march, alongside protests in

New York, Seattle and other US cities, was part of an intensifying push to demand both a ceasefire in the Israel-Gaza conflict and an end to US and western military aid to Israel. Demonstrations in support of Palestine were also staged in London, Berlin, Paris, Ankara and Istanbul with a similar message for both Israel and supportive Western governments.

Meanwhile, US Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib criticized President Biden, saying he "supported the genocide of the Palestinian people" over his administration's support for Israel. Tlaib posted a video to X, formerly known as Twitter, showing pro-Palestinian marches around the country with tens of thousands of participants, adding a message for the president. "Mr. President, the American people are not with you on this one," she said. "We will remember in 2024," the year US elections are due to take place.

Provision of best health facilities to people govt's top priority: PM

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar says provision of best medical facilities to public is top priority of government.

Talking to Director of Khyber Teaching Hospital Peshawar Muhammad Zafar Afridi in Islamabad on Sunday, he appreciated efforts of the hospital admin-

istration.

The Prime Minister said he is well aware of Khyber Teaching Hospital's role as a model healthcare institution in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He assured that more budget will be approved by the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to improve the service quality at

Khyber Teaching Hospital Peshawar.

On this occasion, Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar was briefed about the establishment of a new OPD building, modular operation theatre, new emergency building construction and installation of Pakistan's first helium-free MRI machine.

JUI-F chief meets Hamas leaders in Qatar

DOHA (Agencies): JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Sunday met the leadership of the Palestinian group Hamas in Qatar during which the latter said that it was the duty of the Muslim world to "unite against Israeli injustices" as Tel Aviv continues to bombard the Gaza Strip.

On October 7, Hamas had launched a surprise attack on Israel from Gaza and killed 1,400 people, according to officials, while also taking more than 200 hostages.

In retaliation, Israel launched a brutal air and ground assault on Gaza, which has since killed more than 9,700 people, including at least 4,800 children, according to the health ministry. Since Israel began striking the Palestinian enclave, protests have taken place in Pakistan and across the world demanding a ceasefire and condemning Israeli atrocities against Palestinians. A statement issued by the JUI-F on social media platform X said that the Maulana met Hamas leaders Khaled Meshaal, the group's former chief, and Ismail Haniyeh, its

political head, in Qatar.

The statement quoted party spokesperson Aslam Ghauri as saying that Rehman had arrived in Qatar alongside a delegation on Saturday. During the meeting, there was a detailed exchange of views on the issue of Palestine, he said.

"Israel is attempting to change the status quo in Palestine through oppression and injustice, trying to alter the status of Al-Aqsa Mosque," the Maulana said. He stated that the hands of the "advocates of developed countries" were stained with the blood of innocent women and children. "Palestinians are not only fighting for their land but also waging a battle for the freedom of Al-Aqsa, fulfilling the duty of the Muslim Ummah," he said.

"The time has come for the Muslim Ummah to stand shoulder to shoulder with Palestinian brothers in the field," he added.

On the occasion, Haniyeh said that it was the "duty of the Muslim Ummah to unite against Israeli injus-

tices". "Countries advocating for human rights are sailing ships filled with weapons to Tel Aviv," the JUI-F statement quoted him as saying. "The Muslim Ummah should be in the field to support their Palestinian brothers, helping their mothers, sisters, and brothers," he said.

Meshaal, meanwhile, was quoted as saying that the Kashmir and Palestine issues had long been "a litmus test for the advocated of human rights". Both the leaders were quoted as saying that the Maulana was "playing the role of Pakistan's ambassador to Palestine".

In a separate post on X, the Maulana said he expressed condolences and solidarity with the Hamas leadership, on behalf of Pakistan and the party, for the ongoing Israeli atrocities in Gaza. He said that he assured them that "we stand by your side in every moral, political, and diplomatic field". "Haniyeh and Meshaal conveyed their heartfelt gratitude to the people of Pakistan and JUI workers for their full support to Palestinians," he said.

Govt firmly believes in freedom of press & expression: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi on Sunday said the government fully and firmly believed in the freedom of press and expression that was enshrined in the Constitution. Addressing the 5th anniversary of Independent Urdu, the minister congratulated the management and staff of the media outlet on achieving a milestone in its five-year journey.

He appreciated the role of the Independent Urdu in promoting digital Urdu journalism in Pakistan, besides providing quality contents to its audience through different means. "The platform has contributed significantly to the progress of digital Urdu journalism in the country," he remarked on the occasion while expressing best wishes for the media outlet.

Repatriation of illegal foreign nationals continues

KHYBER (NNI): The repatriation of illegal foreign nationals including Afghans continues to their homelands. Around 167,774 Afghan nationals illegally staying in Pakistan, have returned to home till now, Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees here said Sunday.

In last 24 hours 7,135 Afghan citizens returned to Afghanistan from Torkham border crossing, Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR), has said in a statement.

According to the CAR, NADRA officials collecting data of the people returning back to their country. "Since October 1st, 167,774 Afghan citizens who were illegally

staying in Pakistan, have returned to home till now," the Commissionerate has said. 260 families were repatriated in 186 vehicles to Afghanistan and this process continues on a daily basis. Temporary transit camps for illegals have been set up in various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

Shoes and warm clothes are being distributed to the children to protect them from the cold weather during their stay in the camp and during the journey.

The government, security agencies and civil administration are working with enthusiasm to provide better facilities to the repatriating migrants.

The safe evacuation of

illegal foreign nationals is the top priority of the government after giving them the deadline of October 31.

On October 3, an apex committee of the National Action Plan (NAP) meeting chaired by Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar gave all foreign nationals living illegally in the country until October 31 to leave voluntarily or face deportation.

After the expiry of the deadline, the caretaker government has swung into action against illegal immigrants. Mostly Afghan nationals staying in Pakistan as undocumented illegal immigrants. Repatriation of the illegal Afghans through the Chaman and Torkham borders has been underway.

Islamabad court remands Fawad Ch in police custody for two days

WASHINGTON (NNI): Rejecting the police's request for a five-day physical remand of former federal minister, ex-PTI leader and now a member of Istehkame Pakistan Party (IPP) Fawad Chaudhry, a court in Islamabad on Sunday granted to the police his two-day physical remand instead.

Earlier, Fawad was brought to the court of Duty Magistrate Abbas Shah in an armored vehicle, with his face covered with a piece of cloth.

His both brothers and wife were also present in the District and Sessions Court at that time.

Fawad was arrested yesterday (Saturday) following the registration of an FIR against him on the complaint of a citizen named Zaheer, who had alleged that he had paid Rs5 million to him so that he could get a job as promised to him by the politician. "But neither I got the job, nor was I returned the money. And when I demanded him to pay me my money back, he threatened me that he would kill me," read the FIR.

Nawaz to commence PML-N election campaign next week

LAHORE (NND): With the official announcement of the election date, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif is gearing up to campaign across Pakistan, starting next week.

The three-time prime minister returned to Islamabad in October after spending four years in self-imposed exile in London.

Upon his return, Nawaz addressed a massive crowd of PML-N workers and supporters in his hometown, Lahore, where he reaffirmed his deep affection for the Pakistani people. He prioritised national prosperity over the desire for revenge, and vowed to deliver Pakistan from its economic afflictions.

His party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, is confident that it can win the upcoming general elections, and Nawaz Sharif aims to serve as Pakistan's prime minister for a fourth term. His presence in Pakistan has revitalised the party and boosted the confidence of its rank and file.

Having already set for a five-year period, would contain the party's complete strategy and a comprehensive policy.

Lahore rally on October 21, the former prime minister is now set to formally flex his muscles, starting next week. According to sources within the PML-N, Nawaz Sharif will embark on a whirlwind tour of all four provinces, commencing with a public rally in Mansehra after November 10. He is also scheduled to hold meetings with leaders of other political parties.

Meanwhile, What could be termed a departure from the past practice, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has decided to give a different manifesto for the general elections, 2024.

The decision was taken at the maiden meeting of the party's manifesto committee, which was held in Lahore on Sunday with Senator Irfan Siddiqui in the chair. Other two members of the committee Khawaja Saad Rafique and Barrister Zafarullah Khan were also present on the occasion.

It was agreed that the manifesto, which would be for a five-year period, would contain the party's complete strategy and a comprehensive policy.

Different suggestions regarding drafting of the manifesto came under discussion at the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Senator Irfan Siddiqui said that this time the party's manifesto would not be a traditional one as suggestions would be sought from the representatives of different departments, organisations as well as people belonging to different walks of life for its formulation. On the other hand, PML-N's preparations for the general elections have gathered momentum after the announcement of election date.

Applications for getting the party tickets for the polls are being submitted to the party's secretariat in Model Town Lahore.

The party has set a deadline of November 10 for the submission of applications for the purpose. The PML-N has fixed the fee for those applying for ticket for the provincial assembly seat at Rs100, 000, while Rs200,000 will have to be deposited in fee by applicants for the National Assembly seats.

LAKKI MARWAT (INP): An improvised explosive device (IED) blast claimed lives of two family members besides leaving three others injured here on Sunday. According to details, the IED blast occurred in the Bettani area of district Lakki Marwat of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The blast resulted in the death of two including a child and left three others including a woman injured.



MCL removes 114 encroachments in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): The Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) carried out an anti-encroachment operation and demolished illegal structures in the provincial capital on Sunday.

The MCL spokesperson told media that the anti-encroachment squad removed 114 structures from various areas during 24 hours. A total of 62 warning notices and 39 challans were issued during the period. During the operation, 472 banners were removed and at least four points selling meat for charity (for vultures), were cleared. The planning wing of the corporation demolished three illegal constructions while the services wing replaced and repaired around 370 streetlights. Patchwork was also carried out at a 5,154 square feet area of roads.

MCL Chief Officer Iqbal Freed supervised the encroachment operation and warned that it would continue till clearance of all roads and bazaars. He urged citizens to cooperate with the MCL and its anti-encroachment squads to eliminate encroachments and restore the lost glory of the provincial capital.

LESCO meter reader dismissed

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has dismissed from service a meter reader after he was found guilty of conniving in electricity theft in Sheranwala Sub-Division.

The company's spokesman told media here Sunday that under the leadership of LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider, a vigorous operation against electricity thieves is going on across the LESCO region, while strict action is also being taken against the company's officers and other employees who assist in electricity theft and neglect their duties.

During a recent operation, he said, meter reader Muhammad Naem of Sheranwala Sub-Division was dismissed from service after being found guilty of facilitating a consumer in electricity theft by placing a shunt on the power meter. The accused was also supplying the stolen electricity to neighbours and giving monthly bribes to the meter reader.

After noticing the connivance, LESCO authorities initiated a departmental inquiry against the meter reader after placing him on suspension. The official, he mentioned, was given full opportunity but he failed to clear his position and could not submit a satisfactory answer to the inquiry committee.

On the recommendation of the committee, the competent authority, the XEN/DMO (Deputy Manager-Operation) of Data Darbar Division, issued the 'dismissal from service' order for him, the spokesman concluded.

PUC stands united against terrorism, calls for ceasefire in Gaza

LAHORE (APP): The Central Executive and Consultative Body of Pakistan Ulema Council on Sunday convened a significant meeting, addressing the current situation in Pakistan, Palestine, and the Islamic world. More than two hundred members of the PUC executive and consultative body participated in this gathering, presided over by Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi.

In a comprehensive declaration, the meeting emphasized that hostile forces, including India and its allies, are allegedly involved in acts of terrorism within Pakistan. It called on the international community to take immediate action against India's alleged involvement in terrorism. The meeting commended the Pakistani nation, army, and security agencies for their response to recent terrorist incidents. It highlighted the united stance of Ulema and Mashaykh and religious scholars from across the country, supporting Pakistan's efforts to combat extremism and terrorism. The declaration also lauded the Pakistan Army and security agencies for thwarting a terrorist attack on the Mianwali PAF Airbase.

The PUC expressed its support for the Paigham-e-Pakistan narrative and announced that Paigham-e-Pakistan conventions would be held nationwide. Furthermore, the declaration emphasized that attacks on Pakistan's armed forces, security institutions, government, non-government installations, and civilians are not permissible under any circumstances. It underscored that armed struggle by individuals,

parties, or groups is not legally permissible in Pakistan, and the government has the right to take legal action against those who engage in such activities. Turning to the situation in Palestine, the declaration expressed grave concern over the ongoing siege of Gaza by the Zionist state of Israel. It reported the suspension of essential supplies to 2.3 million people, resulting in a dire humanitarian crisis with thousands of casualties. The declaration strongly condemned the inhuman attacks and criticized the United States and its Western allies for their alleged complicity in Israel's war crimes.

The United Nations, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and Human Rights Organizations were called upon to take immediate steps to secure a ceasefire in Gaza to prevent the conflict from further escalating and impacting the entire world. The declaration characterized the situation in Palestine as a test for the entire Ummah and called upon Saudi Arabia, as the current head of the OIC, to play a leadership role. It urged countries like Turkey, Bahrain, and Jordan, which have cut diplomatic ties with Israel, to encourage other Islamic nations to do the same, including a boycott of Jewish products.

Russia and China received gratitude for their support to the Palestinian people, and the declaration reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering stance on the Palestinian issue, echoing sentiments expressed by Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir in his meeting with the Palestinian ambassador.

Commissioner inaugurates cycle rally

LAHORE (APP): More than 250 cyclists took part in a cycle rally event to create awareness among the public about smog prevention and cycling promotion, here on Sunday.

Lahore Divisional Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa inaugurated and participated in the cycle rally and completed the track with other participants. The rally started from E-Library Gaddafi Stadium and ended at the same point after passing through Nashtar Park Track. The activity is arranged on every Sunday and this is the third meet-up of the rally participants and cyclists.

Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa highlighted the positive impact of cycling in humans' life, saying that cycling is a sports activity in which stamina could be improved, adding that the regular use of

cy-cling will significantly reduce smog. Less use of vehicles that emit smoke will also reduce smog, he said. The commissioner said that they will make it easier for the citizens to ride bicycles on the city roads, adding that administration is taking measures for facilitation of cyclists as it was the sports which was being valued more after Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. He informed that restaurants have 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 bicycle stands are also being built.

He added that a green line has been allocated for bicycles 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.

LESCO detects 244 power pilferers on 58th day of anti-power theft campaign

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) detected a total of 244 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) on the 58th day of grand anti-power theft campaign. LESCO spokesman told the media here Sunday the company had also lodged FIR applications against 243 electricity thieves, out of which 56 FIRs had been registered in respective police stations, while 37 accused have been arrested.

Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations. The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would continue without discrimination until the complete end of electricity theft. The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO officers and employees who facilitate them were also being brought to justice.

On the 58th consecutive day (Nov 5) of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also dis-

connected and charged with detection units. Among the seized connections 10 were commercial, 03 agricultural and 231 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 669,071 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 11,657 million.

Apprising the media about some major power pilferers, he explained that LESCO charged Rs 500,000 detection bill against 8,000 units to an electricity pilferer in Kot Lakhpat area of Lahore; Rs 250,000 fine in the form of detection bill against 5,165 units to a customer stealing electricity in Panoramia Centre Lahore; Rs 206,109 detection bill against 3,153 units to another power thief in Sundar area Raiwind; and Rs 205,609 detection bill against 2,540 units to a power thief also in Sundar area.

During the 58 days of grand anti-theft campaign, the spokesman mentioned that LESCO detected pilferage on 23,713 power connections and submitted 23,474 FIR applications against electricity thieves in the relevant police stations, out of which 22,625 FIRs had been registered, while 11,873 accused have so far been arrested by the police. The LESCO has so far charged a total of 45,212,509 detection units worth Rs 1,916,124,205 to all the power pilferers.

and the EU and NATO are a few examples. The Muslim nations could also establish such political and military alliances easily.

He said the Gaza genocide has exposed not only the Western countries and Arab kings, but also the rulers of big Muslim countries like Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, who are playing the role of the silent spectator over the killing of Gaza civilians including women and children.

He said this situation would surely result in political unrest in the Muslim countries, particularly the Arab nations. He said it demands that the people of the Muslim world should think about making their own block on the pattern of the European Union (EU). He said a strong political and military alliance of all Muslim countries is a must to safeguard their interests, saving their people from aggressions and genocide and getting resolved the issues like Kashmir and Palestine. He said that the social media in the Muslim countries could play a huge role in this regard to promote unity in the Ummah.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali addressing a function organized by Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

First phase of Raiwand Ijtimia concludes with prayers for Pakistan, Muslims

LAHORE (APP): The first phase of the three-day Tableeghi Ijtimia concluded in Raiwind on Sunday with special prayers led by Maulana Muhammad Ibrahim for the prosperity and solidarity of the country and unity of the Muslim world.

Hundreds of thousands of people from across Pakistan and other countries attended the annual congregation in Raiwind, about 36 kilometers from Lahore. Thousands of people from across the city reached the venue in the morning to attend the special prayer that started at 8:45am and concluded at 9:05am. Before Ijtemai-dua, Maulana Muhammad Khurshid briefed the participants about proper manners for offering dua.

Maulana Khurshid gave instructions to the delegates sitting in the pandal before the prayer, the closing prayer was given by Maulana Ibrahim of India and every eye was full of tears during the prayer and everyone was praying before Allah and asking for His mercy.

Emotional scenes were witnessed when Maulana Muhammad Ibrahim prayed to Almighty for forgiveness of sins, setting aside differences and making Pakistan a strong and stable

welfare state with a trembling voice while tears in his eyes.

He prayed Almighty to end our collective problems and make Pakistan a peaceful country, bring unity among people fighting against each other due to differences in faith. He prayed Allah to enable Muslims to follow the teaching of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in letter and spirit.

He also prayed for the unity of the entire Muslim Ummah by setting aside all differences. Emotional scenes were witnessed during the long prayers. Like the leader of the prayers, all participants were weeping while praying. After the prayer, thousands of groups set out in the way for Islam at home and abroad and hundreds of people also registered their names to join the Tablighi Jamaat for three and four-day Chilla.

According to estimate, more than 500,000 people participated in the prayers. When they started leaving, a massive traffic congestion was observed on Raiwind Road and later Multan Road and Ferozepur Road.

On this occasion, foolproof security arrangements were made by the police and sanitation arrangements by the administration.

Meanwhile, The annual Tableeghi Ijtimia in Raiwind's first phase concluded under remarkable security measures on Sunday. The event, which drew participants from near and far, witnessed impeccable traffic management by the city's dedicated traffic police. Central Police Officer Mushtaq Feroze along with SP Malik Ikramullah personally oversaw the operation. They remained vigilant on Raiwind Road until the very last vehicle left, ensuring a seamless departure. A commendable team of 999 traffic wardens, 253 inspectors, 13 DSPs, and 3 SPs worked tirelessly throughout the Raiwind Ijtimia. To further streamline the process, 20 forklifts, 5 breakdown vehicles were deployed and 7 spacious parking stands were set up for the convenience of the participants.

The evacuation strategy prioritized motorcycle stands, followed by cars, vans, buses, and ultimately trucks. This strategic approach ensured that the evacuation was completed within a mere five hours, leaving everyone impressed with the efficiency of the operation. In a statement, the Lahore CPO expressed his gratitude to all officers involved, with special recognition for the exceptional service of SP Malik Ikramullah.

Minister urges students to highlight positive image of Pakistan

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (PITHAM) hosted its sixth annual convention under the chairmanship of Arshad Wali Muhammad, the Caretaker Provincial Minister for Tourism, Environment, Climate Change, and Coastal Development.

The event took place on the premises of Peetham. The convention began with the visit of the caretaker provincial minister to Peetham, emphasizing the government's commitment to promoting excellence in the tourism and hospitality sectors, said a communiqué

here on Sunday.

Director Pitham warmly welcomed the audience and gave an insightful introduction to Pitham and its contribution to the tourism and hotel management industries. Caretaker Provincial Minister Arshad Wali Muhammad highlighted the important role of the institution in shaping the future of tourism and hotel management in the region. A commemorative shield was presented to Arshad Wali Muhammad as a mark of appreciation. In the event, 65 medals were distributed among the position holders; certificates were distrib-

uted to the hearing-impaired students of the Naval School; and certificates were distributed to the junior chefs, recognizing and encouraging their outstanding performance in various fields.

The dedicated faculty and staff of PITHAM were honored with shields in recognition of their tireless efforts in nurturing the talents of students. The Minister of Tourism urged the students to create a name in their fields to highlight the positive image of Pakistan and to bring out the trend of competition to develop their skills, which will improve their overall skills.

213 new dengue cases reported

LAHORE (APP): Over 213 new dengue cases were reported in Punjab on Sunday.

The latest information from the Health Department shows 10,265 affirmed dengue cases across 36 districts in Punjab this year. Lahore leads the count with 4,423 cases, followed by Rawalpindi with 2,357, Multan with 1,035, Faisalabad with 477, and Gujranwala with 893 cases. Lahore reports 107 extra new cases, Rawalpindi 8, Multan 23, Gujranwala 34, Faisalabad 19 and Sheikhupura 5 cases. Kasur and Bahawalpur each reported three cases in 24 hours. Narowal, Sahiwal, Sialkot and Rajanpur each saw two new cases. Toba Tek Singh, Jehlum and Vehari each detailed one instance of dengue in 24 hours.

As of now, 132 dengue patients are under treatment in different emergency clinics across Punjab, with 68 of them in Lahore clinics. Punjab Health Secretary Ali Jaan Khan requested people to keep their environment clean and dry as a preventive measure against dengue fever.

He asked collaboration with health department teams who are attempting to battle the flare-up.

For those looking for dengue treatment, data, or needing to enlist objections, a free helpline is accessible through the health department at 1033.

Physiotherapy centre at Dolphin Police HQs becomes operational

LAHORE (APP): A Physiotherapy centre became operational at Dolphin Police headquarters, Walton, here on Sunday.

It would provide facilitation to Dolphin personnel, a spokesperson told APP here.

Centre head Physiotherapist Muhammad Irfan said that qualified physiotherapists would be present at the centre round-the-clock. He said physiotherapy would help patients get relief from pain of osteoporosis and other body parts, and it

would be possible to get rid of frozen shoulder and headache. It would provide help release tension.

He said that physiotherapy treatment to Dolphin personnel would help relieve pain, including soft tissues massage and stretching to relieve tension and spasm, joint mobilisations, corrective exercise, posture awareness, and advice on how to manage or overcome pain while performing Dolphins daily duties and activities.

Man held for impersonating govt employee

F.P Report

PESHAWAR: Police have arrested a man impersonating as government official in the jurisdiction of town police station, here on Sunday.

According to details, the accused who pretended to be an officer of gov-

ernment institution was identified as Asghar Rehman son of Inayat Ullah.

Police also recovered 2 lakh and 80,000 rupees from his possession and sent him to jail for further investigation.

SP cantt appreciated the performance of station

house officer Ibrahim khan and his team.

Moreover, police also arrested a drug seller identified as Suliman son of Abdul Aziz and recovered 500 gram heroin from his possession, a case has been registered against him and further investigation is underway.



Need stressed to form a Muslim Union on pattern of EU: Altaf Shakoor

KARACHI (NNI): The inability of the Muslim countries to save the citizens of Gaza from genocide at the hands of occupying army of Israel has underscored the need of forming a 'Muslim Union' on the pattern of the European Union (EU), said Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Altaf Shakoor here Sunday.

He said political disunity amongst the Muslim countries has allowed Israel to continue its war crimes in Gaza with impunity. He said the role of the Arab nations to get stopped the genocide in Gaza is more shameful, while all other major Muslim countries have also just paid a lip service.

He said the killings of innocent children and women in Gaza by Israeli bombardment on civilian population, even on schools, hospitals and ambulance vans show that despite the Western sermons about human rights we live in world where might is right.

He said the United Nations has proved to be an instrument of the Western countries which is blind to the human rights violations against

the Muslim populations. He said we have seen this in Kashmir, Afghanistan, Iraq and now in Gaza.

He said the killers of the Muslim populations have got the silent backing of the Western countries and the United Nations, which takes care of their interests. He said Iraq was attacked over false information about so-called weapons of mass destruction, but the United Nations and the Western nations are blind to the mass destruction of Gaza at the hands of anti-human Israel.

Altaf Shakoor said the Muslim world is facing a crisis of leadership. There is not a single courageous Muslim leader that can realise the gravity of situation and get united the Ummah at this crucial juncture of history. He said the OIC is a paper tiger, having no power to defend the Muslim people. He said a broad based political and military alliance between all the Muslim countries is a must to save their women and children from mass killings and genocide. He said political and military alliances are common in the world

KP Finance Dept approved release of 900,00 million

PESHAWAR (APP): The Finance Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has approved the release of 900.00 million rupees under the four-month expenditure budget here on Sunday.

Funds have been released for salaries of employees and operational activities and 99.17 million rupees for agriculture, 7.74 million rupees for endowments and 14.18 million rupees for board of revenue, 2.40 million rupees for water sanitation, 29.21 million rupees for education, 0.43 million rupees for environment have been released.

Approval to release 4.34 million rupees for establishment administration, 7.75 million rupees for excise and taxation, 0.16 million rupees for finance, 76.42 million rupees for forests and 217.42 million rupees for health.

Approval to release 88.56 million rupees for higher education, 8.55 million rupees for home and business affairs, 16.28 million rupees for industries and 0.89 million rupees for public relations.

It was approved to release 34.30 million rupees for urban development, 51.81 million rupees for tourism and 0.34 million rupees for local government.

Apart from this, funds based on salaries and expenses have been released for other departments as well. The approval given by the Finance Department has been given for the next four months from November to February, the notification said here. The release of funds by the Finance Department is expected in the next week, an official, when asked to comment, said.

Camp established for deporting illegal foreigners



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Evacuation of foreigners residing illegally in Pakistan is going on. A large number of Afghans are returning to Afghanistan via Torkham after the crackdown on illegal immigrants following the deadline given by the government of Pakistan.

In this regard, a temporary camp has been set up in Landi Kotal, where the illegal residents are being sent back to their countries after completing the information and other legal requirements. The camp provides all the necessary facilities for the foreigners to return to their countries in a dignified manner. After the arrival of the foreigners in the camp, the NADRA officials collect the data of the head of the family through biometrics.

After which the customs officials conduct a thorough search of them, for which women customs officials have also been appointed.

After a thorough search by the Customs, these foreigners are referred to the FIA officials, where their complete paper work is completed. After all the necessary legal procedures, these foreigners are kept in the waiting room.

After which they are taken to Torkham border in special vehicles provided by the government. On arrival at the Torkham border, these foreigners are again subjected to necessary legal action.

Under which, after a comprehensive search and baggage search, the immigration authorities complete the necessary paperwork and record all the details. After which they are sent back to Afghanistan through the border. Illegally resident Afghans are also moving their household goods to Afghanistan in trucks and containers.

All these goods are also checked by a special scanner established at the Torkham border terminus. After a thorough search of the goods, the vehicle is taken to the export road, where a permit is obtained and the vehicle is sent to Afghanistan.

Government of Pakistan, Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps North and other organizations are active for the honorable return of foreigners and will continue to pursue the return of all illegally resident.

Prices of vegetables, fruits, chicken fixed

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration fixed prices of vegetables, fruits and chicken and released the official list of prices here on Sunday.

However, despite fixing the rates of food items, there is no significant reduction in the prices. White potato at Rs 90 while red potato at Rs 130 per kg, official price list described. The onion price was fixed at 120 rupees per kg.

The price of Afghan tomato has increased by 20 rupees and on Sunday the price of tomato has increased from 180 to 200 rupees. The rate of China lemon is fixed as Rs. 100 but it is available in the market at Rs. 150 to 160 per kg. The capsicum 180, green chili 100, kachalu 60, cabbage 80 rupees and okra 80 rupees per kg fixed.

The price of ginger (Thailand) has decreased, now it is fixed at Rs 820 per kg but still the same is being sold at Rs. 1200 to 1300. The price of Pakistani garlic is fixed as Rs 380 and the price of Chinese garlic is Rs 530 per kg, however, such items have been sold at Rs. 450 and 650 respectively.

Guava 160, Grapes 320, Apples 250 while Banana 110 rupees per kg fixed. Reduction in the price of chicken by 5 rupees, the price of live chicken is fixed at 355 to 350 rupees per kg but it is being sold at the same old price that is Rs. 420 per kg. Surprisingly, no one is ready to sell as per the rate fixed by the district administration. "Despite showing the fixed price the vendors did not follow the same and the inflations of various food items continue," said, a person identified him as Nouman from Khazana Sugar Mills during purchasing various food items in the vegetable market.



PESHAWAR: General Secretary Anjuman-e-Farooqia Parachinar Imran Khan talking to media. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

Preparations for general elections in KP started

PESHAWAR (APP): The preparation for the General Election got under way in all across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with a list of more than 5000 women teachers is ready to give duty.

In this connection a letter issued by the Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to all the Education Officers to prepare the staff for the forthcoming general election to be held soon.

General elections will be held soon, the letter says. The list of teachers of the schools of the four towns of the city is ready, the letter said.

List of teachers does not include IBN and email address and check the list of concerned education officers and add more information, the letter issued on Nov 3, says, without mentioning the date of the election. The letter directed to EDEOs, ASDEOs Town I, II, III IV, Principals, HMs, In-charge, GGHSS, GGHS, GGMS Peshawar to send the verified list to the Education Department office within two days.

Food distributed to Afghans

PESHAWAR (APP): In a heartwarming display of hospitality and support, Nowshera police on Sunday extended a warm welcome to Afghan travelers heading back to their homeland.

The initiative, which took place in Azakhel area, saw the distribution of food to Afghan families by SDPO Cantt Ismail Shah.

A total of 17 families, comprising 117 individuals including 18 males, 18 females, and 81 children. Additionally, 10 vehicles were part of the convoy. The district administration's Tehsildar, Gohar Khan, and Bahadar Khan SI of the local police, played pivotal roles in coordinating this humanitarian effort.

They worked alongside SDPO Ismail Shah of cantt to ensure that food supplies were efficiently distributed to the Afghan families embarking on their journey. Ismail Shah emphasized the importance of providing assistance and cooperation to those traveling to Afghanistan, underlining the commitment to ensuring a safe and harmonious passage. The event not only provided much-needed sustenance but also symbolized the spirit of unity and cooperation between the neighboring nations.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali offering dua after completion of development project at Asia Gate.

Home Affairs Dept prepared plan for holding MDCAT test

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Department of Home Affairs Sunday prepared a plan for the MD CAT test to be held on November 26 all across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Department of Interior Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has fixed the rules and regulations for smooth conduct of the Test. Examination centers for the MD CAT test will be established in Dera Ismail Khan, Kohat, Mardan, Lower Dir, Swat and Abbottabad, they announced.

The test will be held in 11 examination centers in all districts including Peshawar and printing and other important steps for the MD CAT test will be supervised by Peshawar Police while Khyber Medical University would release the details of the duty staff for the exams, their plan revealed.

Delivery of all examination materials from Khyber Medical University to examination centers will be under the supervision of the Police and the police will get the support of FIA for all security measures including the walk-through gate for the exam, an official of the Home Affairs Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said.

Ladies police will also be deployed on the exam situation while the Traffic Department will manage the traffic system outside and around the examination hall, the official said. He said, the services of mobile towers near all the centers will be suspended during the test hours.

The secretaries and other administrative officers of all the departments of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be taken into confidence and kept away from all exam matters.

Police will only perform security duties, announced by the Home Affairs and Interior Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa officials.

He disclosed that CCTV cameras would be installed in all the allotted examination centers of the province and there will be a complete ban on the use of mobile phones on duty staff, students and girls.

He said the Health department staff will be deployed to deal with any emergency situation and the Deputy Commissioners of all seven districts will also perform their duties as Regional Coordinator Officers.

All the relevant institutions have been made bound to have the best coordination among themselves, announced the Department of Interior, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said.

KPHCC releases monthly progress report

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Care Commission released the monthly report (October 2023), highlighting significant developments in healthcare regulation and quality enhancement in the province.

According to the report, during the month of October, 2,575 HCEs were registered, and 10,909 were geo-tagged in the field.

The Commission regularly provides training to the staff of healthcare centers on Minimum Service Delivery Standards.

In the same period, 49 staff members of 16 hospitals were trained.

Provisional licenses were awarded to 16 hospitals during this month. Expert assessors evaluated 12 hospitals across the province.

The Commission utilizes a comprehensive strategy to combat quackery, encompassing the facilitation of registration of qualified healthcare providers, the execution of eradication campaigns, and the enhancement of public awareness.

According to the report, HCC teams inspected a total of 297 health facilities. Out of which 96 were issued notices, and 31 were sealed due to non-compliance with regulations.

The Commission received 223 complaints during this quarter and successfully resolved 20 percent.

Five days' capacity building training were conducted with the collaboration of MTI Khyber Teaching Hospital, Peshawar on Biomedical Equipment, in which inspectors, assessors were take participation.

The Chief Executive Officer Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Care Commission Dr. Nadeem Akhtar expressed that this report reflects the Commission's commitment to enhancing patient safety and healthcare quality in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, along with its dedication to transparency, accountability, and the highest standards in healthcare delivery for the benefit of the people in the region.

Education Dept sends communique to officials

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Department has dispatched a communique to it officials to prepare staff for general elections.

The communique read that general elections were being held shortly and a list of 5000 female teachers has been prepared for duty during polls. A list of teachers of all four towns of Peshawar city has been formulated which don't include IBN and email addresses of the teachers.

The communique further stated that more information of concerned officials must be included in list after scrutiny and certified list should be dispatched to education office within two days.

KP govt unearths misappropriations in payments to PTI U-Tubers

PESHAWAR (APP): The internet users in Pakistan has swelled to a record 87.35 million in January this year, helping them to get all types of information on varieties of subjects including geopolitical development, economic, social, sports and culture besides others day-to-day happenings in and around the globe on a single click on mobile phones.

In the wake of 4.4 million increases in the internet users during the last two years in the country, the number of active cellular mobile connections had swelled to a record 191.8 million, which is equivalent to 80.5 percent of the total population of the country. Resultantly, the number of social media users' had registered an upward increase to record 71.50 million.

The data of social media platforms have revealed that 37.30 million people were using Facebook, 71.70 million YouTube, 12.95 million Instagram, 16.51 million TikTok, 9.30 million LinkedIn, 4.65 million twitter and 25.70 million Snapchat in the country. The above data indicated that Pakistan has witnessed a remarkable growth in internet, social and digital media users in recent years with both positive and negative effects on social fabric of the society. Besides others, political parties, Pakistan Tahrir-e-Insaf have also excessively used social media during their respective rules for projection of its policies, initiatives, reforms and its leadership.

"When caretaker government took over, we have unearthed that PTI government recruited about 1,109 social media influencers (SMI) who were being paid monthly salary from the government kitty for launching negative propaganda against political opponents and projection of PTI's policies and its leadership through their social media accounts on daily basis," claimed Farooz Jamal Kakakhel, caretaker Provincial Minister for Information and Tourism while talking to APP.

He said all SMIs were paid Rs 25,000 per month from the KP government kitty while sitting at homes and were carrying out malicious propaganda against the rival political parties, leaderships and state institutions besides continued personal projection of the PTI leadership, adding as result of these irrational policies and alleged misappropriation in payment to PTI's SMIs/U-Tubers had led to political intolerance and chaos in the society besides very negative effects in the social fabrics.

An official source said that SMIs were inducted in 2021 under an establishment of "social media participatory platform for public project" with initial allocation of Rs 870 million in the Annual Development Program of the then PTI government.

Later, the project cost was revised to Rs 736 million, and that 1360 interneers including 1253 SMIs were inducted on Rs 25,000 per month in different departments initially for one year.

The project was later closed on April 4, 2023 by the caretaker KP government after unearthing the alleged financial scam and salaries of all SMIs were stopped citing unavailability of fund. During time of closer of the project, the source said the total number of interneers was 1,104 including 1050 SMIs on whom Rs242 million were spent from the KP government kitty in nearly two years.

The source said that alleged misappropriations in payments to PTI U-tubers and SMIs were taken by the NAB and FIA for inquiry. Wajid Ali Khan, PML-N leader and former KP Minister for Environment accused the former PTI government for spending huge taxpayer's money for its personal projection in a bid to mislead people and hide its 10-year long poor performance in the province. Without naming the PTI Chairman, the PML-N leader alleged that government funds, seemingly intended for public development, were massively used by the former PTI rulers by recruiting mostly its workers as SMIs to promote the hal-low agenda of a specific individual rather than spending it on genuine welfare of people of KP, who were deceived in the name of change for nearly a decade besides creating rift among state institutions and people.

He said the PTI government has used social media influencers as propaganda tool after it failed to fulfill its promise of constructing five million houses and providing jobs to 10 million people.

He said that PTI flagship Billion Trees Afforestation Project was taken over by NAB Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Peshawar High Court while Peshawar that was once known as city of flowers was converted into a traffic mess due to ill-planned BRT corridor.

Wajid Ali Khan said the much trumpeted Sehat Card scheme was launched in haste without proper planning by the PTI incompetent rulers that was currently marred by payment controversies with State Life Corporation, resultantlly poor patients coming from across the province were suffering today.

He demanded completion of inquiry regarding alleged misappropriation of government funds in payment of salaries to SMIs and bringing the real culprits to justice so that no political party can use taxpayers' money for its personal gains in future.

He said an election campaign was about to start in the country and it was the responsibility of the caretaker government and Election Commission to monitor social media platforms and ensure that objectionable materials and personal attacks through social and digital media could not be used against state institutions.





In brief

Youth kills father

MIANWALI (INP): A callous youth stabbed his father to dead in Daudkhel area of Mianwali, police said on Sunday. According to details, accused Yasir was in differences with father for forbidding him to stay of bad friends. To get rid of father, the culprit stabbed his Iqbal Khan to death and fled the scene of crime. The body was shifted to hospital for postmortem and police after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest the murderer of father.

Forces nab 620 in operation

QUETTA (INP): Law enforcers have arrested 620 illegal immigrants in an operation launched in different areas of the capital of Balochistan province, according to figures released by police on Sunday. It said 116 illegal immigrants were arrested from City Division, 62 from Quaidabad Division, 323 from Sadder and 119 from Saryab. All the arrested illegal immigrants have been sent to Chaman border area for deportation. Meanwhile, 5,246 members of 477 families have been deported via Chaman. They include 1,717 men, 1,367 women and 2,162 children.

Woman gives birth to triplets

NAUSHAHRO FEROZE (INP): A woman gave birth to triplets in a private hospital for Kandiaro district Nausahro Feroze on Sunday. According to details, after feeling labour pain, pregnant wife of Hussain Ali hailing from Ikri was shifted to Hassam Medical Centre in Kandor. The woman underwent C-Section and gave birth to triplets including two boys and a girl. According to Dr Tasleem Masood Sitho of Hassam Medical Centre, all three children and mother were in good health condition.

Woman killed, another hurt

GUJAR KHAN (INP): One woman was killed and another injured in firing of unidentified armed men on a vehicle, police said on Sunday. According to details, unknown gunmen sprayed bullets on passenger van near Doltala in Jatti police station jurisdiction. As a result of firing, a woman identified as Qurat-ul-Aim was killed on the spot while Nourreem Bibi sustained critical injuries. The attackers fled the scene of crime. The body and injured were shifted to hospital for medico-legal formalities. It was learnt that Qurat-ul-Ain had lodged a complaint police and incident could be outcome of same dispute. The police registered a case against unidentified assailants and started search for them.

Motorway closed due to fog

SARGODHA (INP): The Motorway was closed from Pindi Bhattian to Gujra due to dense fog and very low visibility. The decision to close the Motorway was made to prevent accidents and ensure the safety of life and property of the users of the Motorway. The spokesperson of the Motorway Police on Sunday advised citizens to avoid unnecessary travel during fog hours and in vehicles. They also advised drivers to use fog lights and keep a reasonable distance from the next vehicle. The Motorway is expected to reopen once the fog has cleared and the visibility has improved.

‘People of Pakistan want independent, sovereign Palestine’

MULTAN (APP): Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC), Maulana Tahir Ashrafi, said on Sunday that the people of Pakistan maintained a resolute position on the Palestine issue, aligning with the stance originally articulated by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

He made these remarks while addressing a conference to express solidarity with the people of Palestine. There are two big issues of Muslim ummah: Palestine and Kashmir. Pakistan wants to provide complete justice to the people of Kashmir and Palestine, he added. We wish Palestine should have the status of an independent

and sovereign government with its capital in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, Ashrafi added.

He, however, hoped that the upcoming conference of Arab countries in Riaz (Saudi Arabia) on the issue of Palestine would bring good news.

Maulana Tahir Ashraf strongly condemned the new wave of terrorism in the country. He stated that enemies wanted to sabotage the peaceful environment of the country through terror. Now, Pakistan is heading toward economic stability, and the terrorists want to destabilize it.

Ashrafi stated, The Afghans are our brothers, and we want Afghanistan to make progress. He said that

illegal Afghans could not be allowed to stay illegally in the country. Pakistan has always served the people of Afghanistan. Peace in Pakistan is vital for peace in Afghanistan, and vice versa.

Maulana Tahir Ashrafi also criticized propaganda against institutions of security. He added that if the culprits of May 9 were punished, then there would not have been propaganda. He called for strict action against the people involved in propaganda.

He also demanded that the chief justice of Pakistan improve the system of justice. Ashrafi also suggested filing a review petition with the Supreme Court regarding military courts.



MULTAN: Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council Maulana Tahir Ashrafi addressing Solidarity Palestine Conference at Masjid Shohda Al Khair.

Orakzai Mela concludes with enthusiasm and zeal



F.P. Report

KALAYA: The three-day “Orakzai Zalmu Mela” that was jointly organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), Tourism Wing Merged Areas, Pakistan Army and in collaboration with the district sports department, concluded in a colorful ceremony at the Kalaya Sports Complex in Orakzai Tribal District.

The event was attended by Commandant Orakzai Scout Colonel, Saadat Hussain and Deputy Commissioner Tayyab Abdullah as Chief Guests. Wing Commander Lieutenant Colonel Tariq Khattak, Project Director Orakzai district, inviting tourists to explore the area’s

beauty while experiencing the traditions and culture of Orakzai district. It also aimed to ‘fill the playgrounds and shift the minds of the youngsters towards healthy and Creative activities that can result in Peace and harmony.’

A large number of elders and youth, including students from different schools, attended the event and enjoyed the festival on the third day.

Different stalls were set up in the festival to highlight the rich traditions of the area, along with pavilions showcasing local cuisines and items representing the traditions of the merged district. Various events, including cricket, kabaddi, volleyball, stone lifting, tractor stop, truck pulling, tug of war, Desi

Kushti, archery, slingshot, gymnastic and athletics, were also held during the festival.

It’s worth mentioning that KPCTA has organized different events in collaboration with the Pakistan Army and locals to promote tourism and project a positive image of the area worldwide.

These events will help attract tourists to the area and create economic opportunities for the locals. The festival also conveyed the message to the world that peace has been restored in the area through the joint efforts of the Pakistan Army, law enforcement agencies, police, local elders and the people.

KPCTA has also introduced Samana Top, Nanwar Cave, and Sampogh Top as tourist destinations, and the majority of work on the installation of camping pods has been completed.

Later, Commandant Orakzai Scout Colonel Saadat Hussain and Deputy Commissioner Tayyab Abdullah distributed prizes and certificates among outstanding performers who participated in events, including cricket, kabaddi, volleyball, stone lifting, tractor stop, truck pulling, tug of war, Desi Kushti, archery, slingshot, gymnastic and athletics. KPCTA also arranged a musical night that was largely enjoyed and attended by people.

Relief items distributed among fire affectees of refugee camp

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): Pakistan Red Crescent Society Aed Jammu and Kashmir (PRCS AJK) with the generous support of PRCS National Headquarters Islamabad and in collaboration with its dedicated volunteers and staff members, has swiftly mobilized relief efforts to provide support to the affected families of Ambore Refugee Camp.

A devastating fire broke out in the Refugee Camp in Ambore on November 02, causing significant damage to the camp and leaving 25 families homeless.

According to initial report of PRCS AJK Disaster Management Department 13 houses have been destroyed as a result of devastating fire out-

break. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, PRCS AJK immediately initiated a relief operation to address the immediate needs of the affected population. The relief operation involved the distribution of essential relief items, including tents, shelter tool kits, blankets, hygiene kits, water Filter coolers, shelter materials, lamps and tarpaulin sheets.

In this context, a distribution ceremony was held here at Deputy Commissioner Office Muzaffarabad. The Secretary PRCS AJK State Branch Gulzar Fatima, Deputy Commissioner Muzaffarabad Raja Tahir was also present and distributed relief items among affected families.

These items were distributed in a well-organized and efficient manner, ensuring that the most vulnerable individuals

received priority assistance. On this occasion, Program & Disaster Management Manager Naveed Akhtar Awan, Spokesperson PRCS AJK and volunteers were also present.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman PRCS AJK State Branch, Ejaz Raza expressed his deep concern for the affected families and conveyed the organization’s commitment to providing timely and effective relief. He commended the dedication of PRCS AJK volunteers and partners who worked tirelessly to ensure the smooth execution of the relief operation.

“PRCS AJK remains resolute in its commitment to providing humanitarian aid and support to those in needs, and will continue to monitor the situation in Refugee Camp Ambore and respond as necessary”, added Ejaz Raza.

Kundi urged party workers to gear up preparations

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) central Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi said that the PPP would actively participate in the upcoming general elections.

Talking to media in DI Khan, he said, “Our party is fully prepared for the next general elections and urged his party workers to gear up for election preparations.”

He said his party would start holding political activities and would reach out to

the voters. Kundi said that the PPP would emerge victorious in the next election.

Kundi said, “We want all the political parties to agree on the Charter of Democracy for transparent elections and stable democratic system in the country.”

He added that political forces should unite and work for the supremacy of the Parliament and the Constitution.

He maintained that the

PPP always demands free and fair elections on time in the country and his party considers transparent elections quite vital for the political and economic stability of the country.

He also lauded the decision of ECP to hold the elections and termed the decision as a solution to the country’s problems.

He hoped that the doubts should be ended now after the announcement of elections.

Combing operation started

FAISALABAD (APP): The police started a combing operation in Faisalabad to check the bio data of rentees and suspects.

Police spokesman Shehzad Javaid said here on Sunday that the on special directives of Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dr Muhammad Abid and City Police Officer (CPO) Captain (Retired) Ali Muhammad Zia, the police conducted the operation in the areas of Civil Lines, Rail Bazaar, Kotwali, Raza Abad and Factory Area.

SSP Operations Dr Muhammad Rizwan supervised the operation in which teams of CTD, Special Branch, and SHOs concerned took part.

The police through the biometric device checked the bio data of rentees and suspects in addition to conducting snap checking of bus stands, the railway station and hotels.

The operation will help nab criminals besides ensuring law and order in the city, the spokesman added.

Shortage of staff in hospital

MULTAN (APP): The Children’s Hospital, renowned for its comprehensive pediatric care, is currently facing a critical shortage of medical staff and the scarcity has posed significant challenges for the administration in accommodating child patients not only from South Punjab but also those arriving from the interior region of Sindh and Balochistan provinces.

Despite a designated bed capacity of 550, the hospital has been routinely admitting close to 700 children, reflecting the overwhelming demand for its diverse treatment services, including specialized procedures like heart surgeries and dialysis, as confirmed by official sources. Nevertheless, the shortage of staff has become a pressing issue, with approximately 70 doctor positions, 50 nurses, 10 head nurses, and 150 paramedic vacancies across various departments.

Sources revealed an additional concern as there are only 10 rooms available for a substantial nursing staff of 300, hinting at the urgent need for expanded infrastructure to ensure efficient treatment provisions.

Addressing these challenges, the hospital administration assured that measures were underway to alleviate the strain on existing facilities. Notably, construction is in progress for a new emergency unit, set to comprise 100 beds. This development aims to significantly enhance the hospital’s capacity to cater to the needs of kids patients. The construction is slated for completion by December, offering a promising prospect for improved services and increased accommodation for the influx of children requiring medical care.

The pending expansion of the emergency unit stands as a beacon of hope, promising relief for both the hospital staff struggling to meet the demands and, more importantly, the young patients seeking critical medical attention.

PTI workers’ convention stage demolished

MANSEHRA (INP): The district administration of Mansehra in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has demolished the stage set up for a workers’ convention of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and imposed section 144 on assembly processions across the district.

According to media reports, the PTI had applied for a no-objection certificate to hold the convention, but the Deputy Commissioner rejected the application. The administration then demolished the stage and deployed a heavy police force in the area.

The DC said that the police station in Mansehra city did not give security clearance for the event. DPO has ordered that no party, including the PTI, be allowed to hold any gatherings due to security concerns.

The PTI leadership was informed about the orders of the DPO and DC yesterday, but they went ahead with the convention anyway. The police have taken action to implement the orders of the DPO and the administration. The police

have also installed gates at various places to disperse the caravans coming towards the assembly hall. They are also conducting raids to arrest PTI workers.

It is worth mentioned here that the Peshawar High Court (PHC) had earlier allowed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to hold public meetings and rallies for the upcoming elections after fulfilling the conditions put by the respective district administrations. A PHC division bench, comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Shakil Ahmad, passed the orders in a writ petition filed by a PTI leader and former minister Ali Amin Gandapur and others.

During the course of proceedings, Justice Ijaz Anwar remarked that it was not a new thing in Pakistan to organise a public meeting at the residence of an absconder. “It has become a common practice and even an absconder is now brought with protocol,” the judge said. He asked why such restrictions were for a single political party.

Policeman suspended

QUETTA (INP): The Balochistan police has suspended an official following a viral video on social media where he could be seen along with other personnel expressing solidarity with Afghan refugees facing deportation from Pakistan.

This development was confirmed by Caretaker Interior Minister Sarfaraz Bugti, who said Arbab Dawood Kasi, the official involved in making the said TikTok video, has been suspended. He further said that action was being taken to sack the police official from duty. According to other media reports, three policemen, including an assistant sub-inspector, seen in the viral video have been suspended.

In the video, Kasi could be seen criticising the government for deporting the allegedly illegal Afghan refugees, and requested his fellow security officials not to treat the Afghans inappropriately. He goes on to say that after the video, even if he was suspended he wouldn’t mind, and move to Afghanistan for work where

he would be treated with respect. He also mentioned how the properties of all the Afghans being forced to leave Pakistan had been occupied and their houses razed.

In another video, uploaded to his TikTok account boasting over 50,000 followers apparently following his suspension from duty, Kasi says he was not worried at all as he had sacrificed his duty for the Afghans. “I’m from the family of Aimal Kansai. I have no tension about losing my job,” he ends the clip with laughter.

Taking notice of the viral video, Balochistan Police Inspector General Abdul Khaliq Sheikh ordered the police personnel to be suspended. He added that they were trying to identify other personnel in the video – clad in Anti-Terrorism Force uniforms -- and that action would be taken against them as well.

IGP said every police officer in Balochistan should keep patriotism and rule of law above everything else.

Two marriage halls sealed

FAISALABAD (APP): The district administration sealed the premises of two marriage halls besides imposing Rs.575,000 fines on seven others over violation of the Marriage Act.

DC Abdullah said here on Sunday that a vigorous campaign had been launched against the violation of one-dish and the Marriage Act in the district.

The assistant commissioners were activated to take action against violators. They checked 47 marriage halls on Saturday night and found violation of one-dish and the Marriage

Act at seven of them.

Therefore, they imposed a total fine of Rs575,000 on their administration besides sealing the premises of two marriage halls. Cases were also registered against managers of two marriage halls in addition to arresting one caterer from the spot.

He said that a fine of Rs.225,000 was imposed on the management of four marriage halls in Tehsil City while Rs.300,000 fine was imposed on the administration of two marriage halls in Tehsil Sadar and Rs.50,000 on a marriage hall in Tehsil Jaranwala.



Turkey's opposition changes leader after election defeat

ISTANBUL (AFP/APP): Turkey's main opposition party on Sunday dumped its embattled leader in favour of an untested former pharmacist following a disappointing election defeat to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The staunchly secular Republican People's Party (CHP) has been riven by divisions since Kemal Kilicdaroglu lost a bitterly fought May runoff against Turkey's dominant but divisive president.

At the party's annual congress, delegates voted to replace Kilicdaroglu with the relatively unknown Ozgur Ozel after squandering what many viewed as the opposition's best chance to end two decades of Erdogan's Islamic conservative rule.

The May election came in the throes of a dire cost-of-living crisis that analysts blame squarely on Erdogan's unorthodox economic beliefs. Kilicdaroglu managed to pull together a multi-faceted alliance that included both right-wing nationalists and left-wing socialists and Kurds.

But the six-party bloc nearly fractured months before the election and then underperformed in the polls.

Erdogan managed to cement his control of parliament through support from Islamic and ultranationalist groups. Kilicdaroglu then riled many within his own party by refusing to



concede defeat and quit.

The 74-year-old lost his leadership post after two rounds of heated party congress voting to a candidate backed by Istanbul mayor Ekrem Imamoglu.

Ozel had spent a large part of his career working as a private pharmacist in the socially liberal Aegean resort city of Izmir.

He eventually became head of Turkey's pharmacy association and was

elected to parliament in 2011. The bespectacled 49-year-old German speaker won the final ballot by a 812-536 margin after promoting himself as the candidate for "change". But the vote

was far more focused on personalities than any particular policies. Kilicdaroglu compared attempts to unseat him to a "stab in the back". Ozel countered that he wanted to "write a new story and reshape Turkish politics".

Delhi primary schools to close amidst high pollution levels

DELHI (Reuters): Primary schools in India's capital city will remain closed until Nov. 10 due to high pollution levels, a Delhi government minister said in a post on social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

"As pollution levels continue to remain high, primary schools in Delhi will stay closed till 10th November," said Delhi Education Minister Atishi Marlena.

For Grade 6-12, schools are being given the option of shifting to online classes, she added.

New Delhi stands on top of a real-time list of the world's most polluted cities compiled by Swiss group IQAir.

The city's air quality index (AQI) on Sunday was 471, putting it in the "hazardous" category. It was followed by Lahore in Pakistan at a "very unhealthy" of 261.



The toxic air on Saturday had forced Sri Lanka to cancel their training session. The team was practising for a World

Cup clash on Monday against Bangladesh in the heavily-polluted Indian capital.

An AQI of 0-50 is con-

sidered good, while levels 400-500 impacts healthy people and is dangerous to those with existing diseases.

Bleu Royal diamond set to dazzle in Geneva jewels sale

GENEVA (AFP/APP): The exceptionally rare Bleu Royal gem is set to become one of the most expensive diamonds ever sold by auctioneers Christie's when it goes under the hammer on Tuesday.

The Bleu Royal is the star lot in a series of sales in Geneva this month which feature items from movie history including pearls worn by Audrey Hepburn and Marlon Brando's self-engraved watch.

Weighing 17.61 carats, the Bleu Royal is the largest internally flawless fancy vivid blue gem ever to appear for sale in auction history.

The stone is expected to fetch \$35 million to \$50 million in Christie's Magnificent Jewels auction.

"It's going to be one of the top 10 jewels sold at Christie's ever, in terms of value," Rahul Kadakia, Christie's international head of jewellery, told AFP.

The diamond, set in a ring, has been in a private collection for 50 years.

Kadakia said lots of modern coloured diamonds had a modified cut to enhance the colour.

In the Bleu Royal's case, "the rough material itself was so rich that they were able to cut it into a classic brilliant faceting style," he said.

"It checks all the boxes - really top of its class."

Fancy vivid blue diamonds weighing more than 10 carats are exceptionally rare. Since Christie's was founded in 1766, only three such stones have appeared for sale -- all in the last 13 years.

The Bulgari Blue sold for nearly \$15.8 million in 2010; the Winston Blue fetched \$23.8 million in 2014, and the Oppenheimer Blue realised \$57.5 million in 2016.

"This level of the jewellery market has turned into the same sort of appreciation as art," said Kadakia.

"The market saw there's a great scarcity of these special stones and they started making prices in the same manner as great pictures do."

The separate online jewels sale, which runs until November 16, features the pearl necklace worn by Hepburn in the 1953 film "Roman Holiday".

Hepburn, who played a princess in the romantic comedy, picked it out from a selection offered by the Austro-Hungarian jeweller Furst, and returned it afterwards with a signed photograph.

It is being sold by a European collector and has a starting price of 18,000 Swiss francs (\$20,000), but could go much higher in a bidding war.

"You only need two people to make a party," said Max Fawcett, the head of jewellery at Christie's in Geneva.

"Audrey Hepburn is an iconic figure. Her fashion, clothes and anything that she ever wore is still highly sought after by collectors," he told AFP.

"People love a story and private clients want to be part of those stories."

In Monday's Passion for Time watches sale, the timepiece worn by Brando in the 1979 Vietnam War movie "Apocalypse Now" is estimated to fetch one to two million Swiss francs.

The circa 1972 Rolex GMT-Master is hand-engraved "M. Brando" on the back by the Oscar-winning US actor himself.

"The engraving is still sharp, so we can imagine that this watch has been worn, but not too much," said Eli Fayon, junior watches specialist at Christie's Geneva.

Told that the eye-catching watch would distract moviegoers, Brando removed the bezel -- the outer ring which encircles the crystal glass to keep it in place.

Besides the engraving, "that is also what makes this watch unique", Fayon told AFP.

Brando gifted it to his adopted daughter Petra in 1995, who then gave it to her husband in 2003 on their wedding night. It was sold at auction in 2019 for \$1.95 million.

Its white hands and hour markers have aged to parchment yellow.

"Putting aside that it's Marlon Brando's watch, the watch in itself is amazing. The condition is spectacular for a 50-year-old watch," said Fayon.

He was expecting interest from vintage Rolex collectors and clients that want "not only a piece of watch history but also movie history".

Ghana's VP Bawumia gets ruling party nod for 2024 presidential run

ACCRA (AFP/APP): Ghana's ruling NPP party on Saturday elected the country's Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia as their candidate for the 2024 presidential ballot, according to results from primaries released by the electoral commission.

Ghana is undergoing its worst economic crisis in years, which will be a major electoral issue next year when President Nana Akufo-Addo steps down after two terms and an agreement for a \$3 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund.

According to the final results, Bawumia won 61.4 percent of the votes while this nearest rival Kennedy Ohene Agyapong won 37.4 percent.

Bawumia, a former deputy central bank governor, had been widely touted by pollsters to win the New Patriotic Party (NPP) candidacy. He will face opposition National Democratic Congress candidate, ex-president John Dramani Mahama at the end of next year.

Bawumia had already won the first round of NPP voting and as the first Muslim candidate to lead the ethnic Akan and southern-dominated party, he had positioned himself to bridge some of Ghana's regional divisions.

"It's a victory for the rank and file of our great party and particularly to the grass root members. I am humbled and overwhelmed," he said in a speech after the results.

"We know that the NPP is the only party that can transform Ghana. The NPP will enter 2024 united and energised." "I believe the party has been fair and transparent," his rival Agyapong said after the result.

"That is the only thing I've always been preaching. My grassroots have spoken and therefore I accept the results in good faith."

A major cocoa and gold producer, Ghana also has oil and gas reserves. But its debt load has expanded and like other sub-Saharan African nations it has struggled with the economic fallout from the global pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.

Ghana signed the deal with the IMF last year as

the country sought to shore up its public finances and better manage growing debt and its local currency.

It recently reached agreement on the terms for a second payment of \$600 million out of the \$3-billion credit deal.

But the economic situation is complicated. Several hundred opposition protesters rallied in Ghana's capital Accra last month to denounce the economic crisis, blaming it on the central bank governor's policies.

President Akufo-Addo has led the country since 2017 and will step down after serving the two terms allowed by the constitution. Opposition candidate Mahama lost to Akufo-Addo in the 2016 and 2020 elections.

Rock in a hard place: France-Spain border residents angry over road blocks

MADRID (Agenices): Up the French coast from the Spanish border, tourists were enjoying a warm autumn day, basking in the Mediterranean and hiking along the arduous coastal paths.

But behind the idyllic appearances, local feelings have been running high. Two years ago, with little warning, the French government closed four small roads linking this area with its southern neighbour, Spain. France says the aim of the closures is to stop illegal immigration. It has linked the move to anti-terrorism controls.

But Banyuls-sur-Mer's 6,000 residents have for decades shared numerous economic, cultural and personal ties with the population on the other side of the border in Spain. Posters all across the town now call for the re-opening of the border.

Of the four roads that were shut, the Col de Banyuls has almost mythical status here.

Tens of thousands of Spaniards fled along this route to France during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, while many allied forces and Jews escaped in the other direction during the Nazi occupation.

A pressure group of more than 1,000 people has held rallies along the border and gone to court to try and re-open the road. They call themselves "Alberes without borders", after this part of the Pyrenees mountain range.

"Most of the families in Banyuls - my own family, every family - have at different times in history had relatives on one side and part of the family on the other side," said the man behind the group, retired lawyer Pierre Becque.

Driving up the Col de Banyuls, past vineyards, scrubland and cactuses, he says for people like him there is



no border: "In the recent past we would all meet up at various times. Some came to flee Franco, or for work, or better education, or for personal reasons."

You know you've reached the border because massive boulders have been placed in the middle of the road to stop cars going through.

However, one of the rocks appears to have been nudged to the side to allow small vehicles through. Pierre Becque winked as he suggested that strong local winds must have pushed it.

Cyclists from Switzerland and the UK passed through the boulders oblivious they had broken any law.

Two British tourists on mountain bikes, Lisa and Patrick, said there were no signs to turn back and Google Maps told them the road was still open.

A French government spokeswoman told the BBC that the purpose behind closing the smaller routes was to allow police to focus on the main roads and rail links between the two countries.

She said there had been an 82% jump in illegal migration along this part of the border in 2022, and that the roads could be re-

opened when joint French-Spanish police units were up and running.

However, that appears to be a low priority for now, with France once again on its highest state of terror alert - "Emergency Attack" - after a French schoolteacher was fatally stabbed in the northern city of Arras.

The mayor of Banyuls, Jean-Michel Sole, spends a lot of time with his Spanish counterparts trying to persuade the French government to re-open the border. He believes the arguments for closing the roads make no sense, even with France on maximum terror alert.

"We all want to feel safe... but I find it hard to believe any terrorist would take a steep remote road to attack who knows who," he explained. "And immigrants cross on foot, not by car, so a few rocks are not going to stop anyone."

The border closures are also having an effect on the region's important wine industry. More than 120 wine-producers bring their grapes to the biggest co-operative here, L'Etoile.

And in the past hundreds of grape-pickers

would cross the border for seasonal work. What would have been a 15km (9 mile) trip has now become 80km, says Jean-Pierre Centene, the head of the co-operative. "For our Spanish workers it now takes too much time and is too expensive for them so our work ties have been cut."

"This year grapes withered on the vines because there weren't enough pickers."

On the Spanish side of the border in the sleepy Catalan village of Espolla, a huge rock taken from the closed border has been placed on display in the main roundabout.

Farmer and local councillor Josep Maria Tegido has also been campaigning against the closed border, arguing that the road has been used for centuries to cross to the other side of the mountain, although he has never seen irregular migrants using it.

"The closure of the road represents a real impediment to traditional, cultural and economic activities from continuing."

Chris Bockman is the author of Are you the foie gras correspondent? Another slow news day in south-west France.

Hamburg Airport hostage drama is over, police say

HAMBURG (Agencies): A hostage situation at Hamburg Airport involving a young child has ended after 18 hours, according to local police.

The man drove through a security barrier and on to the airport tarmac on Saturday night with his four-year-old daughter in the car and parked under a plane. He eventually gave himself up to the authorities "without resistance", according to police, and was arrested.

"The child appears to be unharmed," they wrote on X (formerly Twitter).

The incident caused the disruption of several flights in and out of the airport. Efforts are now under way to resume operations.

It began at about 20:00 local time (19:00 GMT) when the suspect drove his car to the airport's apron, the area where aircraft are usually parked. According to local media, he parked under a Turkish

Airlines plane. Police said the man shot his weapon twice in the air and threw burning bottles from the vehicle. It was unclear if the man had explosives. The authorities believe the situation involved a "custody dispute". The child's mother is reported to have alerted emergency services that the four-year-old had been taken.

Hamburg police spokeswoman Sandra Levgruen said earlier on Sunday that the

man did not agree with some decisions made by the authorities in relation to the custody arrangement and wanted to travel to Turkey with the child. "He speaks about his life being a heap of shards," she told German broadcaster ZDF.

Local media reported that negotiations with the man were conducted in Turkish through a translator, but it is unclear what his connection to the country is.

DJ shot dead during live broadcast in Philippines

MANILA (BBC): A radio anchor in the Philippines has been shot dead while performing a live broadcast.

Juan Jumalon, known as DJ Johnny Walker, was shot inside his home-based studio, police said.

President Marcos Jr condemned the murder of the radio journalist "in the strongest terms".

Four journalists have been killed since Mr Marcos Jr took office in June of 2022, the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines said.

"The attack is even more condemnable since it happened at Jumalon's own home, which also served as the radio station," the union said. Mr Jumalon was live-streaming on Facebook at around 05:30 local time when the suspect entered the recording booth and shot him.

According to local



media, citing police sources, the suspect asked permission to enter Mr Jumalon's radio booth to announce "something important on air."

Police say they have already secured CCTV footage in the area.

Mr Jumalon's broadcasts are usually aired on 94.7 Gold Mega Calamba

FM Facebook page, which has around 2,400 followers.

The DJ's wife took him to hospital immediately after the incident, but it is understood doctors pronounced him dead upon arrival.

Police said they were not aware of any previous threats against his life.

The president posted on X that he has instructed the police to conduct "a thorough investigation to swiftly bring the perpetrators to justice."

The Philippines is one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists, says US-based Freedom House.

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Issues surrounding repatriation of illegal migrants

The repatriation process of the illegal migrants is steadily continuing and more than 68,000 people have returned to Afghanistan in the past two days. According to government statistics, approximately 150,000 illegal individuals have voluntarily returned before the deadline ends, while the deportation process has been kicked off by all federating units alongside voluntary returns. As said, over 56,000 Afghans have been returned through the Torkham crossing and 12,000 returned through the Spin Boldak gate on the Pak-Afghan border. The government of Pakistan making all-out efforts to ensure a smooth, peaceful and dignified repatriation of all illegal migrants, while multiple screening and holding centres have been established in Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The provincial administrations have set up transit camps at Torkham and Spin Boldak to help facilitate Afghan refugees' peaceful transition to their home country.

As the repatriation process has commenced in the past days, certain issues relating to Afghan refugees, their belongings, assets, vehicles etc have been raised that warrant special focus of the authorities. According to reports, the verification of individuals, and scanning of their households loaded in the vehicles is a lengthy process and clearance at the border crossing points is also slow. Furthermore, the government of Pakistan has set a fifty thousand limit for cash transfers with each family whereas the majority of Afghan refugees have sold out their properties, households and other physical assets before repatriation thus a ban/ limit of cash and no availability of banking channel in Afghanistan causes great embarrassment for them at the final stage. During the recent visit of the Afghan Charge'd affairs to the Torkham border, the Afghan envoy advocated for the exemption of vehicles used for the transportation of refugees from any charges.

According to government statistics, there are some 1.7 million undocumented Afghan refugees, while several lacs other illegal migrants from Iran, India, Bangladesh and Central Asian Republics are residing in the country. After the deadline ends, the process of forced repatriation has begun alongside the voluntary return of all migrants who are not registered with the Pakistani government and UNHCR. Historically, the Afghan refugees have spent nearly four decades in this country and almost half of their population was born and raised in this nation. A majority of them owe movable and immovable assets including homes, shops, vehicles, plots, local as well as foreign currency which they earned from their businesses, and hard work during their stay in Pakistan. Therefore, the Afghan refugees' concerns relating to their property and assets and their shifting to Afghanistan is a genuine issue and it must be resolved on an urgent basis. Although, the provincial and federal governments are working day and night to facilitate the smooth and respectful return of illegal migrants and the administration has issued special instructions to LEAs and civil administration to exercise special care while dealing with Afghan refugees so no single refugee is hurt/displeased during this process.

The government and the people of Pakistan have extended historic hospitality to their Afghan brothers and sisters over the past four decades while the Afghan refugees not only made their livelihood in this nation but also played a constructive role in the development and prosperity of this country. Unfortunately, Pakistan struck into endless economic and security crises while the involvement of Afghan nationals in terrorist activities against Pakistan, smuggling of highly needed commodities, foreign currency, drugs and street crimes sensitized the Pakistani government to take its house in order and streamline all domestic, foreign and security policies. The repatriation of illegal migrants was a difficult decision for Pakistani leaders' yet it was unavoidable for the protection, safety and well-being of the 240-million-strong nation. The government and the people of Pakistan still owe good wishes and hope for a prosperous future for returnees Afghan nationals. Meanwhile, Pakistan's border gates and Pakistanis' hearts will always remain open for them, when they will come through the legal process in the future.

Humanitarian pauses or a sorcery with humanity

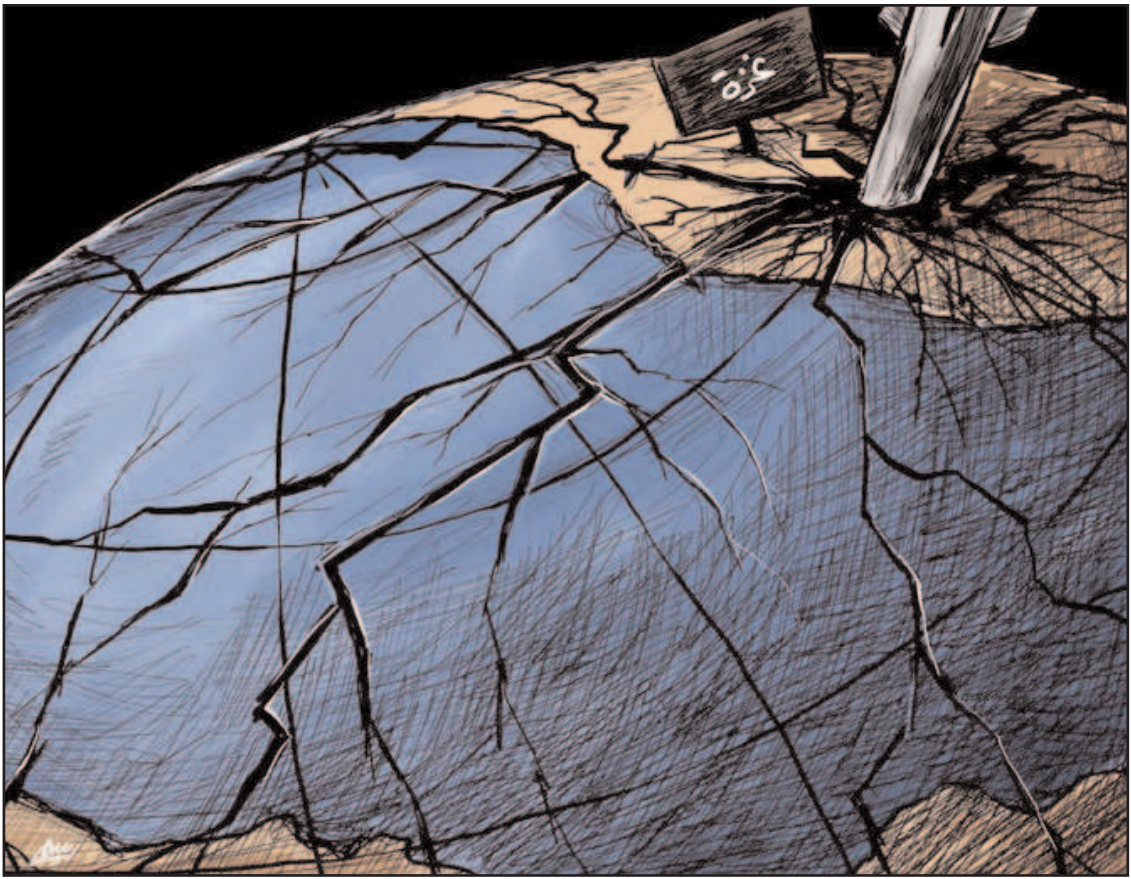
Pakistan called on Israel to stop its ongoing 'genocide' of Palestinian people, and stop its ruthless bombing campaign against civilians in the besieged Gaza. During a meeting at the UN, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process briefed the member states about the latest developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both officials called for humanitarian ceasefires to ensure safe delivery of food, fuel and other essential items to the war-torn region. The Pakistani envoy said that the Israelis, having suffered the Holocaust, were now committing the 'modern genocide' against the Palestinians.

The security and humanitarian situation in war-torn Palestinian territory including the West Bank and Gaza is so dire that essential commodities of common use and life saving drugs become rare. The ruthless bombardment of Israeli troops, airstrikes and artillery shelling continues without any pause, while rogue Israeli regime has refused any ceasefire or negotiation until it achieved its strategic objectives including the release of Israeli captives in Hamas custody. Israeli troops are continuously targeting the civilian population, while hospitals, ambulances, schools and refugee camps are also not safe from Israel's bombardment and inhumane airstrikes, which is a blatant violation of all global laws including Geneva Convention of War, the International Humanitarian law and multiple consortiums relating to war, peace and fundamental human rights.

Amid such a high level of hostility and vicious brutality, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken is currently on a diplomatic voyage to the Middle East, lobbying for humanitarian pauses instead of securing ceasefire that means a five minute pause and resumption of bombardment to undo the positive aspects of the temporary ceasefire if any. In such an environment what poor Palestinians can expect from all those who are leading the United Nations, and all those who are speaking for the conscience of the international community. The powerful nations who have a say at the global forums are currently playing the role of war broker instead of a mediator or peacemaker. Therefore, all efforts for resumption of peace and calls for a ceasefire diminished in the air without realizing their mission. Realistically, Israel and its backers must respect and adhere to the international humanitarian law that forbids attacks on civilians and civilian objects. The global community must stand up and raise its collective voice to realize an effective ceasefire so a sustainable peace could be ensured in the violence hit region. At the same time, the UNSC must initiate a campaign to resolve the long held Palestine dispute which has now become a stigma for the UN, the UN Security Council and the global community at large.

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A shift to ‘strategic interdependence’ could revive the EU’s troubled policy on North Africa

Hafed Al-Ghwel

For every theory of foreign policy, there is an equal and opposite alternative. It is this strange maxim that seeks to augur the bewildering aftermath of Europe's failed pursuit of some kind of strategic vision premised on European exceptionalism.

Swimming against an undercurrent, Europe had sought, and was on the cusp of finding, its place in the sun, somewhat unshackled from American hegemony and poised to take advantage of the emergence of China and heady ambitions for the Global South, fueled by Russian energy, of course.

Unfortunately, a rash of crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, an upsurge in migrant arrivals and the recent convulsions in the Middle East, have conspired to uproot that dream, forcing Brussels back into more familiar geopolitical trenches.

This retreat will likely bury the remnants of the idea of “strategic autonomy,” once the lodestar of European foreign policy in the post-War on Terror world, now to be replaced by a more outward-looking and proactive “strategic interdependence.”

It is within this evolving diplomatic framework that Europe must revisit its troubled policy on North Africa, which has long been plagued by a lack of political will, uneven capabilities, and diverging priorities among member states.

The EU has traditionally viewed North Africa through an array of prisms, including migration management, counterterrorism, and resource trade. Often, these have prioritized European self-interest over a more balanced approach, making it impossible to craft effective policies to build a path toward fostering better ties or, at the very least, helping to ameliorate some of the pressing challenges in the subregion.

Guided by its strategic interests, the EU has long recognized the importance of forging robust ties with North Africa, which is its gateway to the youthful, resource-rich and burgeoning African continent. This focus is nothing new, given the gradual development since the early 2000s of the European Neighbourhood Policy in an attempt to craft frameworks for political dialogue and reforms in North African countries, which form part of the bloc's Southern Neighbourhood.

In 2021, the EU launched a renewed agenda for the South Mediterranean, with a view to integrating these economies further with the EU edifice. Two years later, however, North Africa remains nowhere close to reaching a region-wide free-trade agreement, nor has the subject of EU-Maghreb integration moved beyond the realm of fiction.

Europe is stuck and it can only be hoped that a new, more assertive approach in trade, security, migration and energy will help materialize the contours of this new “strategic interdependence.”

Today, the subregion largely remains at arm's length, its instability perceived more as a distant threat than a direct challenge to Europe's geostrategic interests. The end result, therefore, is a patchwork of clashing priorities, questionable maneuvering, absenteeism, lop-sided bilaterals, unforced errors and, as demonstrated in Libya, complete disarray.

In short, Brussels consistently fails to engage meaningfully with the complex sociopolitical nuances of the subregion by grossly underestimating, and even dismissing, the importance of promoting equitable, mutually beneficial relationships.

Europe’s quest to reenergize its ties with North Africa will likely bear more fruit if it is rooted in honest, unvarnished discourse about the bloc’s vested interests in areas of potential collaboration. Such a transparent approach would position it more as an earnest participant in an increasingly multipolar world, without restricting or denying the agency of keen-eyed counterparts wary of any version of neocolonialism. Moreover, while “moral righteousness” might have shaped the contours of engagement in the world of yesteryear, that world has changed. Identifying common ground rather than demanding subservience to elusive, broad stances on so-called “universal values” will go a lot further, provided it is reinforced by tangible financial backing.

strengthening ties and fostering more effective cooperation.

If successful, such a forward-looking approach will naturally evolve into a conduit for a more nuanced understanding of each North African country's distinct aspirations and imperatives as part of overall policymaking.

By dispensing with the lazy, “one-size-fits-all” diplomacy du jour, the EU could finally achieve something that has eluded many of its accomplished statesmen and women:

Constructive engagement with the bloc's near-neighborhood on the basis of shared interests and expectations, thereby meeting North Africa halfway, while curtailing the one-sided approach that marred previous engagement policies and strategies for navigating the subregion's shared crises.

However, this does not mean that the pathway to strategic interdependence would be devoid of challenges. A crucial prerequisite will be the EU's political will to adopt a more “tactical” approach to help safeguard its interests in an ever-shifting geopolitical landscape in which the lines blur between friends, foes, aspirants and aggressors.

This necessitates navigating

sors.

Europe's quest to reenergize its ties with North Africa will likely bear more fruit if it is rooted in honest, unvarnished discourse about the bloc's vested interests in areas of potential collaboration. Such a transparent approach would position it more as an earnest participant in an increasingly multipolar world, without restricting or denying the agency of keen-eyed counterparts wary of any version of neocolonialism.

Moreover, while “moral righteousness” might have shaped the contours of engagement in the world of yesteryear, that world has changed. Identifying common ground rather than demanding subservience to elusive, broad stances on so-called “universal values” will go a lot further, provided it is reinforced by tangible financial backing.

Europe must therefore endeavor to nurture confidence in partnerships through fruitful discussions about an array of pertinent issues, including debt sustainability, climate change compensation, infrastructure development, health-care, education and migration, to name but a few.

It is vital for the bloc to approach these affairs with a lucid understanding of their inherently transactional dynamics, and engage squarely based on overlapping interests. Over time, acknowledging strategic interdependence and its nuanced approach to collaboration will demand acceptance of a new, fractured global order.

This by no means implies that Europe should isolate itself. On the contrary, constructive engagement with non-Western actors becomes critical, not only to address global challenges but also to further Europe's own agenda.

Commitment to these new rules of engagement will define whether or not the EU emerges as a formative player in shaping this new world order, and it begins with its own proverbial “backyard.”

The shift from autonomy to interdependence should not be a mere change in terminology, or window-dressing to disguise a reshuffle of past failures. It should be a fundamental reorientation of Europe's diplomatic posture, one that signifies a move away from a self-centered, inward-looking approach toward a more proactive, outward-looking stance that emphasizes coexistence, competition and key relationships.

Such a shift could prove instrumental in enhancing Europe's engagements with North Africa, a region in which geopolitical volatility directly affects Europe's security and energy dynamics, and unprecedented migrant surges are adding to the challenges.

For too long, the EU has been bound by a flawed approach defined by one-sided interests; if Brussels hopes to revitalize its strategy for and influence in North Africa, it must signal a willingness to learn from the past, adapt to present realities, and to participate meaningfully in the emerging world order.

The road to Israel’s recovery starts with removing Netanyahu from office

Yossi Mekeberg

It is a mystery to many of those who have witnessed the complete collapse of Israel's strategy toward Hamas that its architect, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, is still in office and being allowed to conduct the war against the Palestinian Islamist organization.

It is especially disturbing considering that, once again, he has proved to possess neither the judgment nor the leadership qualities that are required for the task. Every second that he remains the country's prime minister compromises Israel's interests, threatens regional stability, and risks prolonging the war, with enormous consequences for both sides.

In the months leading up to the horrific Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas, Netanyahu was preoccupied with putting together the most right-wing, provocative and incompetent coalition government in Israel's history. He did this with the sole aim of weakening the judiciary, in an attempt to ensure he could escape justice in his corruption trial.

Because of this he lost his focus, even his interest, in the issues that really matter for Israel, including its security. He surrounded himself in the political arena with inept individuals, as well as people unqualified to hold any senior civil service position, who were told to protect their master's personal interests above all else and vitriolically attack anyone who opposed him. All the while, he was completely misreading the intentions of Hamas.

During the months of regular weekly protests by Israelis against the government's assault on the system of checks and balances that is the core mechanism for protecting any liberal democracy, thousands upon thousands of reservists warned the government that they would not serve a prime minister and a government that attempted to lead the country down a path of authoritarianism. Many of them stopped reporting for duty, including critical air force, navy and cybersecurity personnel.

But instead of halting the judicial coup and entering into dialogue with the wider society to reach a consensus over judicial reforms, Netanyahu used what has become known as the “Poison Machine” to portray these long-serving reservists as traitors.

One of the more mindless ministers in his cabinet went so far as to argue: “There is a mutiny within the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) and any military deals with insurgents as insurgents should be dealt with.” Another equally venomous minister wrote that the reservists could “go to hell.”

Such diatribes were directed at the very same people who were immediately called up for service after the Hamas atrocity of Oct. 7, and who joined their units without hesitation. One can, and should, severely question the missions to which they have been assigned, considering the unacceptable and unbearable death toll among civilians in Gaza. But questioning their loyalty was an act of self-harm dispatched straight from the Israeli prime minister's office.

Anyone who tried to warn Netanyahu that his cynical and irresponsible approach was weakening the military's preparedness, and signaling that message to the country's enemies, was either disparaged or, as in the case of Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, fired by the prime minister for the “offense” — only to be reinstated the very next day as a result of public pressure.

But the damage had been done, in terms of weakened deterrence and social cohesion, and this did not go unnoticed by Hamas, nor by Iran and Hezbollah.

Netanyahu's political opportunism and corruption has caused great damage to Israeli society but his misjudgment of the state of relations with the Palestinians has been criminally costly. Instead of leading Israel toward a lasting peace with the Palestinians, based on a two-state solution, he gambled the country's security on helping to sow the seeds of division in the Palestinian political system.

Divide-and-rule, which is second nature to him in domestic politics, was applied also to his relations with the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and with Hamas in Gaza. The objective, as he put it, was to prevent a Palestinian state from ever being established.

In his own words: “Whoever opposes a Palestinian state must support delivery of funds to Gaza because maintaining separation between the PA in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza will prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.”

He was incapable of understanding that by “sowing the wind” through strengthening Hamas, he would “reap the whirlwind” of their distorted ideology. The idea of weakening the PA for the benefit of Hamas, as a strategy intended to ensure Israel's security, collapsed in the space of a few dreadful hours on that October morning, to the extent that Israel suffered the worst single day of horror in its history.

It was an atrocity that will take years to come to terms with and has embroiled the country in a war that, even if it ends in a military defeat of Hamas, will still tarnish Israel's reputation because of the huge human cost its army is inflicting on the people of Gaza.

This is the horrendous outcome of strengthening Hamas at the expense of the PA, and enabling the organization to arm itself, with the support of Iran, without ever changing its ideology.

Netanyahu, who has long cast himself as “Mr. Security,” the single-handed defender of Israel, not only failed spectacularly to defend his country but is one of the very few people in key positions in politics or the security forces who have so far refused to take any responsibility for the Hamas attacks, or apologize to the families of those who were murdered or taken hostage.

Typically, he instead set about apportioning blame to everyone but himself, including the intelligence community and other branches of the IDF, which is a reflection of his current clouded state of mind.

In the middle of a war, one that he described as Israel's “second war of independence,” the country cannot afford to be led by someone more concerned about being exonerated of blame over the failure to prevent the Hamas attacks, when an official inquest is eventually held into the failures that led to Oct. 7.

He probably stands less chance of being absolved of the responsibility for those failures than of being acquitted in his corruption trial. Even before the current war began it was clear that Israel's prime minister was not fit to govern while on trial and facing such extremely serious charges.

His focus was mainly on getting himself off this legal hook, in the pursuit of which goal he was ready to form an ultra-right-wing government that immediately began to inflame an already delicate situation regarding the holy places in Jerusalem, expand settlements, and allow settler violence to get completely out of control.

There is some logic in arguing that it is risky to change a prime minister during a war. But this argument cannot hold when the danger to Israel's present and future security and well-being emanates from the appalling way in which its prime minister is conducting the country's affairs.

As the EU ponders possible expansion, membership might grow to more than 30 states

Much of the attention among European authorities is currently focused squarely on next year's key European Parliament elections. However, a growing number of key EU officials, including European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, are looking further ahead to the Europe of the 2030s, by which time the bloc might have grown to more than 30 members.

According to some historians, the bloc's biggest achievement in more recent decades has been its various waves of enlargement. It is no coincidence, therefore, that von der Leyen embarked on an official visit to the West Balkans in recent days, where no fewer than six states aspire to EU membership: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

This shows how the 27-member bloc could easily grow to more than 30 members in the 2030s, given that it is not only West Balkan states that are under consideration for accession but others, too, including Ukraine, Moldova and Turkey.

The European integration process began in the 1950s with the six founding members of the bloc and, Brexit aside, it has steadily expanded ever since. This included the accession in 2004 of eight new members from formerly communist Central and Eastern Europe — the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia — plus the Mediterranean countries of Malta and Cyprus.

This huge enlargement resulted in many successes, including the powering of reforms in Central and Eastern Europe. For instance, that subregion's most powerful state, Poland, has increased per capita gross domestic product almost three-fold since joining the EU.

In the two decades since, however, significant "enlargement fatigue" set

in. This has meant the accession process for Turkiye and nations in the Western Balkans has been much more challenging than it was for Central and East European countries in the run-up to 2004.

Yet, the stalled enlargement process of recent years has been rejuvenated. One of the fundamental questions the bloc must address, therefore, is

Part of the reason these questions are so difficult to answer is that enlarging the bloc has key implications for day-to-day decision-making rules and procedures. In addition, the very nature of the EU will also change, significantly, given that the per capita GDPs of potential accession states in the West Balkans, for example, are below the EU average. This will have consequences for EU cohesion policy, which accounts for about one-third of the bloc's overall budget and is its key policy for helping poorer regions catch up with richer ones. Take Ukraine, for example, which, according to a recently leaked internal EU document, could get up to 61 billion (\$65.5 billion) in cohesion money over seven years, post-accession. Even if cohesion budgets grow, this would leave less money for other members.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, some existing EU members have expressed concerns about moving too fast, and too far, on enlargement; it is not only decision-making that might be challenging going forward, but also budgeting.

whether it is as serious now about another "big bang" expansion as it was 20 years ago. This week, the EU will publish an update report on the progress of aspirant states in meeting their accession targets, with a decision on formal negotiations with them expected as soon as next month.

These enlargement questions are huge and answers are needed from key existing member states if the process is to move forward. Otherwise, membership negotiations with Ukraine might begin but then move onto a long, slow road to potential accession, as has been the case with Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkiye.

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Andrew Hammond

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For these reasons, key member states such as Germany and France are already looking at a detailed road map for potential future options. The former, for instance, has suggested offering EU candidate countries some early benefits before full membership is granted,

faster with integration. Some others, but not all, among the wider EU 27 members would join this group, as is the case with the current eurozone currency union of 20 EU states.

The GAC suggests that such multi-speed options should include the possibility of new arrangements between the bloc and non-EU members that stop short of offering full membership. For instance, there might be associate memberships for countries that are part of the European single market, such as Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein in the European Free Trade Area.

Beyond that, additional possibilities might exist for other states to develop future relationships with the EU. These include the new European Political Community, of which French President Emmanuel Macron is a big advocate. He believes it could serve as a potential bridge to an enlarged EU for candidate nations such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine, Moldova and Turkiye, all of which are already members of the EPC.

If any of these nations do not ultimately become full members of the EU, the EPC could also provide a context for greater institutional proximity to the bloc. It has already, for instance, offered a new context for the UK to reach new, post-Brexit accords with some EU member states to increase cooperation, in what Prime Minister Rishi Sunak described as "a new phase of UK-EU co-operation."

Taking all of this together, therefore, the EU has much to think through about its approach to a potential new wave of enlargement. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has transformed the context for this process, however, and there will be huge challenges involved in any new, "big bang" expansion of membership in coming years.

Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states should not forget their interests in the far-off Arctic

Luke Coffey

As a signatory to the Svalbard Treaty, China has conducted scientific research on Svalbard since 2004, at its Arctic Yellow River Station in Ny-Alesund. The US, too, has carried out scientific research on Svalbard but is not currently doing so.

It is unsurprising that Russia is attempting to step up its involvement in the Arctic. Emotionally, historically, culturally and economically, the region holds a very special spot in the hearts and minds of Russians. This dates back to the Great Northern Expeditions conceived by Russian Emperor Peter the Great in the first half of the 18th century, during which vast sums of money were allocated for massive scientific research expeditions across eastern Siberia.

In the more recent past, Russian President Vladimir Putin has used the Arctic

and then traveled to Barentsburg, even though he was listed as being under sanctions and banned from entering Norway.

In 2016, Chechen special forces briefly landed at Longyearbyen airport on their way to military training exercises in the Arctic. The Norwegian government lodged an official protest about the stopover.

Last year, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused Norway of "build(ing) up its military presence in the Svalbard archipelago," after Norwegian coastguard ships were spotted off the coast.

The prospect of conducting scientific research in the Arctic is appealing for countries that are not located in the region. However, before teaming up with Russia it would be wise for such countries to consider other options. Any of the 46 countries — including far-away nations such as Saudi

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Russia's use of Svalbard to advance geopolitical aims is also no surprise. The military use of Svalbard is limited in peacetime due to restrictions placed on the region under the Svalbard Treaty, which demilitarized the islands. Even so, Russia and Norway regularly accuse each other of violating this demilitarization.

In 2015, just a year after Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin paid a surprise visit to Svalbard's airport in Longyearbyen

Arabia, South Africa and Afghanistan — that signed 1920 Svalbard Treaty have the right to conduct scientific research there.

As a recently published Arab News Research and Studies report on the Arctic stated: "It remains to be seen whether the Gulf states want to be a part of the Arctic debate. If they choose to, working though ... the 1920 Svalbard Treaty (offers) opportunities."

In this era of heightened tensions between Russia and the West, a place like Svalbard is one piece of a complex geopolitical puzzle. Russia's recent announcement about plans to open a new research center there is just the latest example of this.

As other nations devote resources to securing their national interests in the Arctic region, globally minded Gulf states might not want to be left behind.

Conflict sending shock waves around the world

All those I have spoken to in political and diplomatic circles recently believe that what we are seeing in Israel and Gaza following Oct. 7 is a complete game changer. There is no "patch up" or going back to some form of status quo after the ferocity and nature of the attacks by Hamas are witnessing.

However, the shock waves of the events may already be deeper and further reaching than in the region itself. The first efforts to contain the impact were quite rightly directed at the risk of the confrontation spreading to neighboring states. Diplomatic time was immediately put in seeking to reduce the chance of escalation in Lebanon and with Iran. There must be some chance of success.

The hopes for a Middle East looking forward rather than back, building on recent regional diplomatic initiatives, developing the economies envisaged in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, and working collectively

with the rest of the world toward energy diversification on the back of COP28 are catastrophically ruined by a new outbreak of war. But no matter how common sense this might be, everyone also knows that the rise in the number of civilian casualties in Gaza might outweigh such considerations. It is the other risks that should worry us just as much.

Western and Arab states have been bitterly and angrily divided, at a time when the cooperation needed to realize the future of the region should be at its height. There can be no disguising the support of Arab states and their populations for the people of Gaza, and for a narrative that all the events being witnessed have their origin in the oppression of Palestinians, and the failure of the West to recognize and respond to the more recent Israeli military incursions on the West Bank, the rise of settler violence, or the threat to Al-Aqsa from the more extreme Israeli protagonists.

Alistair Burt

But many Western states are shocked that the brutality of the Oct. 7 attacks, and the ideology from which they sprang of hatred for Jews, is not more widely condemned. This sharp division is of comfort only to those who want to see that new opportunity for the Middle East destroyed, so that the old can hold back the new. The longer this division goes on, the worse it will be. Repair should be starting now.

Common belief in the truth of events, the fundamental of our understanding of history and the world, is another casualty. The world is different to 1967, 1971 or 2006. The ability to see the most shocking images of war has changed out of all recognition, as has the skill in dissemination of false images and information. Both are combining with the febrile context of Israel and Palestine to make a binary interpretation of events the most common one, infecting public and private opinion globally.

Commentators are reporting the difficulty in expressing the view that the nature of the attacks on civilians by Hamas on Oct. 7 were barbaric and unjustifiable, while at the same time being able to say that there is a legitimate Palestinian cause against occupation of Palestinian territories and for political progress outlined for decades. It is either the one or the other — as the UN secretary-general found out. Truth is no longer a universal commodity, but only selective and partisan. This will not end well.

Two further consequences are worth noting. One is the evidence of a rise of antisemitism in European societies. In Britain, the Jewish community is horrified by the ripping down of posters of kidnapped children; the vehemence of pro-Palestinian demonstrations; and the casual expression of threats to their lives uttered either knowingly or ignorantly by some who mix with others marching

for a peaceful, just resolution of the crisis. And, second, Western politics are being affected.

In the UK, the Labour opposition, seemingly on a glide path to power, has been rocked by a surge of anger over Israeli attacks in Gaza and a demand for a ceasefire from many members, being resisted by a leadership scarred by recent controversies over antisemitism. This is in a country with a growing Muslim population, whose presence in key seats at a close election might be crucial. And in the US, Muslim support for President Joe Biden in key swing states is falling as anger against US policy rises. Elections loom in 2024 for both countries.

There are many reasons why the conflict in Gaza should come to an end now so that politics can begin again, as they inevitably will as the world calculates yet again what has been gained or lost by the violence. Repairing shattered lives in Israel and Palestine will not be the only thing that requires attention.

Nadim Shehadi

Lebanon is revisiting the ghost of the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war

Like the people of Gaza, Lebanon feels powerless and hostage to an armed militia that could drag it into a destructive war it does not want and for objectives that go beyond its borders.

Watching the horror of the Israeli attack on Gaza, many Lebanese are reliving the nightmare of the destruction of their own country in the Israel-Hezbollah war of July-August 2006. This followed another war in Gaza after Hamas militants abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in a cross-border raid.

Hamas and Hezbollah appear to have the same playbook. On July 12, 2006, in another cross-border raid, Hezbollah fighters killed eight Israeli soldiers and abducted two, which triggered the second Lebanon war.

Hezbollah and Hamas

originated in two different, even opposing, Islamist militant schools. Hamas branched out from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Hezbollah is part of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's export of the Iranian revolution. Members of both groups had the opportunity to mingle in 1992 when Israel deported about 400 senior Hamas figures to a camp near the village of Marj Al-Zuhur in south Lebanon.

For about a year they met and bonded before Israel took Hamas leaders back. Hamas's ally, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, is a creation of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards, who are also behind the creation of Hezbollah. Relations were consolidated in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, where both groups were allied with Syria against the main-

stream Palestinian organizations Fatah and the PLO.

The main rift is about the Oslo peace deal, which was negotiated by the PLO and opposed by Hamas and by Hezbollah both part of the so-called "axis of resistance" led by Iran which rejects any peace with Israel. The parallel between 2006 and 2023 is that in both cases wars were started to reestablish the dominance of the doctrine of armed resistance over that of peaceful negotiations.

The 2006 Gaza war disrupted the signing of a document of national reconciliation by Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh. This was known as the "prisoners' document" negotiated by prominent political prisoners in Israeli jails, under which Hamas and the PLO would both join efforts for the creation of a Palestinian state and peace with Israel.

The 2006 Lebanon war also happened when Hezbollah was in a corner and needed to reestablish its resistance credentials. It faced the argument that both Syria and Israel had withdrawn from Lebanon, which was back under international protection. Hezbollah was under pressure to give up its arms and join the political process. Igniting a war with Israel was its answer.

In Hamas's terms, the attack on southern Israel last month succeeded beyond expectations. Again, it was a surprise cross-border raid with the capture of hostages, but on a much larger scale than before. It also threw a spanner into the works of possible Saudi-Israeli rapprochement and the Abraham accords, and brought the

whole region to the brink of war.

It was a shock to the Israeli system and triggered a brutal reaction in which the victims are mainly innocent civilians in Gaza. If the intention was to provoke a war and then international rage at the predictable Israeli response, then Israel has fallen into that trap again with every massacre it commits.

Israel's double defeat in both cases is that it sets itself the impossible objective of eradicating an enemy that not only cannot be militarily defeated, but also emerges stronger by the very fact of its survival.

Hamas's victory is not over Israel, but over its Palestinian rivals the PLO and Fatah. The result is the total marginalization of the Palestinian Authority under

Mahmoud Abbas. Hamas has now established itself as the main interlocutor. Hezbollah's victory is against its political opponents, who are now isolated from their allies in the West and the Gulf.

In Lebanon, the government and state institutions are irrelevant; people are hanging on Hassan Nasrallah's words and trying to interpret his silence, while the US sends aircraft carriers to the region in anticipation of his decisions.

Such armed guerrilla movements be defeated only politically. They follow the textbook model created by revolutionaries such as Mao Zedong and Che Guevara, which prescribes three simple steps: infiltrate the population, deal a heavy blow to the enemy whose retaliation causes massive civilian

casualties, and the outrage caused by the slaughter rallies people around the guerrillas and dents the reputation of the enemy.

As a result of these wars, both Hamas and Hezbollah have destroyed state institutions and built their own parallel ones. Both have used the same violent tactics of assassinations, paralysis and maintaining a state of war while creating conditions of siege and isolation in which they also control resources.

There is no good outcome for Lebanon: war will be destructive at a time when the country's medical infrastructure is weak and its economy and banking system have collapsed. The country will be turned into another Gaza with little prospect of recovery.

A state of no war is not much better. If Israel backs off, Hezbollah will claim

Canton Fair: Pakistan gets golden chance promoting trade

BEIJING (INP): Pakistan gets golden chance promoting its trade in Canton Fair, said Safdar Fayyaz, Chief Manager Exports, Piano Exports FZCO, Pakistan.

"Business is good this time. I'm here to find out more possibility of doing business with China as well as the whole world," he said while talking with China Economic Net.

He was in Guangzhou, China to attend the 134th China Import and Export Fair.

The China Import and Export Fair - known as Canton Fair - kicked off on October 15 and entered its

third and final phase on October 31.

The event, which ended on November 4, has attracted exhibitors and buyers from across the globe.

It is Fayyaz's 2nd time attending the fair. This year he had dazzling stationery products with price & quality combination with him. He told CEN that they have some unique colored pencils from Pakistan that might interest international buyers.

According to the organizer, during the first two phases, a total of 157,200 overseas buyers attended the fair, representing an

increase of 53.6 percent compared with the same period of last fair.

Among them, more than 100,000 buyers were from Belt and Road countries and regions, accounting for 64 percent of the total, witnessing an increase of 69.9 percent year-on-year.

The number of buyers from Europe and the United States saw an increase of 54.9 percent compared with the 133rd event.

On top of increasing buyer traffic, the event attracted more exhibitors, too. Compared with the previous edition, the exhibition area for the 134th

fair is expanded by 50,000 square meters and the number of exhibition booths also increased.

More than 28,000 exhibitors participated in the event, with 650 enterprises coming from 43 foreign countries and regions. Famous Pakistani textile brands including Gohar Textile Mills Pvt Ltd. and M.K. Sons (Pvt.) Ltd., and so on are here to fortify ties with business partners and tap into the Chinese market.

Launched in 1957 and held twice yearly, the fair is considered a major gauge of China's foreign trade.



MULTAN: A vendor displaying decorative items to attract customers at roadside setup.

Banks to remain closed on Iqbal Day

KARACHI (INP): The State Bank of Pakistan has officially declared a bank holiday on November 9, 2023, to commemorate Allama Iqbal Day.

This decision has been taken in accordance with the earlier announcement made by the Government of Pakistan.

In a circular released by the State Bank of Pakistan, it was stated, "The State Bank of Pakistan will be closed on Thursday, November 9, 2023, in observance of the public holiday marking Allama Iqbal Day, as per the Government's directive."

As a result of this declaration, all commercial banks in Pakistan will also remain closed on November 9 (Thursday) and resume their operations on November 10 (Friday).

The Federal Government had previously issued a notification, declaring a public holiday across the country on November 9, in honor of Iqbal Day.

This decision has now been extended to include the closure of banks on the same day.

Gold prices inch downward

ISLAMABAD (INP): The price of 24-karat gold in Pakistan reached Rs214,000 per tola, while 10 grams of 24-karat gold were priced at Rs183,471.

Moreover, the rate of 22-karat gold in Pakistan reached Rs196,167 per tola, while 10 grams of 22-karat gold were stood at Rs168,182.

It's important to note that gold rates in Pakistan can fluctuate multiple times during the day in response to global market trends.

These rates have been obtained from reliable sources, primarily based in Karachi and Multan.

In the international market, the bullion closed at \$1,992.

For the most accurate and up-to-date gold rates in your city, we recommend consulting your local gold dealers and jewellers.

As the gold market closely follows global developments, it's crucial for those monitoring gold rates in Pakistan to stay vigilant and informed about these fluctuations.

Crackdown against gas theft: 112 connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 112 connections while 197 under billing cases processed, Rs 3.52 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 11 connections on illegal use of gas and another 12 on use of compressor.

In Bahawalpur the company disconnected 4 connections on the use of compressor and three under billing cases have been processed.

In Multan the company disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas while another one on the use of compressor, 58 under billing cases have been

processed. The team imposed fine of Rs 0.12 million against gas pilferers.

In Peshawar and Karak, the company disconnected 38 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 0.88 million against gas theft.

In Rawalpindi the regional team disconnected 15 gas connections on illegal use and 21 under billing cases processed and Rs 1.20 fine imposed against gas theft.

In Mardan 30 under billing cases have been processed while 0.05 million amount booked against under billing cases. The regional team in Islamabad disconnected 3 connections on illegal use of gas.

The team in Gujranwala 3 under billing cases have been processed and 2 con-

nections were disconnected on illegal use of gas while another 2 on the use of compressor. The team also imposed fine of Rs 0.22 million against gas pilferers.

In Sahiwal, four connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas and 1 on compressor use and Rs 0.03 million have been booked against gas theft.

In Faisalabad 7 under billing cases processed and 1 connection was disconnected on illegal use of gas.

In Sheikhpura disconnected 27 connections on illegal use of gas while 43 under billing cases processed. The team booked amount of Rs 0.93 as against gas theft and under billing cases.

The regional team in Sargodha 32 under billing cases have been processed while Rs 0.09 fine imposed against under billing cases.

Chairman stress structural reforms for sustainable economic growth

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has said the real answer to country's problems lies in the structural reforms, as there are a number of inefficiencies in tax collection, which must be removed.

In a statement, the PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol observed that the tax compliance should be improved and tax base should be enhanced, which cannot be achieved with a single policy change, but through a systemic approach. He said that businesses are already in a complicated state-of-affairs, while anti-business actions against business community will not only add to the miseries of the business community but also promote trust deficit between the government and the business community.

He said that in the past instead of focusing on controlling under-invoicing, curbing smuggling and expanding the tax net, the FBR seems to be inclined to pressurize registered taxpayers, who are already suffering due to a high rate

of sales tax, income tax, and custom duties by creating fictitious cases for recovery of outstanding dues to meet revenue target.

The PIAF Chairman also called for building a structure in the country, which is in accordance with the requirements of time, as it is easy to weaken institutions but it takes a long time to rebuild them. Whatever appointments government makes to the heads of the institutions should be based on transparency and merit, he said.

Faheem Saigol said that the economy has just come out of the dark shadows but it is still facing the after-shocks and the businessmen are doing their best to makeup the losses incurred during that period, the PIAF Chairman said.

He said that only direct taxes can improve tax collection, as the existing tax system is heavily skewed toward indirect taxation.

PIAF chairman said the registered businesses are required to comply with various departments involving a lot of financial and time resources, whereas unregistered businesses are free from all such hass-

les, he maintained. He also emphasized that concentrating on import substitution is imperative to narrow import bills and certain imported products such as oil are of a fixed nature, therefore, the government needs to enhance focus on import substitution industries, as chemicals, agriculture and steel are potential industries.

He said that undertaking structural reforms require political will. He said that enacting structural reforms, such as improvements in tax collection system, bureaucracy and ease of doing business requires major political will and strict implementation of policies, he added.

He stressed the need for reforms, with a keen focus on value-addition for a sustainable economic growth, recommending the government to raise exports to double digit of the GDP, as Pakistan's exports have bounced back after witnessing decline.

He said that consistent borrowing by developing economies to shore up its reserves in desperate times is only to lead towards a debt trap. He said that bor-

rowing from friendly countries should only be seen as a short-term solution to prevent reserves depletion and consequent further depreciation of the currency.

PIAF chairman stressed that focus should be on promoting exports and restricting imports alongside making domestic industry more competitive and subsequently expand its export market.

He said that exports of goods and services are an injection into the circular flow of income leading to a rise in aggregate demand and an expansion of output, helping raise per capita incomes and reduce extreme poverty especially in developing economies like Pakistan.

He observed that the donor agencies should be considered as a stop-gap arrangement, which may have forced excessive devaluation, steep monetary tightening, cut in development and defence expenditures. Loans simply serve to bridge the gap until the effects of the reforms take effects. The problem occurs if the country takes loans but fails to reform, he added.

Reliance on indirect taxes to be reduced for national development

LAHORE (INP): The Presidential candidate of Federal of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikrum Sheikh has said that reliance on indirect taxes should be reduced to push the country towards rapid development.

Dependence on direct taxes is necessary for national development, but progress towards this is very slow, he said in a statement issued on Sunday.

SBP briefed

LAHORE (APP): TDAP has arranged a meeting between SBP and PCMEA to discuss the difficulties faced by the exporters of handmade carpets and their concerns. Chairman Naeem Khokhar and Vice Chairman Zafar Idris Soleja represented PCMEA, while its Senior Vice Chairman Usman Ashraf, Senior Central Leader Abdul Latif Malik, CTI Chairperson Ijazur Rehman and others attended the meeting through video link.

Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Haleem Civil Judge V/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar, Case No. 187/1. Institution. 2/9/2023. Date of hearing. 22/11/2023. Shamshad VS Yousaf Shah. Notice to No 1. Yousaf Shah. 2. Shahsaad Shah. 3. Hanef Shah. 4. Hayat Shah. 5. Javed Shah sons of Mohamad Ayub Shah residents of Dang Kohay Shangrha thesel Chaghorzai Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 22/11/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court,

Atif Ikrum Sheikh, who has also served as VP FPCCI, Chairman PVMA, and President ICCI, said in a statement issued here today that reforms should be introduced in the tax administration to improve its workings. Reliance on indirect taxes and withholding taxes are damaging; therefore, basic structural changes are needed for documenting the economy to increase revenue, he said.

The business leader stressed that the policy measures would expand the tax base, eliminate tax gaps, and enhance the efficiency of the tax system.

Many hurdles in tax collection can be overcome by employing technology, as is being practised in other countries where tax collection is satisfactory.

The use of information technology is necessary to maximize tax compliance, enforcement, tax base broadening, facilitation, and transparency, he said.

He noted that indirect taxes disproportionately impact vulnerable segments of the population. They take away a larger proportion of income from lower-income individuals compared to those with higher incomes.

Direct taxes contributed 37.2 percent of total FBR tax collection, while indirect tax contribution was 62.8 percent, and within total FBR collection, sales tax remained the top revenue-generating source with a 41.2 percent share, customs duty 16.4 percent, and FED 5.2 percent, respectively.

Atif Ikrum Sheikh said that a substantial portion of the population is engaged in the informal economy, where incomes are irregular and often insufficient.

Indirect taxes, being consumption-based, affect these individuals more because their entire income is spent on necessities, and they may not have the financial buffer to absorb

the impact of increased prices.

Indirect taxes can limit the capacity of the poor to save and invest in income-generating opportunities. With a significant portion of their income going towards indirect taxes and basic expenses, they have less room to save and invest in education, skills development, or small businesses.

The FBR should prioritize bringing untaxed sectors within the purview of taxation rather than further burdening the poorer segments that are already subject to indirect taxation.

He demanded that the government expand the tax base by bringing more people into the tax net and move towards the policy of progressive taxation for higher-income groups.

Our taxation structure favours the rich and leaves the poor behind, while reforms can ensure the economic safety of the poor class.

Foreign remittances flow crucial to curb CAD: BMP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has said that foreign remittances flows are crucial which can support the country's account balance amidst low volumes of foreign direct investment (FDI) and nominal growth of exports. He said that overseas Pakistanis living in Gulf should further be motivated to maintain an upward momentum in remittances, as they contributed more than 60 percent of the total inflows during last couple of months.

FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar 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.

The Businessmen Panel Chairman said that Pakistan has been witnessing a significant decline in workers' remittances on a year-on-year basis, however it surged by 5.34% on a month-on-month basis, reaching a total of \$2.21 billion, owing to several positive factors, including improved transparency and the implementation of stringent measures against dollar smuggling. These initiatives have helped create a more secure and regulated environment for remittance transactions.

He said that remittances for Sept came in at \$2.21 billion, according to data shared by the State Bank of Pakistan. This figure, while an improvement from last month's \$2.09 billion, was

significantly lower than market expectations of \$2.4-2.5 billion. On a month-on-month basis, remittances rose by 5.3%. However, they declined by 11.24% compared to last year, when remittances stood at \$2.49 billion.

In a statement issued here, the BMP Chairman asked the government to announce attractive package for overseas Pakistanis to enhance the volume of foreign inflows because this is the only hope which can support the country's account balance, as the remittances have started declining, showing a huge fall during last month.

If government supports overseas Pakistanis and provides them incentives, they can play a vital role in boosting Pakistan's economy through their remittances and investments for high economic growth. If the falling trend persists in the remaining months of

this fiscal year, it could pose serious problems for the economic managers as the govt heavily relies on remittances, which are much higher than the country's total export proceeds.

The BMP Chairman observed that the development comes at a crucial time for Pakistan, which has seen its foreign exchange reserves deplete due to external debt servicing and lower inflow of dollars.

Mian Anjum Nisar appreciated the SBP, which under its home remittances promotion measures, allowed Exchange Companies to maintain separate foreign currency accounts for each Money Transfer Operator.

The State Bank of Pakistan and the Arab Monetary Fund has signed a memorandum of understanding to facilitate remittances from Arab countries with official channels.

The government and the SBP have been trying to stop remittances through illegal channels, which not only destabilizes the exchange rate but also reduces inflows. He believes that the MoU with the AMF would help Pakistan bring most of the inflows through the banking channels.

Arab countries contribute about 55 per cent of the total remittances. In FY23, Pakistan received \$27.3 billion in remittances compared to \$31.2bn in FY22, showing a shortfall of \$4.2bn.

This shortfall was a cause for concern as the country faced a default-like situation at the beginning of the current fiscal year FY24. It is believed that this \$4.2bn was either sold in Dubai at much higher rates or sent home through illegal channels.

In the first week of September, the government

initiated a crackdown against illegal currency businesses and dollar smuggling, which produced positive results, and the rupee started appreciating.

However, the latest move to sign an MoU with the AMF is expected to be helpful for the country in receiving maximum remittances through official channels.

Linking Raast with Buna will facilitate Pakistanis to remit money in real time.

The MoU is signed to establish a framework of cooperation between Buna, the cross-border payment system operated by Arab Regional Payments Clearing and Settlement Organization "ARPCSO", owned by AMF, and Raast, Pakistan's Instant Payment System.

The SBP said the integration of Raast with Buna aims to facilitate cross-border remittances between the Arab region and

Pakistan through formal channels. This initiative will benefit individuals as well as businesses not only through instant, safe and cost-effective cross-border payments, but also by strengthening economic, financial, and investment ties between the Arab countries and Pakistan.

This resonates with the shared vision of innovating cross-border payment solutions to offer safe and efficient cross-border instant payment access for individuals and corporates, he said.

Mian Anjum said this MoU is a significant strategic achievement that opens the door to a closer connection between Pakistan and the Arab region. He said the integration of the two payment systems will increase remittances to Pakistan through formal channels, with enhanced speed, safety, and savings in these cross-border transactions.



In brief

Babar, Naseem win matches

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani cueists Babar Masih and Muhammad Naseem Akhtar earned victories in the IBSF Men's World Snooker Championship 2023 at Doha, Qatar. Babar downed Husain Allawati of Oman by 4-1 (39-52, 69-30, 75-05, 71-58, 71-16), while Naseem beat Esa Oikarinen of Finland by 4-2 (54-19, 07-85, 81-0(54), 46-64, 98-09, 98-0). Babar would face Andrei Orzan of Romania, and Naseem would be up against Mohammed Al-Binali of Qatar on Monday. Ahsan Ramzan (Pak) would face Alexander Widau of Germany. The last round and semifinals would be played on November 9, with the final on November 10.

School Olympics games

MULTAN (APP): School Olympics games season three organized by School Education department, South Punjab would start tomorrow November 6 from Bahawalpur. Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) of South Punjab, Saqib Zafar, will inaugurate the games. The opening ceremony will be held at Four Wall Stadium Bahawalpur in which hundreds of students from public and private schools will participate. Over 2100 athletes were participating in the School Olympics games to win medals. Provincial level teams from Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab were also participating in the games.

Asian Taekwondo C'ship closing ceremony held

ISLAMABAD (APP): The closing ceremony of the 5th Asian Open International Taekwondo Championship organized by Pakistan Taekwondo Federation was held here at the Liaquat Gymnasium of the Pakistan Sports Board. Foreign teams of Afghanistan, Egypt, Germany, Great Britain, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Nepal, USA, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Türkiye, Croatia, Uzbekistan, WTH (UZ Refugee) including 20 Teams from Pakistan participated in the event along with 530 officials. It is worth mentioning here that Twenty One International and Nine Pakistani International Referees duly qualified from World Taekwondo Federation conducted the extravaganza. World Taekwondo has nominated Kook Hyun Jung as Technical Delegate, Sang Ho Jeon as Chairman Referee and Tawfiq Nwaser form Bahrain, Stephen Fernandez from Egypt and Miss Najia Rasool from Pakistan as CSB Members and Amar Masood acted as IVROVR to conduct the said event. Prof Kyu Seok Lee, President ATU, Director General Pakistan Sports board, Pakistan Taekwondo Federation representatives and other renowned sports High Officials attended the closing ceremony. On the second day of the Kyorugi event during the ongoing Championship, as many as six different weight category competitions were held. In the men's -54 kg final, Pakistan's Shahzaib Khan showed a brilliant performance against Saudi Arabia's Riad Hamdi to win the Gold medal. While Pakistan's Tanzeel Hasnat won the bronze, compatriot Abubakar Siddique got the 4th bronze.



KOLKATA: Virat Kohli continued his excellent form.

PCB Management Committee extended by three months

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The caretaker federal cabinet has given a three-month extension to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Management Committee Chairman, led by Zaka Ashraf.

According to the notification issued by the Inter-Provincial Coordination Ministry after the approval from the cabinet, the powers of the PCB Management Committee have been restricted.

The notification states that the PCB Management Committee cannot make any high-level appointments, the Management Committee will conduct the election of the Board of Governors and the Chairman.

The Management Committee will deal with day-to-day affairs and cannot make policy decisions.

The notification also states that the PCB Management Committee will not get an extension beyond three months.

Ashraf-led PCB Management Committee was formed in July 2023 for a four-month period, and the caretaker PM, using his prerogative as patron of the PCB, has given a three-month extension, said the PCB.

On Thursday, former Pakistani cricketer Shahid Afridi, who previously captained the national team, shared his insights and recommendations aimed at elevating the state of the game in the country.

During their meeting, Afridi, who previously captained the national team, shared his insights and recommendations aimed at elevating the state of the game in the country.

Shahid Afridi expressed his interest in grooming young cricketers into future stars and positively shaping them into well-rounded representatives of Pakistan cricket.

He also admired and appreciated Mr Zaka Ashraf's efforts and contributions to Pakistan cricket.

Notably, PM Kakar encouraged Afridi to actively contribute to the enhancement of cricket, particularly focusing on matters pertaining to its improvement.

Pakistan sanctioned for slow over-rate against New Zealand

BENGALURU (Agencies): Pakistan's miraculous victory over New Zealand in the ICC World Cup 2023 has been soured after the team was sanctioned for maintaining a slow over-rate during the match.

On-field umpires Paul Wilson and Richard Kettleborough, third umpire Richard Illingworth and fourth umpire Joel Wilson levelled the charge.

"Richie Richardson of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees imposed the sanction after Babar Azam's side was ruled to be two overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration," said a statement issued by the cricketing body.

Under Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to minimum over-rate offences, players are fined five percent of their match fee for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time.

Babar pleaded guilty to the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, so there was no need for a formal hearing. This wasn't the first time Pakistan was sanctioned for slow over-rate in the ongoing ICC World Cup 2023.

The Asian side was fined 20 per cent of their match fee for maintaining a slow over-rate against South Africa, according to ICC.

As far as the match is concerned, Pakistan opener Fakhar Zaman hit an explosive 126 off 81 balls while chasing New Zealand's huge 402-run target, leading Pakistan to a crucial DLS win.

Set to chase 402, Pakistan edged New Zealand by 21 runs as per the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method, keeping their semi-final hopes alive.

The green shirts had a contrasting start to their pursuit as their in-form opener Abdullah Shafique (4) perished cheaply with just six runs on the board in two overs. Despite the early blow, Fakhar Zaman launched an onslaught on the Blackcaps' bowlers and brought up his 11th ODI century in just 61 deliveries.

The win was Pakistan's fourth of their campaign and leaves them in contention to finish in the top four places on the standings with a victory over England in their final match of the group stage on Saturday.

Kohli equals Tendulkar record as India thrash SA

KOLKATA (Agencies): Virat Kohli equalled the record of fellow India great Sachin Tendulkar after hitting his 49th one-day international century in a dominant 243-run win for the hosts against South Africa in the World Cup in Kolkata.

Kohli, on his 35th birthday, hit 101 not out from 121 balls, sending the crowd at Eden Gardens into a frenzy. His superb knock helped India post 326-5 from their 50 overs.

South Africa were then skittled out for just 89 after 27.1 overs. It means India are assured of top spot after winning all eight of their group-stage matches.

South Africa, who have already secured a semi-final place, are second on 12 points, two points ahead of Australia in third.

Kohli put on 134 for the third wicket to anchor the India innings with Shreyas Iyer, who came to the crease in the 11th over with the score 92-2 following a typically explosive start by Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill.

Shreyas was eventually dismissed by Lungi Ngidi for 77 from 87 deliveries, before an energetic 22 from 14 balls from Suryakumar Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja's unbeaten 29 from 15 saw the innings end with a flourish.

India's powerful seam attack was backed up by their spinners to breeze through the South Africa batting line-up, with Jadeja the pick of the bowlers taking 5-33. With India and South Africa leading the way at the top, this match was a potential dress rehearsal for the World Cup final in Ahmedabad later this month.

The convincing nature of this win will do little to alter India's status as heavy favourites to lift the trophy for a third time.

Kohli draws level with the 'Little Master'
Eden Gardens became a

sea of light as the crowd lit up their mobile phones in anticipation when Jadeja nudged a single off Kagiso Rabada to bring Kohli on strike on 99 in the 49th over.

Kohli pushed the next ball to cover for a single to spark huge celebrations in the stands, with Kohli calmly raising his bat before taking off his helmet and looking to the sky.

"Every opportunity to play for India is a big one and to do this on my birthday in front of a huge crowd is the stuff of dreams. It is something you dream about as a child," said Kohli, whose innings included 10 fours. "I am just happy to help the team as much as possible."

Writing on X, formerly Twitter, Tendulkar said: "Well played Virat. It took me 365 days to go from 49 to 50 earlier this year. I hope you go from 49 to 50 and break my record in the next few days. Congratulations!"

Legendary batter Tendulkar took 451 innings and 462 ODIs to hit his 49th century, while it has taken Kohli 277 innings and 289 ODIs. He is also now the second-highest run-scorer at the tournament with 543 and may also have one eye on breaking Tendulkar's record for most runs at a single World Cup, which stands at 673.

Kohli made his ODI debut against Sri Lanka in 2008, and played alongside Tendulkar in the early stages of his career, including a World Cup victory against the same opponents in 2011. He was in India's team when Tendulkar made the last of his 49 ODI centuries against Bangladesh in Mirpur at the 2012 Asia Cup.

Kohli already had 10 ODI hundreds to his name at that point and the 'Little Master' must have had more than an inkling of the most likely candidate to dethrone him.

He averages 58.48 in ODI cricket - the best of any player

to have played 50 matches or more. Kohli also has an astonishing record when chasing targets in ODIs, averaging 65.24 in chases, while 27 of Kohli's 49 hundreds have come while batting second.

Tendulkar still holds the record for the most ODI career runs, with 18,426, and has the most Test centuries, with 51. Kohli is joint 16th on the list of Test centuries, with 29. With fewer ODIs expected to be played in the future, amid the popularity of T20 cricket, he could reach 50 ODI centuries knowing the record may never be broken again.

South Africa falter on the chase again

South Africa's fate was perhaps decided when they were asked to chase after losing the toss. Temba Bavuma's side have scored 428, 311, 399, 382 and 357 when batting first at this World Cup, winning by more than 100 runs each time.

On the two occasions they have chased, the Proteas lost to the Netherlands and scraped a one-wicket victory against Pakistan. Their innings got off to a terrible start when tournament top-scorer Quinton de Kock chopped Mohammed Siraj onto his own stumps after scoring just six.

Their conservative approach in the powerplay, with the aim of preserving wickets before pushing on later in the innings, also backfired when Bavuma and Aiden Markram fell cheaply to reduce the Proteas to 35-3 after 10 overs.

They never really recovered as wickets then fell with alarming regularity to an India attack that has bowled out Sri Lanka and England for 55 and 129 respectively in their last two matches. Only four players reached double figures, with bowling all-rounder Marco Jansen top scorer with just 14.

Bangladesh World Cup flop 'all between the ears'



NEW DELHI (AFP): Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha said his players have retreated into "a shell" at the World Cup, insisting their problems are "between the ears."

The Tigers have just one win in seven games and are already out of contention for a semifinal place despite having two group games left to play.

"We didn't play our best cricket but the thing is nothing has changed from the first game to now. Only change is what's going on between our ears. Our skills haven't gone anywhere," said Hathurusingha.

Bangladesh face Sri Lanka in pollution-choked New Delhi on Monday

before rounding off their campaign against five-time champions Australia in Pune on Saturday.

They began the World Cup with a victory over Afghanistan but they were only chasing 156 to win.

Since then, they have slipped to heavy losses to England, New Zealand, India, South Africa and Pakistan. They also suffered probably their lowest point in losing to the Netherlands, bowled out for just 142 in pursuit of a modest 230-run target.

In a tournament where huge totals have become standard, Bangladesh's best was 256 against India.

Furthermore, they have only one batsman and one

bowler in the top 25 of run-makers and wicket-takers.

Mahmudullah, who will be 38 in February and highly unlikely to feature at the 2027 World Cup, has 274 runs with an impressive average of more than 68.

Off-spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz is Bangladesh's leading bowler albeit with just nine wickets.

"Their skill hasn't gone anywhere, whatever is going through our heads is the only thing that is disturbing us," added Hathurusingha. "We haven't shown what we are capable of. For some reason we have gone into a shell, especially in batting. That is what we need to fix and come and play fearless cricket."

Arsenal back Arteta over VAR 'disgrace' rant



NEWCASTLE (AFP): Arsenal threw their backing behind manager Mikel Arteta on Sunday after he branded the decision to award Newcastle's winning goal in a 1-0 defeat for the Gunners "a disgrace".

The Spaniard was furious after Anthony Gordon's strike survived three VAR checks to inflict Arsenal's first Premier League defeat of the season on Saturday.

Gabriel Magalhaes claimed he was fouled by Brazilian international teammate Joelinton before the ball broke for Gordon to smash into an empty net.

A check for offside and whether the ball had gone out of play earlier in the move also proved inconclusive. Arteta labelled the decision an "embarrassment" to a league that brands itself as the best in the world.

"The result should not

be what it is. Embarrassing what happened, how this goal stands, in the Premier League, this league we say is the best in the world," Arteta said.

"I've been 20 years in this country and now I feel ashamed. It's a disgrace and there's too much at stake here." The Arsenal boss is likely to face at least a fine and possibly a touchline ban for his comments.

But the club did not back down as they called for officiating to match the standard of players and coaches in the Premier League. "Arsenal Football Club wholeheartedly supports Mikel Arteta's post-match comments after yet more unacceptable refereeing and VAR errors on Saturday evening," read a club statement.

"The Premier League is the best league in the world with the best players,

coaches and supporters, all of whom deserve better."

Last season referee chiefs were forced to apologise to Arsenal after Brentford's equaliser in a 1-1 draw was wrongly awarded for VAR not checking for offside.

Liverpool said the "sporting integrity" of their 2-1 defeat at Tottenham in September had been undermined after they had a goal wrongly ruled out for offside after VAR officials incorrectly believed the goal had been given.

Jürgen Klopp's calls for the game to be replayed fell on deaf ears.

And Arsenal said the time had come for action rather than apologies.

"PGMOL (Professional Game Match Officials Limited) urgently needs to address the standard of officiating and focus on action which moves us all on from retrospective analysis, attempted explanations and apologies," added the club statement.

"We support the ongoing efforts of chief refereeing officer Howard Webb and would welcome working together to achieve the world-class officiating standards our league demands."

Defeat left Arsenal three points behind Manchester City at the top of the Premier League.

Bannu wins Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Men Badminton title

PESHAWAR (APP): Remained unbeaten Bannu clinched the trophy of the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Men Badminton Championship played at Abdul Wali Khan Sports Complex on Sunday.

Muhammad Asfandyar Khan Khalil, Registrar/Treasurer University of Swabi graced the occasion as prize distribution ceremony. Director Sports and Organizing Secretary University of Swabi Iltaf Hussain, District Sports Officer Charsadda Muhammad Imran, players and officials were also present.

Bannu after securing victory against the strong Peshawar team in the League matches recorded

victories against Hazara, Mardan and Swat as well and remained unbeaten in the League by winning the trophy.

Bannu took first position, followed by Peshawar with a loss against Bannu secured victories against Hazara, Mardan and Swat took second position while Swat, lost matches against Peshawar and Bannu and victories against Hazara and Mardan got third position respectively.

In the last league round match Swat beat Hazara by 3-0, as in the first singles Hanain Swat beat Ahmed Hazara by 2-0, the score was 21-19 and 21-18, Shahid of Swat beat Sami Hazara by 2-0, the score was 21-

16 and 21-19, and in the doubles Hanain and Shahid beat Ahmad and Sami Hasnain by 2-0, the score was 21-19, 21-18.

In the second match Mardan beat Hazara by 3-0, in the first singles Bilal (Mardan) beat Sami Hasnain (Hazara) by 2-0, the score was 21-18 and 21-16, in the doubles Bilal and Khalfan (Mardan) beat Hamza and Ahmad (Hazara) by 2-0, the score was 21-17, 21-16, in the second singles Faiz of Mardan beat Abdur Rehman of Hazara by 2-0, the score was 21-15 and 21-19.

In the other match Afnan of Bannu beat Kilfan of Mardan by 2-0, the score was 23-21 and 21-

19, Hamza and Afnan beat Bilal and Faiz of Mardan by 2-1, the score was 21-23, 23-21 and 21-19 and Fahad Bannu beat Falak of Mardan by 2-0, the score was 21-19 and 21-19.

All five Regions host Peshawar, Bannu, Swat, Mardan, and Hazara, took part in the League. A selection committee headed by Muhammad Nadeem Khan and Hayatullah monitored the performance of the players during the Provincial League would short-list a team to represent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the national league, for which date and venue would be announced later on by Director General Sports Higher Education

Commission Javed Mehmood and other committee members.

Muhammad Asfandyar Khan Khalil, Registrar/Treasurer University of Swabi was of the view that work should be needed at the grassroots level for searching out talent and new faces and that talent hunt through open trials could be provided facilities of playing, diet, physical endurance under qualified coaches and above all provided them best equipment for playing.

He thanked HEC for reposing confidence in University of Swabi and granted Men Badminton Championship to organize and involve players from all the five regions across

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said a team among them could be selected from the ongoing PM Talent Hunt Men Provincial League Badminton by the selection committee to represent KP in the National League. Hopefully a strong and good team out of the Provincial League would be selected by giving opportunities to the talented players on merit and merits only.

At the end, the chief guest gave away trophies and cash prizes to the winners, runners-up and third position teams. He also hailed Director Sports University of Swabi and former international athlete Iltaf Hussain for his excellent organization.



In brief

Death anniversary observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The death anniversary of renowned filmmaker, director and poet Shabab Keranvi was observed here on Sunday. Born in 1925 at Kerana, district Muzaffar Garh, Utter Pardesh, his real name was Nazeer Ahmad. At 15, he started writing poems and chose the pseudonym "Shabab". He was a resident of Kairana and thus he became known as Shabab Kiranvi. Later he devoted himself to the profession of film-making and as a lyricist, screenwriter, producer and director, he made one of the most remarkable contributions to the history of Pakistani cinema. He debuted in the Pakistani film industry as a producer and lyricist with Jalwa (1955) while he made his directorial debut with Surayya (1961). With his long-time associate A. Hameed, Keranvi founded a production company in 1958, which eventually morphed into Shabab Studios in the 60s. Keranvi directed the studio's first blockbuster, "Insaniyat", which was followed by a string of hits that made Shabab Studios one of the most successful production houses of the 60s and 70s. He directed more than fifty films out of seventy-five he produced. His films as a producer include "Surayya" (1961) and "Shama-e-Mohabbat" (1977) among others.

PTDC planning to establish TIC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) was planning to establish a modern Tourist Information Center (TIC) at New Gwadar International Airport to facilitate the foreign and local tourists about their destination. Talking to APP, a PTDC official said the establishment of TIC would provide comprehensive information to tourists thronging to Pakistan from various countries to enjoy the beauty of recreational sites of Balochistan province. An official said that TIC would not only play a pivotal role in promoting tourism globally but also emphasize the need for state-of-the-art facilities. He highlighted the growing significance of Gwadar as a tourist destination, attracting visitors from across the country and around the world. He said that Caretaker Minister of State for Tourism Wasi Shah was committed to construct Tourist Information Center at Gwadar airport as soon as possible to provide all kinds of information and facilities to tourists. He further said that the minister Wasi Shah had already made it clear that he would not tolerate any incompetence within his ministry, underscoring his commitment in improving the tourism experience for all.

AIOU commences final exams

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is conducting final examinations of 2.5 and 3.5 years MBA programs offered in the spring 2023 semester from November 18. These examinations will take place throughout the country till December 7, 2023, said a press release yesterday. The date sheet is available on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk). Roll number slips have been uploaded to students' CMS portal. Additionally, the deadline for fresh students to enroll in the Associate Degree in Arts (BA General), Associate Degree in Commerce (BCom), Associate Degree in Education, BS (ODL) programs, 1.5, 2.5, 4-year B.Ed programs, BBA, and Post Graduate Diploma programs is tomorrow (Tuesday, November 7).



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Health Minister Dr. Nadeem Jan visiting Community Health Centre G/13.

Dr Nadeem visits Community Health Center G/13

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan on Sunday visited the Community Health Center G/13 to observe the patients' care services.

During the visit, the minister reviewed the facilities provided by the Community Health Center.

Dr. Nadeem Jan also inquired about health facilities being provided to women. He inspected the attendance sheet of the staff and the immunization

counter. He stressed that pharmacy records should be computerized on an urgent basis.

Dr. Nadeem Jan asked to ensure an uninterrupted supply of medicines to patients. He said that a population of 4,000 to 5,000 can benefit from the health facilities.

He said that an integrated strategy has been formulated to strengthen the primary health care system.

Dr. Nadeem Jan said that the population of the sub-

urbs should benefit from the facilities of the primary health care system.

He said that the Community Health Center should be fully functional. "I will monitor the facilities of the primary health care system myself." He said women must get their children vaccinated. He said the staff should create awareness about this hospital in social media so that more patients can benefit from the health facilities.

DC orders crackdown on sheesha cafes

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the directions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, the Assistant Commissioners conducted crackdown on sheesha cafes in their respective areas on Sunday, sealing several establishments in compliance with the Islamabad High Court's order. The DC said that the owners of cafes were strictly prohibited from serving sheesha to customers until the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination (NHSR&C) clarified the rules and regulations regarding the use of sheesha in public places. The Assistant Commissioners sealed the DJ Cafe in F-6 and Late Sheesha Cafe in F-7, a sheesha cafe in Bahria Town.

ECP summons list of private schools, teachers for polls

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Election Commission of Pakistan has summoned the list of private schools for polling in general election, a spokesperson of the electoral body said.

The ECP will also setup polling stations in private schools' buildings for convenience of voters.

The election commission collecting details of private schools' teachers and buildings.

District election commissioner has written letter to the EDO Education and demanded details.

The services of private schools' teachers will be availed in case of shortage of the government servants.

"Private schools' buildings and teachers will be kept as reserved arrangement," the ECP spokesman said.

The election commission has recently informed the Supreme Court that general elections in the country will be held on 08 February next year.

Meanwhile, a control room has been setup at the election commission secretariat for monitoring the local government by elections in Sindh.

"The control room has been established for monitoring the electoral process and redressing election complaints," ECP spokesperson said. The control room will continue functioning till compilation of the election results.

Cracks down on illegal fishing, boating, price hikes

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a major crackdown on illegal activities, the Islamabad Magistrate Secretariat conducted a series of operations on Sunday, arresting nine people for illegal fishing besides inspecting petrol pumps to address public grievances. The Magistrate also took action against price hikes and ensured the display of government-set rates and notified rate lists in various areas. The operation, which was carried out on the instructions of the Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, targeted illegal fishing points, unauthorized motorized boats and illegal swimming areas.

The Magistrate Secretariat raided several illegal fishing spots and arrested nine people who were present there.

The arrested individuals were transferred to the police station for further legal action.

In addition to the crackdown on illegal fishing, the Magistrate Secretariat also inspected petrol pumps to ensure that they were in compliance with government regulations. The Magistrate took action against several petrol pumps for inaccurate measures, price hikes and for violating government-set rates and notified rate lists. The Magistrate Secretariat has warned that the operation against illegal activities will continue on a daily basis. The Magistrate has urged the citizens to report any illegal activities to the ICT authorities so that prompt action can be taken.

IRSA releases 107,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 107,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 51,000 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarela Dam was 1520.31 feet and was 122.31 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 27,200 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1198.50 feet, which was 148.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 6,700 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively.

Admin trying to ensure availability of essential commodities at affordable rates: Commissioner

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chhatta Saturday said Rawalpindi district administration was trying to ensure availability of essential commodities at affordable rates.

He hailed the efforts of the relevant officers to set up vegetable and fruit mandi in Rawat to facilitate the citizens. The Commissioner directed the Director Agriculture to give special discount to the local farmers on rent of the stalls in Rawat vegetable Mandi.

Vegetable and fruit items would be available at 20% lower prices in Rawalpindi

the mandi as compared to Islamabad mandi, the Commissioner said adding, the residents would get quality vegetable and fruit items at affordable prices in Rawat mandi.

He informed that all the basic facilities were provided in Rawat mandi to facilitate the stall holders and the citizens. The Commissioner urged the media representatives to play their key role to publicize the vegetable and fruit mandi. Rawalpindi's three million population would directly benefit from the vegetable and fruit mandi, he added.

The establishment of a

Rawat mandi would help promote business activities at regional level, the Commissioner said. The administration worked day and night for the establishment and functioning of the Rawat mandi, he added.

The district administration was trying to ensure the sale of essential commodities in the city markets according to the prices of the vegetable market, he said adding, with the establishment of Rawalpindi vegetable and fruit market, the citizens would get quality essential items and affordable rates.

National folk festival helping in cultural tourism promotion

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Folk Festival (Lok Mela) was helping in promoting cultural tourism as a large number of local tourists coming from various parts of the country to enjoy amazing and mega event in the capital.

Talking to APP, the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) official said that the biggest folk festival in the country called Lok Mela continued from November 3-12 here.

It was organized by the National Heritage and Culture Division at Lok Virsa, he added.

He said the festival was attracting tourists massively by serving them with cultural and traditional treats, featuring a variety of activities such as provincial pavilions, food stalls, shopping at traditional stalls and music programmes that was reflecting and unveiling the rich cultural diversity of the country. The official said that the exceptional festival

was encouraging and fascinating the folk lovers to throng the federal capital and enjoy the music, traditional dances, arts and handicraft. "The cultural nights are also part of the unique folk mela that also entraining the tourists," he added.

It is pertinent to mention here, the festival was being conducting under the theme 'Peace and Harmony through Cultural Diversity' offers an immense opportunity to enjoy the rich culture of all the provinces.

Rs 99,90,804 fine imposed, 4359 FIRs registered for violating dengue SOPs

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as Rs 99,90,804 fine was imposed and 4,359 FIRs had been registered on violations of anti-dengue SOPs from January 1 to date in various areas of the Rawalpindi district, said District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control Dr Sajjad Mehmood here Sunday.

Giving details of the penalty actions, the health officer said that the district administration, in collaboration with allied departments, had sealed 637 premises and issued tickets to 1,310 violators in 2023.

Dr Sajjad informed that around 2,396 confirmed cases had been reported in the district this year, while the number was 1,890 in 2021, and 4,418 in 2022 during the period.

The health officer further said that presently 42 patients were admitted to the district's hospitals, including 34 to the Holy Family Hospital, five to Wah General Hospital, two to Kalar Syeda and one to the Taxila Hospital.

Dr Sajjad informed that 2,366 patients were discharged after treatment while two patients were in critical condition.

During the last day's indoor vector surveillance, the teams checked 5,757 houses and larvae were detected at 97 sites while during outdoor surveillance larvae were found at 28 spots while inspecting 1,845 places.

He added that dengue fever cases had registered a sharp decrease in the city during the last week with changing weather conditions as five to 15 patients had been reported to the district health facilities daily while during the last month, the number of daily patients was between 40 to 60.

The health officer expressed hope that dengue cases would end till November 15 with the decrease in temperature however, he urged the residents to be careful during the wee hours and in the evening as it was the suitable time for mosquito bites.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Despite a number of initiatives to ensure a healthy environment at Capital Territory educational institutions, better hygiene still remains a challenge exposing students to different kinds of ailments.

Although Oral Hygiene Program, provision of hygiene kits and steps like ensuring cleanliness of premises and toilets, clean drinking water and overall tidy environment were already underway, yet there are still challenges like paucity of funds and staff. Since the clean and hygienic school environment stands as a fundamental pillar for safeguarding the health and well-being of students and staff, it also serves as a powerful catalyst for nurturing a profound sense of pride and responsibility among them. Drawing inspiration from the timeless wisdom found in the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who imparted, "Cleanliness is half of faith," the school management can also derive a valuable lesson for the students. Therefore, the schools are not only expected to impart better education but also better hygiene to fulfill the requirements of better health as well as a clean and healthy environment. "Given the size of our educational institutions, it is often a challenging task for custodial staff to manage cleaning and maintenance tasks alone," said Riffat Jabeen, Director Academics, Federal Directorate of Education (FDE).

"It is common that students litter the premises by throwing waste here and there even in the presence of waste bin," she remarked. "Therefore, teachers emphasize the importance of cleanliness and hygiene during their lectures." She said the Head Teachers ensure cleaning supplies like disinfectants, toilet brushes, mops and cleaning clothes. As per the FDE guidelines on hygiene the students are kept away from hazardous chemicals, students and staff are instructed on proper use

of toilets, cleaning sinks and counter-top surfaces and toilet floor after use.

"Heads of Institutions are specifically directed to encourage students to actively participate in ensuring a clean and healthy environment without compromising routine academic activities," Riffat Jabeen informed.

Keeping in view the importance of hygiene facilities, the Federal Government has started the "Oral Hygiene Program" at 423 public sector schools and colleges under the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE). Under this Program, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training distributes 'Hygiene Kits' among students of government educational institutions within the ICT jurisdiction.

"Under the Hygiene Kits program started in April 2023, as many as 100,000 kits have been distributed among students," Riffat Jabeen said. "Doctors are also engaged to guide students on health and hygiene issues." But, despite her claims, there are complaints of missing facilities especially at female schools, as poor cleanliness and substandard food supplied by canteens inside the institutions and private vendors outside, was proving to be hazardous for students' health.

In many cases, there is also a deficiency of bathrooms as compared to the number of students with many needing immediate repair and up-gradation as Director Monitoring FDE Malik Sohail assured to bridge this gap and claimed these facilities would be provided sooner.

"Hygiene conditions are far better now than the past especially at institutions where the Principal and staff are active," he said. Contrary to his claims, the President Federal Government Teachers Association, Malik Ameer Ahmed Khan has pointed out the shortage of sanitary staff at a number of institutions.

"There is a shortage of staff at some schools and a requisition has

been forwarded for more sweepers and sanitary workers," he informed. "We are fully alive to better health of our children and the Association has formed a committee for identifying missing facilities at government schools and ensuring their earliest provision." There are also scattered reports of selling unhygienic food at some of the institutions although the authorities claim on random checking of the stuff being sold out at these outlets. Similarly in numerous cases either the washrooms were worn out with broken tiles and flour or the lethargic response of sanitary staff, left these washrooms dirty and stuffy.

Keeping the playgrounds and flower beds tidy with frequent trimming is another issue especially in institutions in remote areas of the ICT as the focus remains on main institutions situated in the heart of the city.

As most of the buildings are properly cared of, there are instances of old and worn out furniture, soggy walls with falling whitewash and dirty floors, making the rooms' environment stinky. Caretaker Education Minister Madad Ali Sindhi in his recent visit to educational institutions had directed FDE to provide a detailed proposal for the maintenance of facilities. "The government would provide necessary funding for upgradation of the facilities." He also directed the FDE to regularly conduct an audit of food quality and cancel the contract of those involved in selling unhygienic food.

Although the government has initiated multiple measures to promote better hygiene at educational institutions, still there are challenges like inadequate attention to hygiene concepts in the curricula, an un-conducive environment and a communication gap between teachers and parents. Therefore, the authorities must adopt a holistic approach by involving all stakeholders to promote hygiene, revise the curriculum and raise awareness among teachers, parents and students.



ISLAMABAD: People purchasing traditional items from stalls setup during Ten-Days 'Folk Festival Lok Mela' at Lok Virsa.

ARCS provide treatment

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) is currently providing treatment and care for 2,182 individuals with mental health conditions in the country. According to a statement from the ARCS, the organization has established support and care centers for those with mental health conditions. They have urged families who are unable to care for their mentally ill relatives to transfer them to these centers.

Latif meets Turkish officials

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Minister of Energy and Water Abdul Latif Mansoor met with officials from Turkey's IDDEF Charity Foundation to discuss potential joint cooperation, the ministry said in a statement. The energy minister has welcomed the Turkish officials and commended them on their enthusiasm for collaboration in various fields, especially in the area of strengthening religious programs, read the statement.

FAO, WFP give early warnings on acute food insecurity

KABUL (TOLNews): The World Food Programme and Food and Agriculture Organization warned of increasing food insecurity in Afghanistan. According to the statement of the WFP and FAO, organizations within the UN, Afghanistan is placed among 8 countries whose citizens face severe food insecurity.

"Acute food insecurity is likely to worsen over the forecast period due to the likely drop in humanitarian funding and its destabilizing impact on the fragile macroeconomic situation," the statement said.

"Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Pakistan, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen are hotspots of very high concern and in the included countries or territories, life-threatening conditions are expected to further intensify in the outlook period," the statement said.

Meanwhile, some economic activists said that providing the work oppor-

tunity to citizens in the country can solve the challenges of food insecurity.

"Unfortunately, Afghanistan is one of the countries in the region that lacks infrastructure. We do not have sufficient strategic infrastructure in all aspects of welfare, social and economic areas to provide for the people of Afghanistan," said Mohammad Shabir Bashiri, a political analyst.

However, the Deputy Minister of Economy once again called on international institutions and aid agencies to continue their assistance. "With the approaching winter season and the cold weather, we ask aid agencies and the international community to pay attention and support our dear compatriots," said Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of Economy.

At the same time, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator, OCHA, said in a report that \$93.6 million is needed to deal with the 114,000 people affected by the aftershocks

in Herat.

The organization added that only 26% of the total amount of money was received.

"Overall, US \$93.6M is required to assist 114K people over winter, but only 26% has been received to date. Additional funding is urgently needed to ensure people are not living in the open or in makeshift shelters as temperatures fall," OCHA said in a report.

"The current government of Afghanistan has to make a mechanism to establish an evaluation and observer commission consisting of professional and experienced people that is also honest and united," said Abdul Zohor Mudaber, political analyst.

Earlier, the representative and head of the World Food Programme for Afghanistan in a discussion told TOLNews that \$400 million is needed to assist the Herat earthquake victims. Right now, 15 million people are struggling to find food.

12,000 returnees documented

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation has reported the registration and biometric documentation of 12,000 Afghans who were forcibly repatriated from Pakistan.

According to a statement from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, the committee responsible for registering returnees in the Spinboldak district of Kandahar province has initiated its work in the border region. To date, it has documented 1,132 families, comprising 12,000 individuals.

The report further states that other committees have also commenced their operations to assess and respond to the situation of the returnees. According to the Committee for Registration, Verification, and Reception of Afghan returnees, 56,872 Afghans have returned just on Friday. The source states that 7,109 of these families identified as eligible for receiving essential assistance.

It's worth noting that the Pakistani government decided to expel Afghan immigrants from the country a month ago, and a significant number of Afghan immigrants have already been deported.

Envoy discusses deportation of refugees with Muttaqi



KABUL (Agencies): The ambassador of China, Zhao Xing, called on the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Amir Khan Muttaqi on Sunday and discussed a number of issues including Islamabad's move to expel undocumented Afghan migrants. During the meeting, talks

were held on enhancing bilateral diplomatic relations, recent regional developments and other issues pertaining to bilateral security and economic domains.

Muttaqi said at the meeting recent discussions with Chinese officials have had positive outcomes and the scope of IEA-China cooperation is broadening.

Calling relations of the two countries positive, Zhao illustrated China's interest in further strengthening diplomatic relations.

Talks also focused on forced deportation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan. Muttaqi highlighted measures taken by the IEA to reintegrate returnees in the country, as well as

problems arising from forced deportations at the beginning of winter, usurping their assets along with several other related issues.

Showing readiness to look into providing assistance, Zhao expressed hope that the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan will be able to resolve this issue in a cordial manner.

RSF says sending journalists to Afghanistan endangers lives

KABUL (Khaama Press): The organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has criticized the actions of the interim Pakistani government in expelling undocumented Afghan migrants from the country, stating that it has also put 200 Afghan journalists at risk of expulsion.

In a statement, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has revealed that they have spoken with several journalists who have reported facing

extreme violence following the decision by the Pakistani government to expel Afghan migrants. These journalists have recounted harrowing experiences in the wake of this expulsion policy.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) warns that sending these journalists back to Afghanistan puts their lives in danger and calls on Pakistani authorities to allow them to stay in Pakistan and ensure their safety there.

The organization cites the case of a journalist who, despite having a temporary residence permit, is being harassed and intimidated by Pakistani police and fears expulsion. She stated, "I am accused of espionage for foreign media, vandalism, negative propaganda, and supporting women's rights under legal persecution in my own country. Death awaits me there."

RSF further emphasizes that forcibly repatriating

Afghan journalists who have sought refuge in Pakistan is a clear violation of international laws and entirely unacceptable.

These journalists, some of whom were exposing sensitive information, often faced threats and sought refuge in Pakistan to preserve their lives. The organization urges the temporary Pakistani government to revoke its decision promptly and ensure the journalists' security.

Opium poppy cultivation declined by 95% in Afghanistan: UNODC



KABUL (TOLNews): The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in a report that the "opium poppy cul-

tivation and opium production dramatically declined after the ban prohibiting 'Poppy Cultivation and All types of Narcotics' was

announced by the de facto authorities (DfA) in April 2022."

"Opium poppy cultivation dramatically declined

across all parts of the country and almost entirely in some provinces where opium poppy was illicitly cultivated for many years. Nationally, area under cultivation declined by 95% to a total of just 10,800 ha, indicating that farmers were adhering to the ban that was announced in April 2022," the report reads.

The UNODC said that consequently, this has reduced the supply of opium and export quality heroin coming out of the 2023 harvest.

"Opium production saw a similar 95% decline from 6,200 tons produced in 2022 to 333 tons in 2023," it said. "The total 2023 opium harvest could be converted into 24-38 tons heroin of export quality (50 – 70% purity). In 2022 that amount was 350- 380 tons."

Afghanistan grapples with 3.5m drug users, unveiling hidden struggles

KABUL (Khaama Press): According to a report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Afghanistan is home to approximately 3.5 million drug users, accounting for nearly 10% of the country's total population. This staggering figure, revealed after the emergence of the Taliban administration, sheds light on the hidden struggles of thousands of families who have become victims of drug addiction. The report tells the story of a woman who has endured countless acts of violence solely because of her husband's addiction to drugs, leaving her with nothing but the ruins of the life she once dreamed of.

In traditional societies like Afghanistan, characterized by undesirable cultural norms, low literacy rates, widespread poverty, and unemployment, along with years of conflict and insecurity, women are often viewed as passive and helpless individuals. They are seen as unable to break free from the cycle of recurring violence and often lack the means to improve their situations. However, despite experiencing numerous acts of violence herself, Zahra has not lost her ability to respond to adversity.

Zahra, twenty-five years ago, entered into marriage with the son of her uncle, filled with hundreds of dreams. She aspired to a shared life that she once yearned for and fought to make a reality despite her husband's descent into drug

addiction. She describes how her husband, like many others she knew, went to Iran to earn a living, but there he fell into the trap of drug addiction.

She believes that no one truly understands the depth of her suffering: "Our homes have hidden secrets, and only those women whose husbands have an addiction can comprehend me because of the pain and suffering we endure, every moment of our lives filled with countless miseries, remain unspoken."

Zahra's addicted husband has subjected her and their children to physical abuse on multiple occasions, driven by the need for money to sustain his drug habit. She recounts days when her husband attacked her with a knife or a cleaver, driven by the urge to acquire drugs. The broken bones in her hand are a testament to the pain she endured.

In their shared life, Zahra not only lacks the love and support she yearns for, but her children have also experienced the brutality of this situation. She says, "We have always lived alone. My husband never showed paternal love to my children. He would be away from home for months. When he returned after several months, he could not even remember our youngest son."

This repetitive reality in Zahra's life has taught her to accept it and focus on her children: "He has dragged me and my children out of the house many times, but

we endured it and returned home later."

Zahra recounts a night when her husband, due to not having drugs and being in a state of withdrawal, took her and her children out of the house in the middle of the night. They spent the night in a small shelter, like a shed, where neighbours store their junk. "In the morning, he left alone without even closing the door. We then returned home."

She has come to accept that her husband is not seeking treatment, and he, at times when he is not in withdrawal and witnesses her pain and suffering, breaks down in tears, saying, "I cannot save myself."

The question of who is primarily responsible for the turmoil in Zahra's life remains unanswered. She sees her husband as a victim of a situation that has ensnared nearly 10% of Afghanistan's population. She still believes that, alongside her husband, they should "endure and rebuild."

"I have tried countless times to get my husband treated. When we had some money, we placed him in several private rehabilitation centres, and we even admitted him to government-run rehab facilities in Kabul. However, he never quit an addiction, claiming that once you fall into this trap, there is no way out."

The result of Zahra's marriage, now at forty, is four sons. Drug addiction has cast a shadow over her life, blurring the concepts of "love," "liking," "dream-

ing," and "working together." She no longer knows which of these she has lost and for which she should remain hopeful.

Zahra, who has worked in various offices for seventeen years and managed to cover her living expenses, has encouraged her children to attend school and study, not allowing their father's addiction to affect them. Her eldest son, aged nineteen, studies medicine at a university and works part-time at a clinic.

Despite facing numerous challenges in her life and doing her best to secure her children's futures, Zahra is now deeply worried about the resurgence of the Taliban. Her job at the Ministry of Public Health may be at risk, and she has worked hard and earned credibility over the years. She enjoys a decent income and can secure her sons' futures, but the situation has changed with the return of the Taliban.

Zahra, a person living with an addiction, a person living with a substance use disorder directly impacted by her husband's addiction, has experienced suffering and deprivation but has received no help from any institution throughout these years. She sought help from several organizations during extreme hardship and financial struggles. However, she received rejection after rejection because there was no institution dedicated to helping people living with an addiction, the people living with substance use disorder.

Nine people killed in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), UN and International Organisations have called on Pakistan to stop the deportation of Afghan refugees.

UN and others have warned the mass deportation of refugees would create human catastrophe while IEA leadership urged halt to the process and called on Pakistan to think about its future.

Japan and Turkey have stressed over IEA and the international community's interactions.

Casualties

Nine people were killed in the country last week in different incidents of violence.

According to officials security forces killed a member f the Resistance Front in Nuristan, three armed men were killed in Balkh during clash with security forces and three kidnappers were killed in security forces operation in Herat province.

A child was killed by his brother in Ghor mistakenly and a 22-year-old girl was

killed in her house in Sar-i-Pul province.

According to reports 10 people were killed and 31 others injured nationwide in the previous week.

Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and security personnel would get killed and maimed every week.

Deportation of Afghans and reactions

Pakistan last week started the deportation of Afghans without legal documents. Some refugees said Pakistani police arrested refugees who have vailed documents. According to reports 1.4 million refugees without valid documents lived in Pakistan.

Reports said Pakistani police have arrested Afghans, destroy their houses and did not allow taking their assets and transportation vehicles with themselves.

UN and some other international organisations have asked Pakistan to stop the deportation of Afghan refugees and warned deportation of Afghan refugees

could create a humanitarian crisis.

UN Special Representative Rina Ameerri during a meeting with Pakistani Ambassador to the US in Washington discussed the deportation of Afghans from Pakistan while European Union allocated 15 million Euro aid for deported Afghans.

Afghan officials also asked Pakistan to show restraint and stop the deportation of Afghans on the bases of cordial neighbouring relationship, Islamic brotherhood and humanitarian sympathy.

IEA supreme leader Sheikh Haibatullah Akhonzada has said painful stories are being heard about the sufferings of Afghan refugees in another country, something he called intolerable.

"The refugees are arrested and imprisoned, this is not tolerable," Akhonzada said in a voice message published by the Kandahar provincial government's press office.

Acting Defence Minister Mawlawi Mohammad

Yaqoub Akhonzada asked Pakistan to stop suppression of Afghan refugees, he said the neighbouring country should consider the consequences of whatever she is doing now.

Pakhtonkhwa Political Leaders Usman Kakar and Khoshal Khan Kakar strongly condemned the forced deportation of Afghan refugees and asked the acting Pakistani Prime Minister not to behave like Shah Shuja.

Another Pashton Politician Mohsan Dawar and some others reacted to the deportation of Afghan refugees and filed a petition to the Supreme Court of Pakistan in which it demanded halt to the forced deportation of Afghan refugees.

Ex-president Hamid Karzai has expressed his concern about the forced deportation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran, slamming the move as an act against human rights and international law.

In a statement from his office, the former president

lashed out at Pakistani security forces for coercing refugees, snatching their belongings and documents. Such acts amounted to a violation of their rights, he said.

Acting Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund has asked relevant government institutions to address issues faced by deported Afghans.

A powerful delegation headed by PM's Admin and Finance Aide Mawlawi Abdul Salaam Hanafi has visited Torkham to observe the problems faced by deported Afghans.

The Ministry of Refugees has created a temporary camp, the Ministry of Transport arrange free of cost transport service to all incoming Afghan families, Defence Ministry dispatched vehicles, temporary drinking water tankers and bathrooms.

The Information and Statistics Authority registered deported refugees. Education Ministry said all deported Afghans would be provided learning opportunities in the country.

The IEA said two bank accounts have been created for the collection of assistance with refugees. Government, businessmen, civil society activists and common people provide food for incoming Afghans in Torkham and some people have launched fund collection campaign through social media platforms for deported Afghans.

Relations with acting Afghan government

Japan's Ambassador Takayoshi Kormaya said his country was trying to encourage interaction between Afghanistan and the international community.

He made the remarks during a meeting with Higher Education Minister Neda Mohammad Nadeem in Kabul, said the a spokesman for the ministry.

Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi wanted the international community to interact positively with the caretaker government on the basis of the current ground realities.

Abdul Qahar Balkhi, spokesman for the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), wrote on his X handle that Muttaqi met UN Special Coordinator Feridun Hadi Sinirlioglu in Turkey.

The MoFA spokesman said Sinirlioglu emphasised on increased interaction between Afghanistan and the global fraternity.

Delegation from Uzbekistan

Last week a 45-member Uzbekistan delegation headed by Deputy Prime Minister Jamshid Khojayeov arrived in Kabul for the inauguration of exhibition and bilateral commerce and trade talks.

The delegation held talks with Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and the acting minister of commerce and industry.

Both sides discussed various aspects, such as trade, transit, economic ties, railway, transportation, mining, water management, agricultural development.

Khodjaev expressed Uzbekistan's readiness to cooperate with Afghanistan in various

sectors, including agriculture, transportation, railways, transit, water management and mining.

He unveiled a trade road map designed to boost Afghanistan's exports to Uzbekistan to boost the trade volume between the two countries to approximately three billion dollars a year.

According to the statement, Uzbekistan has also simplified the visa process for Afghan businessmen and drivers, with plans to host an exhibition of Afghan products in Tashkent and open a large business centre in Termez.

Afghanistna Railway Authority asked Uzbekistan to tariff on transit goods in order to boost the flow of goods.

Turkey against armed resistance in Afghanistan

The Turkish foreign minister said there should be no longer armed resistance in Afghanistan.

He issued the call at a meeting with his Afghan counterpart Amir Khan Muttaqi in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, on Tuesday.

President directs SLICP to pay insurance claim to nominees of a deceased policyholder

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has directed the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLICP) to pay a death insurance claim worth Rs 300,000 along with a profit to the family members of a deceased policyholder, who had not been paid the claim for almost three years.

The president further asked the SLICP to form a panel of doctors to devise a policy on pre-insurance tests of proposed policyholders.

The president gave these directions while rejecting a representation filed by SLICP against the order of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, the President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Sunday.

Saad Taheer (the complainant) alleged that his father had purchased a life insurance policy from the agency in 2013 for the sum assured of Rs 300,000/- with an annual premium of Rs 18,406.

His father died in 2020, and he filed the death insurance claim which was repudiated by SLICP on the ground that the deceased had a pre-insurance ailment of hepatitis C, which he had deliberately hidden. Feeling aggrieved, he approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib which asked SLICP to reconsider the matter and provide appropriate relief to the nominees of the deceased policyholder. SLICP, then, filed a representation with the President against Mohtasib's order.

The president held a hearing on the matter, and after listening to both sides, gave his decision.

He pointed out that the deceased purchased the policy in 2013, whereas SLICP

had produced copies of medical reports of the year 2015 and all reports pertained to the post-insurance period and were not worth consideration.

He further noted that the confidential report of the SLICP field officer had also declared the insured as healthy at the time of issuance of the policy and had clearly stated that she knew the insured for the last two years.

The president also referred to Section 80 of the Insurance Ordinance 2000, which provided that no policy of life insurance, after the expiry of two years from the date on which it was affected, shall be called into question by the insurer on the ground that a statement in the proposal for insurance or in any report of a medical officer was false or inaccurate.

The president, therefore, rejected State Life's representation and directed it to pay the insurance claim along with the accrued profit within 30 days to the nominees.

He further asked State Life to constitute a panel of doctors to advise it on a policy regarding pre-insurance medical tests.

"This panel of doctors would suggest as to what are the most prevalent and common diseases in Pakistan and what tests should be included before issuance of the policy", he added.

The president also advised that the company might devise a risk assessment about different diseases and modify premiums accordingly if they wanted to issue policies to patients with mild and very prevalent diseases like diabetes, hypertension, hepatitis, etc.

Trump set to take the stand in New York civil fraud trial

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Donald Trump rose to political power touting the business acumen he says made him a fortune.

On Monday, the 77-year-old once and potentially future president is expected to take the stand at a civil trial in which he stands accused of fraudulently inflating those famous assets to advance his real estate empire.

Trump's son Eric says he is "very fired up" ahead of his testimony -- due to begin at 10:00 am (1500 GMT) -- before New York judge Arthur Engoron, with whom the Republican has had a fractious relationship since the trial opened last month.

Just as he has insulted the judges overseeing his four criminal trials, Trump has called Engoron "unhinged" and a "Trump-hating, radical left, Democrat operative."

Engoron has responded by slapping Trump with two fines -- one for \$5,000,

another for \$10,000 -- when he ruled the onetime reality television star had violated a partial gag order imposed after he bashed the judge's clerk on social media. Trump has been heard twice in connection with this case -- on August 10, 2022 and again on April 13 of this year.

In excerpts from the first deposition, he called the proceedings "the greatest witch hunt in the history of our country," and called New York state attorney general Letitia James an "out of control prosecutor."

The bench trial -- there is no jury, and the judge will decide on his own -- is just one of a long line of legal troubles for the candidate who is currently the 2024 Republican presidential frontrunner, according to opinion polls.

So far, two of his children -- Donald Jr and Eric -- have testified, along with executives from the Trump Organization, a conglomerate that manages skyscrap-

ers, luxury hotels and golf clubs around the world.

Even before opening arguments, Engoron ruled that James' office had already shown "conclusive evidence" that Trump had overstated his net worth on financial documents by between \$812 million and \$2.2 billion between 2014 and 2021.

As a result, the judge ordered the liquidation of the companies managing the assets in question, such as the Trump Tower and 40 Wall Street skyscrapers in Manhattan and the opulent Seven Springs private estate in the suburbs.

Simply put: Trump would lose control of part of his real estate empire.

That order is on hold pending appeal, but its potentially sweeping consequences highlight the high stakes for the former president, who has built his political persona on the image of the successes described in his book "The Art of the Deal."

Lahore, with AQI 393, ranked as world's second most polluted city

LAHORE (NNI): There is no respite from smog for the people of Lahore as the city, with the air quality index (AQI) recorded at 393, was ranked as the second most polluted city in the world on Sunday.

The AQI over Fida Hussain Road was recorded at 481. Similarly, it was 462 over Phase-8 in DHA, 368 over Shimpla Pahari and 464 over Syed Maratab Ali Road. Doctors, on the other hand, advised people to take precautionary measures by avoiding travelling unnecessarily, and use facemasks if travelling was inevitable.

Weathermen, on the other hand, forecast dry weather for the provincial capital during the next few days, thus considerably minimizing chances of any relief for residents of the city as it will be due to rain that dust particles suspended in the air will settle down and the smog will be over. The Met Office predicted that maximum temperature in the city would reach 29 degrees Celsius later in the day while it would be 16 degrees Celsius on the minimum side in the early hours on Monday.

On the other hand, smog in neighbouring India, espe-

cially over capital New Delhi, has become a threat for Pakistan. According to the images and report released by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), 740 per cent increase has been noticed in the incidents of burning of crops' residue, especially in parts bordering Pakistan. Indian media, on the other hand, have said that there is no chance of smog getting thin in the next two days. The situation had come to such a pass in New Delhi on Thursday that an emergency had to be imposed in the city.

Nepal earthquake: Thousands spend night outdoors in cold

JAJARKOT (Agencies): In a remote hilly region of western Nepal, thousands of people were forced to spend a very cold night outdoors after their houses were damaged by a strong earthquake on Friday. 157 people died and more than 300 were injured in the quake.

Officials say search and rescue missions are coming to a close.

The focus now is on providing shelter to the homeless and arranging essential supplies. But rescue teams told the BBC they did not have enough tents. Thousands of people who lost their homes slept under the open sky or in makeshift tents in freezing temperatures overnight.

One sufferer, who lost her sister in the earthquake, shared her grief: "We have been forced to live in this situation. We have lost everything. There is no food and no shelter. My sister left us all. We need help."

Relief efforts are focused on the more remote parts of the two districts worst hit by the 6.3-magnitude earthquake - Jajarkot and Rukum West.

Stories of horrifying experiences, miraculous escapes, close calls and the devastating loss of family mem-



bers and friends are coming in. Baljit Mahar, who lost his seven-year-old son, is one of them.

"We could not save him, while all the other six members of the family were able to rush out as soon as the earthquake jolted us from our sleep," Mahar told Reuters in the remote village of Chiuri in the hilly Jajarkot district. He pulled his son's body from the crumbled facade of their single-storey mud and stone house.

"All my belongings and clothes are under the debris, I have been left without anything," Mahar added.

Another survivor from Rukum, Baljeet BK, pleaded for government assistance to shelter the now-homeless people: "There is no food to eat and no shelter to stay in. People are staying outside in the open. We have to stay in this cold. Entire houses have gone away." In the most affected areas of ??Jajarkot, preparations are being made for the mass cremation of people who died during the earthquake. People are not only suffering from the loss of loved ones, but also fearing the possibility of more aftershocks.

JUI-F to kick-start election campaign from Murree

RAWALPINDI (NNI): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) has decided to kick off its election campaign next week as the party has planned to hold its first election rally in Murree the party's spokesperson said Sunday. According to JUI-F spox, Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman will address the party's first general election 2024 gathering in Murree.

The development came after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) notified general elections on February 8, 2024. The electoral watchdog issued a notification of the date of the general election under Section 57 of the Election Act?

The notification said that in light of the Supreme Court's order, the general elections will take place on February 8, 2024.

The notification was issued by the ECP after, the Supreme Court declared February 8, 2024, as the date for holding general elections across the country after the ECP submitted the record of meeting with the president. Meanwhile, the Election Commission of Pakistan has summoned the list of private schools for polling in general election, a spokesperson of the electoral body said.

The ECP will also setup polling stations in private schools' buildings for convenience of voters.

The election commission collecting details of private schools' teachers and buildings.

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Russian nuclear submarine test launches missile

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia's new strategic nuclear submarine, the Imperator Alexander III, has successfully tested a Bulava intercontinental ballistic missile, the Russian defence ministry said on Sunday.

The missile, which the Federation of American Scientists says is designed to carry up to six nuclear warheads, was launched from an underwater position in the White Sea off Russia's northern coast and hit a target thousands of kilometres away on the Kamchatka peninsula in the Russian Far East, the defence ministry said.

"Firing a ballistic missile is the final element of state tests, after which a decision will be made to accept the cruiser into the Navy," a ministry statement said.

The Imperator Alexander III is the seventh of the Russian Project 955 Borei (Arctic Wind) class nuclear submarines and the fourth of the modernised Borei-A variant, according to Russian sources.

They are known in NATO as the Dolgoruky class of submarines, after the first boat - the Yuri Dolgoruky - became the first new generation of nuclear submarine launched by Russia since the Cold War.

The Borei class submarine is armed with 16 Bulava missiles. The 12-metre (40-foot) missile has a range of about 8,000 km (5,000 miles).

Since rising to power in 1999, President Vladimir Putin has increased military spending and sought to rebuild Russia's nuclear and conventional forces after the chaos that accompanied the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union.



DOHA: JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman meets Hamas leaders in Qatar.

Dar's leading role in senate leaves PPP concerned

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has voiced its concern about Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Ishaq Dar's role as leader of the house in the Senate.

The party, according to a report on Sunday, sought clarification from the interim government regarding Dar's capacity in which he is functioning as the leader of the upper house, arguing that the situation reflects an alliance between the PML-N and the caretaker set-up.

PPP Secretary-General Syed Nayyer Hussain Bokhari questioned why an independent senator was not appointed for the role by the interim administration to represent the leader of the house in the Senate, as is cus-

tomary. "The Leader of the House in Senate is the representative of the prime minister in the upper house and he can hoist the flag on his car and his house and why the caretaker government did not appoint any independent senator to represent as the Leader of the House in the Senate," the senior politician asked.

The PPP veteran also pointed out the close association between caretaker Federal Minister Ahad Cheema, Fawad Hasan Fawad, and PML-N leaders including Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif, as well as the Punjab governor's affiliation with the PML-N. He said that it is responsibility of the establishment, Election Commission of Pakistan and the caretaker government to

ensure free, fair and transparent elections.

"The Election Commission of Pakistan and the caretaker government have to prove their impartial attitude and conduct for holding free, fair and transparent elections," he said, adding that the political and economic stability is linked to free, fair and transparent elections.

The PPP's secretary general said the negotiations can be held with every party registered with the Election Commission, but the negotiations cannot be held with the enemies of the state. He said the PPP believed in the reconciliation and even made alliance with political opponents for the sake of Constitution and democracy.

LG by-polls in 16 districts of Sindh: PPP's Murtaza Wahab secures decisive victory

KARACHI (NNI): In the aftermath of a peaceful polling process on Sunday, the local government by-elections in 16 districts of Sindh saw Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidate, Murtaza Wahab from Karachi, clinch a substantial victory.

Wahab garnered a total of 3,976 votes from his Union Council, while his competitor, Noor Islam of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), trailed behind with 1,566 votes.

In Khairpur, PPP candidates are leading most of the constituencies while in 4 constituencies, a victory of the PPP has been confirmed.

Counting of votes has started in all 16 districts of Sindh including five districts of Karachi after closing of polling process at 5.00 pm sharp.

To observe the transparency and law and order on the polling day, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has set up a control room in Karachi. Today morning, the polling started at sharp 8.00 am and continued until 5.00 pm without any break.

At least 121 polling stations have been set up in the metropolis for the purpose. The polling was being held for 10 seats of chairmen and vice

chairmen, including ward members.

People voted for seats of chairmen in District South, Malir and Kemari of the provincial capital.

Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab and Jamaat-e-Islami's (JI) Obaidullah Shah Noorul Islam are facing each other in UC-13 Saddar Town.

Extremely tough competition is expected between Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Ramzan Mazari and Sindh United Party's (SUP) Allah Dino Kalwarr in Union Council (UC) Masowala of district Kashmore.

Total number of voters in the constituency are 13, 184, of whom 6, 249 are females. Out of 10 polling stations set up in the constituency, six are for both males and females, two exclusively for men while two others are exclusively for women.

Contingents of police personnel are providing security at these stations. The seat had fallen vacant on account of the resignation of Sardar Daud Jan Mazari. Tough competition is expected between PPP, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) candidates for the seat of councillor in Shikarpur. As many as 2,225 people will cast their votes in Union Council

7's Ward-III.

Several polling stations have been declared extremely sensitive.

A control room has been set up inside the deputy commissioner's (DC) office to ensure that no untoward incident take place.

JUI-F's Barkat Bhutto and the PPP's Bashir Bhutto are vying for the seat of general councilor in Ward-II of the UC Qadirpur in Ghotki.

Three polling stations have been set up in the area while the total number of voters are 3, 500.

As many as 12 local bodies' (LB) seats were initially up for grabs in Sukkur division.

However, candidates on six seats were elected unopposed, while voting is underway for the remaining six seats. Of those who were elected unopposed, five belonged to the PPP while one was an independent candidate, PPP, JI and Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) candidates are competing for two municipal committees (MC), one town committee and a district council seat in Khairpur.

Tough contest is likely between PPP's Noman Raza and GDA's Asif Raza for a MC seat.

Australia PM Albanese vows to 'work constructively with China'

SHANGHAI (AFP/APP): Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese vowed on Sunday to "work constructively" with China as the two countries seek to thaw icy relations.

Albanese was speaking at the opening of the China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai on the first full day of a high-profile state visit to his country's biggest trading partner. "Constructive economic engagement between countries helps to build relationships... that is why the government that I lead will continue to work constructively with China," Albanese said in a speech.

The prime minister will spend four days in China, splitting his time between Shanghai and Beijing.

It is the first such visit by an Australian leader in seven years, with the two countries seeking to patch things up after a diplomatic spat that affected billions of dollars in trade.

Albanese's administration has sought more amicable ties with

China, while also pushing back against Beijing's growing influence in the Pacific. The prime minister on Sunday said the development of the Asia Pacific region was "the lens through which we see so much of the future," adding that "Australia's relationship with China is a key part of all of this". He hailed a "mature relationship" between Beijing and Canberra, "energised by the complementary nature of our economies".

China's foreign ministry has said that Albanese would meet Chinese leaders and "have an in-depth exchange of views on bilateral issues as well as on international and regional issues of common concern".

"A healthy and stable China-Australia relationship accords with the fundamental interests of both countries and peoples," said ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin.

Albanese was among a handful of heads of state present at the opening of the CIIE, an event touted by

Beijing as an important platform for international economic cooperation, though foreign business groups have complained the deals it generates lack substance. Organisers say more than 3,400 exhibitors will participate in the sixth annual CIIE, which runs until Friday and is the first edition of the fair to take place after China relaxed strict pandemic travel controls. It also comes as foreign business confidence weakens in the world's second-largest economy, with the US and European chambers of commerce warning in recent months that firms are increasingly looking to move investment away from China.

Premier Li Qiang told expo guests on Sunday that China was committed to opening up and increasing market access for international investors. "China sincerely wishes to work with other countries to meet each other halfway and make mutual achievements on a grand stage of openness," Li said at the opening of the expo.

'Surge in terror attacks testimony of Pakistan being blackmailed by neighbour'

QUETTA (NNI): Balochistan's Caretaker Minister for Information Jan Achakzai has said neighbouring countries are "blackmailing Pakistan" as the country witnesses an uptick in terror attacks.

Recent terror attacks proved that the neighbouring countries were attempting to blackmail Pakistan, Achakzai said during a press conference in Quetta on Sunday.

The interim minister's remarks come as 14 soldiers were martyred after terrorists attacked two vehicles carrying security forces in Gwadar on Friday. Six Afghan nationals are involved in the Zhob terrorist attack, he

added. "We all know that one day before the attack on PAF's Mianwali base RAW operated social media accounts were conveying advance congratulations and warning of a major incident the said, adding, "Seeing the sophistication of the attack only RAW can be the mastermind of such attack."

A day earlier, security forces killed nine terrorists thwarting a major terrorist attack on the training base, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. Pakistan has seen a significant rise in terrorist attacks in recent times. The Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), in a report released

last month, noted that the security forces lost at least 386 personnel in the first nine months of 2023, marking an eight-year high. In the third quarter of the current year, more than 400 people have been killed in nearly 200 terror attacks and counter-terror operations.

At least six people were killed and 20 were wounded, including two policemen, in a blast that targeted a police van in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Friday. On the same day, five soldiers were martyred in two separate intelligence-based operations (IBO) conducted by the security forces.