

Four killed in stabbing attack

NEW YORK (Agenices): Four people, including two children, have been killed and three others injured following a stabbing in Queens, New York. Police called to the Far Rockaway neighbourhood in the early hours of Sunday found the victims in a home that had been set on fire. The male suspect stabbed two police officers before being shot by one of the injured officers.

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Sindhi Culture Day

KARACHI (APP): The Sindhi Culture Day was celebrated also in the metropolis like other parts of the Sindh province and the world, where Sindh people live, with zeal and zest on Sunday. The Sindhi Culture Day also known as Sindhi ajrak and topi day is celebrated every year on the first Sunday of December. The Day is celebrated to highlight Sindh's rich culture.

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PM hails UAE-led fund to mitigate climate change as highly promising for Global South

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar while lauding the United Arab Emirates announcement of a \$30 billion fund to channel investments to mitigate climate change, has said that the climate fund initiative by the UAE is promising and will be translated into tangible projects, especially in the Global South.

However, at the same time, the prime minister noted that the challenge was global, and the contribution has to be global as well. "It is not just the UAE who should cater to climate mitigation," he opined during an interview with Aletihad, a UAE newspaper. The caretaker prime minister also highlighted the importance of modern knowledge-based economies and the transformation towards low carbon, adding that Pakistan considered the climate change a "national security challenge" and a shared global issue.

He said the climate change was a common challenge to all of them, whether it was a small nation or a

large nation.

Elaborating his viewpoint, the caretaker prime minister further said that one could not rely on the assumption that drought would only affect a particular country, or a hurricane would target a specific nation, or the melting of a glacier would only occur in certain regions.

"Yes, there will be more vulnerable countries, but that vulnerability does not protect others. Climate change is changing its face, shape, and form, affecting more or less the entire globe," the media outlet quoted the prime minister as saying.

Emphasising the need for solutions, he said that scientific and empirical evidence should guide governments. Vulnerable nations as well as emitters determined the terms of reference for dialogue. These terms outlined the role of all contributors, he observed.

"Rather than being judgemental, the focus should be on resolving the challenge, and the key question is who would play that role!" the care-

taker prime minister said.

In the initial stages, the outcomes of the process were beyond the scope of human knowledge. Now, all were aware of the situation, he said, stressing that defining roles and determining who would actively contribute, held the key to resolving the climate issue. The caretaker prime minister also highlighted the importance of closely watching scientific developments in the climate domain. "The buzzwords of one decade would be obsolete in another. So we have to think that the change will be kaleidoscopic, and it will be quite speedy. So we have to be vigilant about what scientific developments are happening. And we have to keep an eye on that," he maintained.

He also outlined Pakistan's efforts in sustainability and climate fight, noting that the country could also benefit from the UAE-led climate fund. "Pakistan, I presume, would be one of the beneficiaries of such funds, particularly when it comes from a brotherly country like the UAE.

(Continued on Back Page)

Israeli bombing of Gaza intensifies, refugee camp reported hit

GAZA/CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli forces bombed wide areas of the Gaza Strip on Sunday, killing and wounding dozens of Palestinians, as civilians in the besieged territory sought shelter in an ever-shrinking area of the south.

The Hamas Palestinian militant group said its fighters clashed with Israeli troops about 2 km (1 mile) from the southern city of Khan Younis, as residents said they feared a fresh Israeli ground offensive was building there. There was no immediate comment from Israel.

The Jabalia refugee camp in the north of the Hamas-ruled enclave was among the sites hit reported hit from the air. A Gazan health ministry spokesperson said several people were killed by an Israeli air strike.

Footage obtained by Reuters showed a boy covered in grey dust, sitting weeping amid crumbled cement and rubble from collapsed buildings. "My father was martyred (killed)," he cried in a hoarse voice.

A girl in a pink sweatshirt, also coated with dust, stood between piles of rubble saying: "No, no, no."

Bombardments from war planes and artillery also concentrated on Khan Younis and Rafah, another city

in Gaza's south, residents said, and hospitals were struggling to cope with the flow of wounded.

There was no immediate comment from Israel on the reported actions.

The renewed warfare followed the end on Friday of a seven-day pause in the fighting between Israeli forces and Hamas militants which had allowed an exchange of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners.

The violence took place despite calls from the United States - Israel's closest ally - for Israel to avoid further harm to Palestinian civilians.

More than 15,523 people have been killed, according to Gaza's health ministry, in nearly two months of warfare that broke out after a Hamas cross-border raid on southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which 1,200 Israelis were killed and more than 200 taken hostage.

Israel says it is acting to annihilate Hamas, saying it poses a mortal threat to the Jewish state's very existence. The initial Hamas attack and the ensuing war amount to the bloodiest episode in the decades-old wider Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, speaking to ABC News, said the military pressure was to force

Hamas to make a deal on further exchanges of prisoners and hostages. "And that military pressure continued on Friday (after the truce ended) and will continue in the days and weeks ahead." Gaza residents said on Sunday they feared an Israeli ground offensive on the southern areas was imminent. Tanks had cut off the road between Khan Younis and Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza, effectively dividing the Gaza Strip into three areas, they said.

The Israeli military ordered Palestinians to evacuate several areas in and around Khan Younis. It posted a map highlighting shelters they should go to west of Khan Younis and south towards Rafah, on the border with Egypt.

But residents said that areas they had been told to go to were themselves coming under attack.

Israeli tanks shelled the eastern sector of Rafah on Sunday morning, residents said. There was no immediate comment from Israel on that.

There was hardly any space for more displaced people in the south after hundreds of thousands had fled the Israeli ground invasion in the north of the enclave, the residents said.



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Yemen's Houthis say they attacked Israeli ships in Red Sea

RIYADH (Reuters): The Pentagon said it was aware of reports regarding attacks on an American warship and commercial vessels in the Red Sea on Sunday, as Yemen's Houthi group claimed drone and missile attacks on two Israeli vessels in the area.

"We're aware of reports regarding attacks on the USS Carney and commercial vessels in the Red Sea and will provide information as it becomes available," the Pentagon said, Yemen's Houthi movement said its navy had attacked two Israeli ships, Unity Explorer and Number

Nine, with an armed drone and a naval missile. A spokesperson for the group's military said the two ships were targeted after they rejected warnings, without elaborating.

In a broadcast statement the spokesperson said the attacks were in response to the demands of the Yemeni people and calls from Islamic nations to stand with the Palestinian people. An Israeli military spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The reported incident follows a series of attacks in Middle Eastern

waters since war broke out between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas on Oct. 7.

An Israeli-linked cargo ship was seized last month by the Houthis, allies of Iran. The group, which controls most of Yemen's Red Sea coast, had previously fired ballistic missiles and armed drones at Israel and vowed to target more Israeli vessels. ABC News, citing a U.S. official, said the USS Carney had been involved in multiple engagements involving Houthi attacks on commercial vessels.

FIR of Chilas bus firing incident lodged

CHILAS (INP): Police lodged First Information Report (FIR) of the firing at a passenger bus in Chilas town in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) that killed at least nine persons and injured 25 yesterday, media reported on Sunday.

Local police confirmed the development and said that an FIR was lodged under different sections including terrorism into the Chilas bus firing incident.

In another development today, the GB chief minister announced Rs1 million compensation for the martyrs in the bus firing incident, Rs500,000 for seriously wounded people and Rs300,000 for those who sustained minor injuries.

Meanwhile, The Diamer police arrested six individuals following an assault on an Islamabad-bound bus in Chilas, Gilgit-Baltistan, where nine individuals, including two soldiers, lost their lives and 21 were injured due to an attack by unidentified gunmen. The bus driver's acceleration, prompted by the firing, caused a collision with a goods truck. The interior minister of GB labelled this attack as an act of terrorism, yet no group has claimed responsibility.

The Diamer commissioner's PR officer mentioned that a case was filed against unidentified troublemakers by Diamer SHO Azmat

Shah. Six suspects were apprehended at different police stations. Security measures were escalated with closures at GB entry and exit points, alongside search operations in Diamer, leading to the suspension of traffic on the Karakoram Highway for the day.

The Deputy Commissioner of Diamer, Captain Arif Ahmad, and Chilas Assistant Commissioner Sadaqat Ali confirmed these actions.

The funeral rites for the deceased, attended by GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan and senior army officials, were conducted, and bodies were later sent to their respective hometowns via Rescue 1122.

Pakistan defeats India, bags vice-chairmanship of UNESCO executive board

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan has been elected as Vice Chair of the UNESCO executive board defeating its historical opponent India by 20 votes for the term 2023 to 2025.

Pakistan was elected as Vice Chair of the UNESCO Executive Board for the term 2023-2025 from the Asia Pacific Group.

The elections were held at the 218th Session of the UNESCO Executive Board held in Paris.

In the elections, Pakistan secured 38 votes whereas India got 18.

The re-election of Pakistan for the UNESCO Executive

Board will very beneficial for the country. The re-election is proof of Pakistan's longstanding support and constructive role in the United Nations.

The Executive Board plays an important role in shaping the organization's policies and programs. The vice-chairmanship of the Executive Board of UNESCO will provide Pakistan an excellent opportunity to enhance its diplomatic relations and cooperation with other member countries.

Pakistan will play an important role in global advocacy and cooperation on issues of education, culture, science and communication.

DUBAI: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets the Pakistani students who won the award in one of the categories of Zayed Sustainability Awards 2023.

Russia accused of killing unarmed prisoners of war

KYIV (BBC): Ukraine has launched an investigation after a video emerged purportedly showing Russian troops killing two Ukrainian soldiers who had surrendered.

Ukrainian prosecutors say the footage shows "a group of people in Russian uniforms" shooting the unarmed Ukrainians at close range.

The prosecutors say the killing of prisoners of war is a "gross violation" of the laws and customs of conflict. The video has not been independently verified. Russia has not commented. Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022, both Kyiv and Moscow have accused each other of vio-

lating the Geneva conventions - a set of international humanitarian laws regulating the conduct of armed conflict, and specifically the treatment of POWs.

In a statement on Sunday, Ukraine's prosecutor general's office said a pre-trial investigation was launched "for violation of the laws and customs of war, combined with intentional murder".

It said the killing of POWs qualified as "a grave international crime".

Preliminary data suggested that the shooting happened near the village of Stepove in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, the office added. It gave no details about who shot the video and when.

Sindh Rangers hosts Peace Bicycle Rally

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Rangers on Sunday hosted a peace bicycle rally to persuade the masses to participate in peaceful healthy activities for further promotion of sports and tourism in the port city.

Over 50 male and female cyclists from different walks of life participated in the bicycle rally, said a spokesperson.

The rally started from Indus Chowrangi and passed through Qayyumabad, Ayesha Masjid, Clock Tower, Bilawal Chowrangi, Boat Basin, Nitti Jati Bridge, Gulbai, PAF Masroor Base, Cycle Chowrangi and ended at Dua Chowrangi.

The purpose of the rally is to create a peaceful environment in the city as well as attract citizens towards healthy activities, and promote sports and tourism.

The prizes were distributed at the end of the ceremony to encourage the winning players.

The participants said that in today's era, activity like cycling is very important for a healthy environment and physical health and organizing such sports activities increases the trend of sports events.

On this occasion, the participants appreciated the role of Rangers and other law enforcement agencies in promoting health activities along with establishing peace and order in Karachi.

14-day chrysanthemum show at Jilani Park

LAHORE (APP): With a wide array of colorful flowers on display, the annual chrysanthemum show organised by the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) of Lahore will open in the Jilani Park on Monday.

According to the PHA spokesperson, during the two-week long event, more than 50 colorful chrysanthemum varieties, some of them exotic, will be displayed. The main attraction is the innovative use of flowers to craft topiaries of animals such as peacock and giraffe. Over the weekend, as the event enters its final stages, Jilani Park will witness a steady stream of visitors arriving to discover an alternative world of blooms of rare size, colour, and form.

The blooms range from delicate, threadlike flowers suggesting spreading tentacles of coral to enormous globes of feather-like petals.

The PHA has decorated around 35,000 plants, including marigold, on the Jilani Park premises. The exhibition is the only time of the year when so many varieties of chrysanthemums are on display at one place, the spokesperson added. The PHA has also set up a shop at Jilani Park to enable visitors to purchase plants at government prices.

Director General Muhammad Tahir Wattoo said the annual exhibition had become a trademark of the PHA, helping it revive the golden tradition. He also lauded the organising committee, headed by Administration Director Muhammad Musa Ali Bokhari, for "working day and night" to present a wonderful chrysanthemum display.

Punjab governor meets children of SOS Village

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman met with children of SOS Children's Village here at the Governor's House on Sunday. Ayesha Baligh, wife of the governor, was also present. The governor said that children are our future and the management and entire team of SOS Children Village deserves to be praised for taking good care of the children.

He said that along with educating the children, character building is very important. He asked the children to inculcate high moral values in themselves and achieve excellence in life.

The governor added that a good character enables one to achieve success in life and hereafter. Appreciating the administration of SOS Children's Village, he said said that institutions like SOS Children's Village were doing a good job by providing good care, education, and training to children without parents.

He said that SOS Children's Village is

rendering great services to society by fostering these children who become useful members of society after getting better education and training. He emphasized, "We should collectively contribute to the welfare of the children to make them responsible citizens of society. Our religion also teaches to treat such children who are deprived of parental care with compassion and love."

The governor, while addressing the children, welcomed them to the historical building. He said that all of them were bright stars, and their presence had brightened up the Governor's House. He urged the children to work hard and always think positive for the betterment of humanity and the country. On this occasion, National Director SOS Children, Saba Faisal, and Chairman SOS Children Village Lubna Lashari were also with the children. The administration of the Governor's House also showed the children round.

CM inaugurates new building of Hanjarwal police station

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has inaugurated the new 3-storey building of Hanjarwal police station built in seven months and inspected various sections of the police station including the front desk.

The CM took a token from the machine and appreciated the token system being installed for the visitors. He inspected the waiting area, SHO room, IT room and meeting room. He directed to improve the quality of the doors.

Mohsin Naqvi inquired from the accused detained in the lockup about their cases. He lauded the steps with regard to the provision of excellent facilities for the visitors. He congratulated the Inspector General of Police, CCPO Lahore, DIG Operations and the whole team.

The condition of police stations is also being improved besides changing police station culture. Young and honest police officers are being posted and positive results have come to surface."

He maintained, "Around 24,800 driving licences have been made in a single day in Lahore which were only 250 per day before one month and it is a record. When a crackdown was not launched then only 250 licences were being made on a daily basis while 75,000 licences are being made in a single day across Punjab. The ACS (Home) is working hard day and night on the Safe City projects. We are receiving a positive feedback with regard to the police and improvement about police has occurred."

"The applicants can provide their feedback regarding a police station on the QR code. We are upgrading 737 police stations not only in Lahore but across Punjab. We will Insha Allah complete revamping, upgradation and other projects within the stipulated timeframe. Approximately 9,000 induction of police was being carried out," he maintained.

IG Police Dr. Usman Anwar gave a briefing about the construction of Hanjarwal Police Station and the provision of facilities to the visitors.

Talking to the media, the CM stated that upgradation work of 737 police stations across Punjab was ongoing. "Upgradation of every police station of the province would be undertaken and not a single police station would be ignored. Front desk, SHO room, investigation and reporting room are being improved in every police station and 22 new police stations are being built in Lahore. There is a great work load on the Communication & Works Department. Hopefully, 22 new police stations of Lahore would be constructed soon," he remarked.

He added, "A committee headed by the Additional Chief Secretary (Home) is being constituted which would further extend Safe City projects in 16 districts of the province. Over Rs one billion rent was being paid under the cost of cameras for mega events in the past but now this amount would be saved with the installation of cameras."

He said that he had visited Katcha areas along with the whole team and all gangs of dacoits would be eliminated. A separate package is being formulated for the uplift of the Katcha area which would comprise 19 police stations, two base stations, schools, roads and hospitals.

In reply to a question, the CM said that parents should think as to whether they have to keep their children in police stations or make their driving licenses. Parents should definitely make driving licenses of their children and no leniency would be tolerated in this regard. There are 7 million vehicles and motorcycles in Lahore and only one million licence-holders. We have made travel free on the Metrobus and Orange Line Metro Train for students, he said.

97 new dengue cases reported in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Punjab remains in the clutches of the dengue virus, with 97 new cases reported on Sunday.

The latest Health Department data reveals a total of 14,432 confirmed dengue cases across 36 districts in Punjab this year.

Lahore takes the lead in this unfortunate count with a staggering 6,602 cases, followed closely by Rawalpindi with 2,633, Gujranwala with 1,533, Multan with 1,379 and Faisalabad with 851 cases.

The situation continues, with Lahore reporting an additional 61 new dengue cases, Rawalpindi with 2, Gujranwala with 11, Multan with 10, Faisalabad with 4 and Sheikhupura with 2 new cases. Meanwhile, Narowal, Okara,

Muzaffargarh, Bahawalpur, Vehari, Lodhran and Khoshab each reported one case within 24 hours.

Currently, 72 dengue patients are undergoing treatment in various hospitals across Punjab, with 38 of them in Lahore district hospitals.

The Secretary of Health Punjab, Ali Jaan Khan, issued a compelling plea to citizens, urging them to maintain clean and dry surroundings as a preventive measure against Dengue fever.

He also called for cooperation with health department teams that are working tirelessly to combat this outbreak.

For those in need of dengue treatment, information, or wishing to register complaints, a free helpline is available through the health department at 1033.



KARACHI: Folk singer performing Sindhi song during celebration of Sindhi Ajrak Topi Culture Day at Karachi Press Club.

Sindhi Culture Day celebrations begin

KARACHI (APP): The Sindhi Culture Day celebrations have commenced across the metropolis here on Sunday. Sindhi Culture Day, also known as Sindhi Ajrak and Topi Day, is celebrated every year on the first Sunday of December.

The day is celebrated to highlight Sindhi's rich culture. Different programs and rallies have also been scheduled across the city today.

Sindhi Police marks Sindhi Culture Day: The Sindhi Police marked 'Sindhi Cultural Day' with enthusiasm at the Central Police Office (CPO), Karachi, hosting a cultural event at the Police Headquarters. Senior officers adorned traditional Sindhi Ajrak attire, adding vibrancy to the occasion.

Artists paid tribute to martyrs with Sufi songs.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindhi, Riffat Mukhtar Raja, highlighted Sindhi's significance, its ancient culture, and stressed fostering

a crime-free society.

Emphasizing respect for all, he urged upholding Sindhi culture's essence and promoting safety.

IGP Riffat Mukhtar Raja emphasized Sindhi's historical significance, calling it a symbol of peace with a unique identity and global recognition. The event concluded with a message of unity among diverse communities in Sindhi, emphasizing shared humanity. Participants received Sindhi cultural caps and ajraks as tokens of unity and celebration. The DIGPs and AIGPs also shared their perspectives during the ceremony.

Faryal Talpur felicitates on 'Sindhi Culture Day': The Central President of Pakistan Peoples Party Women's Wing Faryal Talpur has congratulated the people of the whole country including Sindhi on the 'Sindhi Culture Day'.

She said, "The culture of the Indus Valley is a reflection of a five thousand year old civilization and is one

oldest and greatest civilizations of the world." She also said, "Sindhi Topi, Ajrak and Sindhi language have a distinct identity, adding that Pakistan is a land of unparalleled cultural heritage." Talpur said, "We all have to play our part to preserve and highlight this great legacy of cultures in Pakistan." Media should play its leading role in highlighting all the beautiful cultures of Pakistan, she added.

Governor, Caretaker CM felicitate on Sindhi Culture Day: Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori and Sindh Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar while congratulating the people of the province on Sindhi Culture Day, said that the history and culture of our province was centuries old.

In their separate messages on Sunday, they said that peace and harmony were the special qualities of the people of the province. They said that Sindhi was the land of Sufis and Saints, who always taught brotherhood and love.

Lahore still world's second most polluted city despite govt measures

LAHORE (APP): Despite government efforts, the provincial metropolis was the second most polluted place in the world on Sunday.

According to the Meteorological Department, the overall air pollution level in the city was 221. In Phase VIII DHA, it was 308, Cantt Polo Ground 263, Aitchison College 185, Shahrah-e-Quad-e-Azam 373, Johor Town 189, while at Fida Hussain House was 230.

Meanwhile, on the instructions of Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa, action continues against

violation of anti-smog orders. Four trash burning furnaces have been demolished for using old technology, while nine were extinguished. The Punjab Environment Protection Department (EPD) also started various initiatives to control smog, under which smog dissolution "weather generators" have been installed in Lahore.

EPD Directors Naseem-Ul-Rehman Shah told APP that anti-smog generators were operating successfully in Russia, Dubai, adding a weather generator is capa-

ble of dissolving smog in a 10 square kilometer area.

The EPD director said that all possible measures including generators were being taken to control smog. "Short and medium-term projects have been prepared in this regard", he added.

He said that it was the need of the hour to reduce the emission of harmful gases and use modern technology to control air pollution. Meanwhile, the EPD's anti-smog squad sealed various smoke emitting units in the city.

Declining education quality, a ringing alarm bell

LAHORE (APP): As recent years witnessed a clear decline in education standards at the government run institutions, respective provincial governments opted for alternate measures to keep up the pace of quality education.

With some of the known educational institutions in the private sector already earning laurels in the area, the governments are also struggling for a matching response through out of box solutions. A recent decision by caretaker Punjab government to shift control of 1000 public-sector schools to a non-governmental organization (NGO) is a clear manifestation of this approach. But, the same time, this initiative is also reflective of a malady that the provincial education system is suffering from chronic shortcomings in financial, administrative and academic domains.

The challenge of freeing the provincial education system from the clutches of inefficiency is not new as the previous governments also handed over thousands of schools to NGOs under Punjab Education Initiative Management Authority (PEIMA) in 2015.

Paid by the government, these organizations improved education quality and facilities at different urban and rural areas schools besides luring a large number of out of school children back to these institutions.

These measures also reflect desperation of the governments to grapple with declining education quality at public-sector institutions.

"Education quality was at decline at both the public and private educational institutions," claimed Prof. Abid Sherwani, Director General (DG) University of Management and Technology (UMT). "Decline in all fields of life including economy, politics, monetary and value system had also impacted quality of education."

Being critical of the conduct of both the students and teachers, he recommended to improve performance of administrative as well as professional side of the education system. "We need strict regulations and their implementation and a

specific criterion to run the educational institutions." Describing budgetary allocations for education sector as nominal, Prof. Sherwani remarked, "when we put the education on back burner, its quality would definitely suffer."

Though the quality of education was a bit better at colleges and universities, yet incapacity and disinterest of teachers, corrupt and weak administrative set-ups, bureaucratic indifference and lack of political will keeps haunting the public sector primary and secondary level institutions.

Lack of capacity-building initiatives and infrastructural facilities, temporary appointment of teachers, poor attendance of teachers and students and missing facilities at institutions are other factors detrimental to education quality.

"Lack of qualified faculty is enormously impacting quality of education at our institutions," said Former Deputy Secretary Planning at Punjab Higher Education Department (PHED) Prof. Ashfaq Bokhari. "Imbalance in demand and supply in academia linkages market for lower and upper level institutions, is another factor behind poor education quality." Referring to lacunae in appointment of regular Vice Chancellors (VCs) at public sector universities, Prof. Bokhari said improper process practiced for VCs appointment was weakening academic and administrative control at public-sector universities. "It was also a matter of lacking political will as education had never been a top priority for our politicians and decision makers," he stated.

Like Prof Bokhari, even the common men also believe that political elite in the country very often remained oblivious to this declining education quality at our institutions.

"Since they could afford costly education at private institutions for their children, why they would bother about the kids of poor people," said a small shopkeeper Ahmed Ali. "For them, political postings and transfers at these institutions were more important than the future of our children."

Meanwhile, a cursory look at

annual results of public-sector institutions also presents gloomy picture. Although, there are scattered instances of student from government institutions clinching positions at Board level examinations, yet the major chunk is grasped by private institutions.

"When the meritorious students prefer to study at private institutions, the chances for public sector institutions to excel in this domain would minimize," remarked Former Chairman Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Lahore Prof. Chaudhry Ismail.

Even if the private institutions boast of quality education, he contested, the quality was deteriorating there as well. "Commonly, the majority of today's teachers lack qualitative depth despite higher qualifications."

He said even many of the Phd degree holders lacked proper grip on their subjects. "This is our main dilemma as many universities given degree awarding status, were unable to maintain the required standards of education."

Moreover, lethargy and incompetence of the public sector teachers and poor administrative control was also well known to everyone, he added.

"Constant monitoring and target-oriented tasks for heads of institutions were vital for a change," Prof. Ismail said as he claimed, appointment of administrative secretaries other than educationists was another reason behind deterioration.

It is worth mentioning that besides other factors, the decision of converting many colleges into universities, giving them degree awarding status during early 2000s and thereon had also badly affected education quality.

Since the problem is multifaceted, therefore the anti-dote to these ills is efficient implementation of National Education Policy, least political interference in posting and transfers of institutional heads, improve administration and budgetary allocations, promote competitiveness and a put in place a strict reward and punishment code.



LAHORE: Children enjoy swings in a local park at Bagh Jinnah.



Disability Day observed in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Like other parts of the country the International Day of Persons Disability was observed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also on Sunday.

In observance of the International Disabilities Day, a ceremony was held at the Governor House under the auspices of the Association for the Rehabilitation of Physically Disabled (ARPD).

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali was chief guest while provincial minister Justice (R) Irshad Qaisar, ARPD President Anjum Anwar, Secretary General Zahra Iqbal, and around 50 disabled children also took part in the ceremony.

Addressing the gather-

ing, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali said that special children are close to his heart, considering their service as a form of worship.

Following his pledge, Governor House not only extended invitations to special children but also personally remained available to serve them.

He said that over 2,000 disabled children were made special guests at the Governor House, where arrangements were made for their entertainment and lunch.

The Governor expressed his wish for disabled individuals to lead a life of dignity and respect.

The Governor emphasized that disabled persons are an integral part of our community and are seekers of our special attention and

love.

Speaking at the ceremony, Provincial Minister Irshad Qaisar lauded the Governor's humanitarian commitment and expressed appreciation for his dedication to serving humanity.

He emphasized that disabled and special children deserve our special attention, and the Governor has proven his sincere commitment to humanity and public service.

The president of the association commended the Governor for his compassion, love, and empathy towards special children, highlighting the exemplary manner in which they were invited to the Governor House.

The event concluded with a celebratory cake cutting.

Officials directed to leave all WhatsApp groups

PESHAWAR (APP): SSP Operations Kashif Aftab Ahmad Abbasi has issued instructions to police officers and personnel to leave all WhatsApp groups.

According to detail, through a message, SSP Operations Kashif Aftab Ahmad Abbasi through a message to SPs to ask police officers and personnel to leave WhatsApp groups. Anti-national elements are using baseless news in social media and portraying the role of the Police Force in different ways, he said.

Police social media team should start monitoring all personnel, he said, adding, "Departmental action will be taken on the presence of police officers or personnel in WhatsApp groups."

Peshawar Police spokesperson will be a part of WhatsApp groups, he said. Peshawar Police Disciplinary Force would look into it, SSP Operations Kashif Aftab Ahmad Abbasi said.

The police force was being blackmailed in various ways, which the senior officers took notice of, SSP Operations said. Officers including all police personnel should immediately leave social media WhatsApp groups, SSP operations warned, otherwise disciplinary action would be taken against the violators of the orders.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali addressing a public meeting at Gulbahar.

Bilawal Bhutto visit to mobilize workers in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visit to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had strengthened the party and encourage workers to mobilize before upcoming general elections scheduled on 8th February, 2024.

This was claimed by People's lawyers Forum (PLF) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Gohar Rehman Khattak advocate

while addressing cabinet meeting and focused on Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visit to Peshawar High Court.

Former Governor Masood Kausar, PLF general secretary Lajbar Khan Khalil and senior leader Wali Khan also addressed the participants. They argued for full participation to welcome PPP's chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at Peshawar High Court.

PLF president Gohar Rehman Advocate said that

the forum would be reorganize on pure democratic norms to ensure representation of both legal fraternity and public interest litigation. He claimed that PPP had upheld rights of deprived segments of society.

He argued public at large to vote PPP in next general elections for social security and good governance. He added that PLF stands with the party shoulder to shoulder supremacy of constitution and public interest policy making.

All facilities to be provided to people

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali Sunday said that all resources would be utilized to provide facilities to the people at their door steps and such services would be continued without any break.

The young generation, he said, should control their emotions and direct all their energies towards sports activities. Sports equipment will be provided for sports activities without any discrimination in all areas, he added.

He was addressing a gathering wherein people from different parties joined JUI-F in Gulbahar area. The people of

Peshawar presented problems related to their area, including gas, HDP pipe, iron tanks, removal of towels, drain, main drain of Asad Anwar Colony, street lights, transformer, electricity and gas load shedding.

Mayor of Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali said that he is trying to provide facilities to the people at their doorstep. Mayor Peshawar issued instructions and directed the staff that the problems of Gulbahar will be solved on a regional basis.

On the occasion of the joining program, Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani, Advocate Haji Mohammad Saeed, Maulana Shahid

Jamal, and Fazlur Rahman, Haji Rahmatullah, Talat Iqbal, Chairman Imran Naveed, Chairman Azal Sher Haji Amin Gul, Haji Zar-amash and Haji Farid Gul were also present who welcomed those joined JUI-F.

The dignitaries were also present and congratulated the new entrants in the party. On this occasion, Mayor Peshawar said that the popularity of JUI is increasing day by day and people are leaving other parties and joining JUI-F and inshallah once again JUI will prove a popular party that believes in serving the people of all areas without any discrimination or party affiliation.

NHA operation to clear road continues

PESHAWAR (APP): The National Highways Authority (NHA) continued its operation to clear glaciers and snow from the Mansehra Naran Jalkhad (MNJ) road on Sunday, successfully reinstating the route up to Phuldari.

According to NHA sources, operations were initiated at various locations where glaciers and snow had caused blockages on the MNJ road.

Deputy Director of NHA, Javed Yousuf, informed the media that heavy machinery has effectively cleared the road up to Khannian Phuldari. It is anticipated that the road will be fully cleared up to Naran by the evening.

Following heavy snowfall last Thursday in Naran, Kaghan, Babasar Top, and other tourist attractions in the upper Mansehra district, certain sections of the MNJ road were obstructed by glaciers and snow, leading to the entrapment of tourists and locals in some areas.

'Physical disability may cause serious problems'

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, CEO Paraplegic Center Peshawar, has said that due to the revolutionary changes in medical science, the average age of people is continuously increasing. However, in such situations, physical disability can become a serious threat to humanity that requires immediate focus to all the causes, he added.

On the occasion of the International Day of People with disabilities, Dr. Ilyas Syed, while answering various questions of the host Dr. Latifullah Umarzai in the

special program of Radio Pakhtunkhwa Peshawar, Daru Dermal, said that if the principles of proper diet and exercise are adopted like developed nations, then most diseases and medications including diabetes and blood pressure can be avoided in Pakistan. Similarly, he said, cousins' marriages and discouraging children from motor cycling can also block pathways to physical disabilities.

Dr Ilyas said the use of motorcycle helmets and strict adherence to traffic laws can also prevent people from becoming disabled. Likewise, he said that in Pakistan, there are

millions of patients with severe head injuries in various accidents and thousands of disabled people suffer due to spinal cord injuries, but there is a serious lack of effective treatment facilities for them, on which the government and the public need all attention to address it for good.

On this occasion, the host Dr. Latif and a number of listeners paid tribute to Dr. Ilyas Syed for his selfless services for successfully running the only Spinal Cord Injury Institute in Pakistan and devotion for the rehabilitation of the physically challenged who also demanded the highest civil award for him.

253,068 people repatriated

PESHAWAR (APP): The repatriation of people to Afghanistan continued as 253,068 persons returned till December 2 through three border points of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to KP Home Department, 248,890 persons repatriated through Torkham, 3,479 people through Angor Adda Waziristan, 698 people via Kharachi Kurram district.

Total 5064 people including 114 from Islamabad, 873 from Punjab and 24 from Azad Kashmir were deported through Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Similarly, 6075 were deported through Torkham border.

Weather to remain cold

PESHAWAR (APP): The weather is likely to remain cold and partly cloudy in most districts of the province, an official of the Met Office told here Sunday.

There is a possibility of fog in the morning and evening in the districts of Nowshera, Mardan, Swabi, Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu, the official said.

Peshawar: In Kalam, the mercury fell due to freezing. The temperature in Kalam is minus 3 degrees centigrade, the official of the Meteorological Department said.

The minimum temperature in Peshawar is expected to be 8 degrees Celsius while the maximum temperature is expected to be 26 degrees Celsius, the official of the Meteorological Department said, adding, Chitral 1, Dir 0, Malam Jabba 1 and Takhtbhai recorded 7 degrees Celsius.

Police arrested an alleged accused involved in crime

PESHAWAR (APP): A successful operation of the Hayatabad Police by arresting a suspect involved in street crime incidents, Police officials told media men here on Sunday morning.

The alleged accused had taken shelter in the canal to

avoid arrest during the search operation, Police officials said.

The official said that the accused identified as Abdullah belongs to Afghanistan. Police had also continued advertisements for the arrest of the

said accused, who committed many crimes.

The accused is also a part of a robbery gang including snatching and killing, Police said. Further interrogation of the accused is being continued, the Police officials told media men.

Waves of inflation not reducing

PESHAWAR (APP): As claimed by the district administration to control the prices of the various commodities after their raids, the wave of inflation could not be reduced and the prices of vegetables and fruits continued to increase.

During a visit to the vegetables and fruits market, the rates of various food items continued increasing and the vendors did not follow the price lists of various food items issued by the district administration.

The price of ginger is Rs. 540, garlic 620, lemon 150 rupees sold per kg and onion 160, tomato 120, potato 120, capsicum 150, pumpkin 100 and peas 200 rupees per kg sale while the Tenda 90, karela 160 and potato 140 rupees are being sold per kg in the market.

In the fruits market, the price of apples 280, Grapes 370 and Amluk Rs 190, are being sold. Malta 290, pomegranate Rs 330 and Banana Rs 160 are being sold per dozen.

However, fluctuations continue in the price of live chicken per kg. The price of live chicken in the market will reach 410 rupees per kg.

Colourful Annual Day organized

PESHAWAR (APP): The colourful Annual Day of the Happy Day School System held with female students mesmerizes by taking part in scores of events part of the Annual Day celebration of the girls campus.

Director of the Happy Day School System Dr. Syed Dawood Bukhari was the chief guest on this occasion with academic staff, teaching faculties, parents and students were there and largely enjoyed the carnival.

Along with the academic health of female students, sports are very important for physical and mental health, Director Dr. Syed Dawood Bukhari said while addressing the Annual Day of the Happy Day School System.

In order to include Peshawar female students in the provincial and national cycle, they have to be equipped with education and physically challenged

besides ensuring due facilities to them so that they could actively participate in sports activities, which is not an integral part of the Academic.

Along with education, the educational institutions that provide sports opportunities for physical fitness are implementing the government orders for the promotion of education, he added.

The Annual Sports Week 2023 was organized by the Happy Day School System at Garrison Recreation Park wherein not only teaching staff, students but their parents were also there and enjoyed the performance of the loving kids.

The event started with the recitation from the Holy Quran, after which special guest Director Dr. Syed Dawood Bukhari and School Principal Maimoona Rauf opened the ceremony by cutting the ribbon.

Following the inauguration school children presented a March Past and exhibited their skills in various games including One Leg Race, Sack Race, Simple Race, Spoon & Ball Game, Kangaroo Race, Painting & Drawings Games, Balloon Race, Frog Jumping, Back to Back Race, Apple eating, Musical Chair Game, Head to Head Game, Blind Apple Eating Game, Balance the Ball on the Plate, Tennis Game etc with all the participating students in their respective colorful dresses and games made the event a joyful moment for the participants.

At the end of the day's event, Director Dr. Syed Dawood Bukhari and Principal of the school, Maimoona Rauf distributed medals and prizes among the winning position holders' students. The ceremony ended with the National Anthem.



PESHAWAR: Special Assistant Zafarullah Khan Umarzai giving a shield to Contractor Abid Mufji during his visit to BRT Dabgari Gardan Depot.

Addiction of Naswar increases health hazards

PESHAWAR (APP): Alam Khan, a 46-year-old resident of Nowshera district, was rushed to a private dental hospital in an emergency due to excruciating tooth pain.

Crying with immense pain while laying his hand on his right face, Alam was immediately shifted to the Oral and Maxillofacial Department of the Sardar Begium Dental College, Peshawar, for surgery on one of his right molars.

Upon thorough examination, the doctor diagnosed decayed molars, which had also caused a critical gum infection due to the extensive use of naswar by the patient since his adolescence.

Dr. Tahir Khan, senior surgeon of the hospital, said

that the molar of the patient was extracted as root canal treatment was not feasible due to decay and gum infection.

"I started Naswar in a hostel with a group of friends in a bid to avoid the stress of the MA exam back in 2000, and since then I have not been able to leave the practice due to its addiction," said Alam, adding that due to excessive use of Naswar, his teeth turned pale and also caused the extraction of his two teeth.

"I time and again tried my level best to get rid of this habit, but to no use. Throwing saliva in the office and house makes a very bad impression on my personality,"

Dr. Tahir Khan said the

severity of naswar addiction could result in severe gum infections, jaw complications, and the loss of multiple teeth. Naswar's harmful effects extend beyond oral health, potentially causing bone loss, stomach disorders, and facial disfigurement.

It may also contribute to an increase in heart rate with cardiac vascular complications, and in some cases, it can lead to more severe conditions like mouth and oral cancer.

Referring to a report from the Global Cancer Observatory, Dr. Tahir pointed out that Pakistan faces a significant burden of lip and oral cavity cancers, with about 11,000 new cases in males every year, making it the most

common cancer among men. "Poor dental hygiene, tobacco use, and viral infections, besides quack doctors, contribute to these alarming statistics," he informed.

Approximately 10,000 people die of cancer of the lips and oral cavity annually in the country, the doctor said, adding that the main reasons for such cancers were chewable and non-chewable tobacco, poor dental hygiene practices, oncogenic viral infections, and genetic predispositions.

Despite the grave health risks, naswar remains prevalent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where approximately 70 percent of the population uses it without knowing its serious consequences for health.

PMDC award ceremony held

PESHAWAR (APP): The Annual Excellence Award Ceremony of Peshawar Model Degree Colleges was held at City University of Science and Information Technology on Sunday.

The students who performed exceptionally well in their HSSC Annual Exam 2022 were awarded gold medals, silver medals, and certificates.

The MDCAT and ETEA toppers from Peshawar Model Degree Colleges were also honored with special prizes.

Deputy Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Mirza Muhammad Afridi, graced the occasion as the chief guest. A large number of parents were also present.





In brief

Meeting takes up recovery

NAROWAL (APP): Deputy Commissioner Syed Hassan Raza chaired a meeting on the recovery of rents of government commercial properties on the direction of the chief secretary. In the meeting, recovery of tenancy and rental amount regarding auction of commercial properties of the government, municipal committees and district council in Narowal district including court cases of these properties were discussed. Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Shaukat Azim, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Hafiz Irfan Hameed, CO District Council Sajjid Musharraf and CO Municipal Committee of the three tehsils Sardar Ali, Naseer Ahmad and Rehan Saleem participated.

Suspects arrested

PATUKI (INP): Police in Patuki on Sunday arrested four suspects who opened fire on a coaster bus carrying female students yesterday. The incident occurred in the Sunder area of Patuki after a tour coaster bus traveling from Patuki to Kashmir was fired upon, injuring two female students. According to police, the suspects are from Lahore and reside in Hanjarwal. They opened fire on the bus, injuring two female students. The injured students were taken to a hospital in Lahore for treatment. DIG Investigation Lahore Imran Kishwar has taken notice of the incident and has formed five special teams to investigate the case. The teams have been tasked with arresting the remaining suspects and bringing them to justice. The police are urging the public to come forward with any information they may have about the suspects or the incidents.

State land reclaimed

FAISALABAD (APP): About 15 Kanal, 8 Marla and 35 feet state land was reclaimed on the orders of the Punjab Ombudsman. A spokesman for the divisional administration said here on Sunday that various applicants had filed complaints before the Punjab Ombudsman, contending that people had grabbed state land in their areas in Toba Tek Singh, Sargodha and Bhakkar. Punjab Ombudsman Major (Retired) Azam Suleman Khan after hearing complaints issued orders for immediate retrieval of state land from the illegal possession of the Qabza mafia. Therefore, special teams comprising administration and revenue officers took action against land grabbers and retrieved 15 Kanal, 8 Marla and 35 feet state land from their possession. The market value of the land was estimated at Rs.493.6 million, the spokesman added.

PWDs day observed

SARGODHA (APP): Like other parts of the globe and Pakistan, Persons with Disabilities Day was observed in Sargodha and many departments held seminars and walks. Makhdoom Shah Kameer Qureshi, Senior vice President Pakistan Muslim league Nawaz Sillanwali, urged government organisations and civil society to make special efforts for the inclusion of PWDs in all spheres of life. Talking to APP, he said, "We need to create an enabling and friendly environment for PWDs by providing them with inclusive education, healthcare facilities, employment based on their skills and abilities, and implementing job quotas," he added.

Governor visits King Bazaar

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali embarked on a sudden visit to Kohat's renowned King Bazar, eliciting expressions of joy from the local business community and residents.

The Governor strolled through King Gate in the central bazar, engaging in informal interactions with shopkeepers and traders.

He took the opportunity to gain insights into the issues and challenges faced by the business community.

The impromptu visit took the form of a procession as Governor's presence in King Gate Bazar triggered spontaneous celebrations.

Local residents, chil-

dren, and traders took pictures, showered petals, and adorned him with garlands.

Witnessing the Governor casually mingling with the public in the market brought genuine happiness to the people. This spontaneous interaction showcased strong public relations between the Governor and the local community and business fraternity.

Later, the Governor participated in the Kohat Chamber of Commerce's event. The Chamber's President, Arshad Hayat, founder member Rashid Paracha, and other officials warmly welcomed the Governor.

During the ceremony, Chamber representatives presented suggestions relat-

ed to the advancement of the national industry and highlighted challenges faced by the business community.

The Governor addressed the gathering, emphasizing the integral connection between the country's economic progress and industrial growth.

There is a current demand for facilitating the business class, and Governor Haji Ghulam Ali expressed the commitment of federal and provincial governments to promote investment in the country.

He assured that all necessary facilities are being provided to the business community for the advancement of national industry and trade.

FIA offloads 9 beggars from Saudia-bound flight

MULTAN (INP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Sunday offloaded nine alleged beggars travelling to Saudi Arabia in the disguise of Umrah pilgrims from Multan, Punjab.

According to the FIA spokesperson, FIA Immigration arrested nine alleged beggars from Saudi Arabia-bound flight from Multan International airport.

The authorities said the arrested included 6 women and two men, who failed to

disclose the booking of any hotel during their stay in Saudi Arabia.

The arrested have been moved to the anti-human trafficking cell of the FIA for further investigation. FIA spokesperson said strict monitoring is underway of the passengers to burst begging gangs.

Earlier, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) offloaded 24 alleged beggars in the disguise of Umrah pilgrims from Saudi Arabia-bound flight at

Multan airport.

The FIA officials during the immigration process questioned the passengers who confessed that they were going to visit the KSA to seek alms.

The arrests came after the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development disclosed to the Senate Committee on Overseas Pakistanis that a significant proportion of beggars are trafficked abroad through illegal channels.

Five wanted criminals arrested by police

MULTAN (INP): Police Station Sadar Multan on Sunday has arrested five accused belonging to two different gangs involved in various incidents of robberies, snatchings, street crimes and motorcycle theft.

According to police, the arrests were made during separate operations led by SHO Police Station President Multan Munir Javed and his team. The first gang, led by Imran alias Mana Sheikh, son of Wazir Ahmed, was apprehended along with his

accomplices Wajahat Hussain, son of Hanif Ahmed, and Mukhtiar Ahmed, son of Abdul Sattar. Stolen property worth Rs. 3 lakh, including two motorcycles and Rs. 1 lakh in cash, was recovered from them.

The second gang, led by Khalil Ahmed, son of Wazir Ahmed, was also apprehended. His accomplice, Irfan Ahmed, son of Fida Hussain, was arrested alongside him. Stolen goods worth over Rs. 6 lakh, including five motor-

cycles, were recovered from their possession.

Both gangs were wanted in multiple cases of robbery, dacoity, and motorcycle theft. During the investigation, it was revealed that the arrested accused of the Mana gang were involved in several robberies and thefts, while those of the Khalil gang were specifically involved in ten motorcycle thefts. Cases are being registered against all the arrested suspects, and further investigations are underway.

Members visits Miranshah North Waziristan



MIRANSHAH (APP): The members of national security workshop belonging to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa visited tehsil Miranshah of North Waziristan district.

During the visit, local peoples' welfare, establishment of durable peace, development projects and positive effects of the foresighted strategies were analyzed, a security official told APP on Sunday.

The team of the workshop were also shown mobile infotainment school that were providing quality education to the far flung areas' students of the district.

Mobil health unit setup for provision of free medicines and better treatment services to people of North Waziristan was also shown. The members of the workshop also visited

Tochi Museum where they were informed about North Waziristan's historical perspective and sacrifices of the martyres for peace and stability of North Waziristan.

The members of the workshop highly praised the efforts of Pakistan Army for establishment of peace, progress and development of North Waziristan district.

Gur wali Chai a healthy hot drink in winter

SARGODHA (APP): With the advent of the winter season, 'gur chai' or jaggery tea is the most favorite hot drink as it helps fight several winter-related diseases.

Dr. Abdul Rehman, a health expert, told APP that nutritious and tasty 'Gur wali chai' attracts most people in cold weather and the sale of jaggery increases from November to February. Apart from staving off the cold, the tea helps in fighting several winter-related diseases, he added. Hassan Khichi, a rural man, said during win-

ter he never takes sugar tea as gur is cheap and its tea is better than sugar tea in nutrition, taste and overall vitality. "It is very common to eat 'gur' in winter and my family still love to take Gur Chai in the season," he added.

A vendor who sells 'gur chai' at Shaheen Chowk Sargodha said, "This tea is basically taken by rural persons, who are familiar with the benefits of jaggery. It is affordable in price and its nutritive value makes it a hit among the masses".

Doctors also recommend tea prepared with jaggery

as it is a rich source of iron, potassium, vitamins and helps in detoxification of liver, good for digestive system and enhances immunity. Medical expert Dr. Waqas Naeem said jaggery contains potassium and sodium, which play an important role in the maintenance of acid levels in the body as well as it makes sure that a normal level of blood pressure is properly maintained. "If you suffer from aches and pains in your joints, eating jaggery can provide you with much-needed relief," he says.



ABBOTTABAD: Deputy Commissioner Abbottabad Khalid Iqbal presiding over a meeting regarding computerizing of land record.

One killed, another injured

SHEIKHUPUR (INP): One person was killed and another injured after hit by an over speeding tractor trolley in Mandiali Chowk of Sheikhpura on Sunday, police said.

According to details, a reckless drive tractor trolley ran over two pedestrians in Sheikhpura.

As a result of accident, one person was killed on the spot and another sustained critical wounds. Driver of the tractor trolley fled the scene of accident.

The bodies and injured were shifted to hospital for medico-legal formalities. The police impounded the vehicle and after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest the driver at large.

Constable, others booked

PAKPATTAN (INP): Pakpattan police have registered a case against a lady police constable and her 24 accomplices for allegedly torturing an official of Punjab Highway Patrolling Police, reported on Sunday.

The case includes provisions for speeding, assaulting a policeman, blocking a road and attempting to snatch official weapons.

According to details, the Punjab Highway Patrol Police stopped the speeding vehicles near Jeevan Shah and vehicles were brought to Rang Shah police station to be locked in the police station.

A lady constable Nabila Vakil from Vihari, who was also travelling in one of the over-speeding vehicles with her relatives, flew into a rage and blocked the road first with the help of her colleagues and then started torturing Punjab Highway Patrol Police personnel for stopping the vehicles.

The accused also tried to snatch government weapons from officials of Pakpattan police station Rangshah and also tortured three local people for forbidding.

Board interviews candidates

SARGODHA (INP): The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Parliamentary Board has interviewed 105 shortlisted candidates for 11 national and 23 provincial assembly seats in Sargodha region for the general elections and has started formulating its recommendations for the final decision.

The The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Parliamentary Board, which is headed by former Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif and former President Mian Shabbaz Sharif, also includes Vice President Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Chairman Election Cell Senator Ishaq Dar, Central General Secretary Ahsan Iqbal, Provincial President Rana Sanaiullah, Coordinator Dr. Tariq Fazal Choudhary and senior members conducted the interviews of the applicants.

The next meeting of the Parliamentary Board will be held on Sunday, in which the interviews of the shortlisted candidates of Rawalpindi Division will be conducted.

The Parliamentary Board has started formulating its recommendations for the final decision based on the recent interviews.

Rescue 1122 handles 557 emergencies

DI KHAN (INP): The district emergency service Rescue 1122 tackled a total of 557 emergencies with response time ranging within seven minutes during the last month.

Sharing a monthly performance report, the spokesman of the Rescue 1122 said on Sunday the service provided first medical aid to about 604 patients and subsequently shifted them to hospitals while tackling different emergencies in month of November under the leadership of District Emergency Officer Awais Babar.

Giving details, the spokesman added these emergencies included 423 medical, 111 road traffic accidents, six fire eruption, nine bullet injury or fight, two of roof and wall collapsing and six were recovery-related emergencies.

He informed that the response time to tackle those emergencies was

recorded at seven minutes.

He said a total of 97852 calls were received by the emergency service out of which 75548 were fake or irrelevant.

During this period, the rescue 1122 handled several referral-related emergencies, in which 67 patients shifted to various hospitals within the district. Similarly, in seven emergency cases, the patients were shifted to other cities including Peshawar, Islamabad and Multan.

He said that rescue teams also arranged training sessions on first aid or tackling other emergencies for employees of different organizations and students of various institutions.

Dera police seize NCP goods worth over Rs 14m

The district police, in continuation of crackdown against smuggling of non-custom paid (NCP) items, have seized goods worth over Rs 14 million in the

limits of Darzinda police station here Sunday.

Following the directions of District Police Officer Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, the operations against smugglings of NCP goods were continued across the district without any discrimination, said police spokesman.

He said a team of Darazinda police station led by SDPO Darazinda Circle Sher Ullah Khan along with SHO Taib Din Khan and Incharge of 'Aman-Mela' check post Mokol Khan recovered NCP items during checking of several vehicles.

During the checking of vehicles, the police recovered a total of 439 sacks of 'Chalia', 43 sacks of Chinese Salt and 24 bundles of Tyres. The estimated worth of these recovered items was around Rs 14 millions which was later handed over to the customs authorities for further legal action.

Police arrest 9 outlaws, recover drugs, arms

DI KHAN (APP): The district police on Sunday claimed to have arrested nine outlaws recovering drugs, weapons, and ammunition from them during different actions taken across the district.

According to a police spokesman, a team of Cantt police station led by SDPO Paharpur circle Kashif Sattar along with SHO Younis Khan arrested Kaleem Ullah son of Muhammad Ayub recovering 149 gram Ice drug from him. The same police raided at house of an absconder named Karman Ullah alias Toori son of Shereen Jan for his arrest. During the raid, the accused was not present at home, however, the police recovered a rifle along with 50 cartridges from his house.

Meanwhile, the Saddar police team led by SDPO

drug, Azhar Uddin son of Ghafoor Ahmad with 350 gram Ice drug and 300 gram hashish and Noor Akbar son of Bakmal Khan with an illegal pistol along with five cartridges.

Similarly, a team of Shaheed Nawab Khan police station led by SDPO Paharpur circle Kashif Sattar along with SHO Younis Khan arrested Kaleem Ullah son of Muhammad Ayub recovering 149 gram Ice drug from him. The same police raided at house of an absconder named Karman Ullah alias Toori son of Shereen Jan for his arrest. During the raid, the accused was not present at home, however, the police recovered a rifle along with 50 cartridges from his house.

Meanwhile, the Saddar police team led by SDPO

Saddar Circle Muhammad Saleem Baloch along with SHO Khubab Wali Baloch arrested a drug dealer Nausher alias Shera son of Falak Sher recovering 335 gram Ice drug from him.

Likewise, a team of Kulachi police station led by SDPO Kulachi Circle Sagheer Abbas Gilani along with SHO Yousaf Khan arrested Qudrat Ali son of Muhammad Bakhsh and Muhammad Mushtaq son of Abdul Sattar recovering 57 grams heroin from each of them. The same police also recovered 1500 liters Iranian Diesel from a Truck bearing registration number (6422) and arrested a truck driver named Faisal Mehmood son of Gulistan.

All the arrested accused were sent behind bars after registering separate cases against them.

UK offering help to improve health, educ

MULTAN (APP): Head of Economy and Trade (British High Commission) Mahesh Mishra stated that the United Kingdom was offering assistance to improve various sectors including health and education, in Pakistan.

He said this while addressing a ceremony at Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).

Mahesh Mishra hailed Pakistan's commitment to economic stability.

Mishra highlighted ongoing programs across provinces, emphasizing efforts to boost employment in the SME sector and facilitate access to British markets for Pakistani businessmen.

Mishra commended the unique aroma and taste of Multani mangoes and explored the renowned Blue Pottery Institute, acknowledging its global significance.

He maintained that UK was assisting Pakistan to expand the tax net, aiming to alleviate pressure on existing taxpayers and attract new contributors.

Furthermore, Mishra outlined collaborative measures to address challenges in health and educa-

tion, stressing the importance of skill development in the SME sector.

He stated, "The Infra Zamin" (Guarantee) Program, a non-profit credit extension facility designed to accelerate economic growth and enhance the regulatory environment.

He expressed dedication to boosting economic activity in South Punjab and fostering a conducive business environment.

Plans include improving the regulatory framework, promoting barter trade, and supporting Pakistani businesses in accessing the UK market. Mishra also unveiled a "green financing" program to facilitate Pakistan in combating environmental challenges, highlighting a 10-year commitment under the Climate Investment Program.

Mian Rashid Iqbal, President of the Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, also spoke and informed about Multan's rich heritage and economic potential. He underscored the city's diverse industries, from agriculture to handicrafts, and the formation of an alliance with seven Chambers in South Punjab to promote business activities.

The collaboration aims to foster trade, industry, commerce, agriculture, tourism, and IT sectors, with regular seminars and meetings between Pakistan and the UK, he added.

The establishment of a B2B platform was announced, promising to boost Pakistani exports and create employment opportunities, particularly in South Punjab.

On this occasion, Senior Economic Advisor Mr. Louie Dani and many other local businessmen were also present.

Body meets

BAHAWALPUR (APP): A meeting of the Committee of the Board of Management of Bahawalpur Arts Council was held here at the arts council premises.

Renowned intellectual, writer, poet, and academic, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Aslam Adee, presided over the meeting, which was also attended by the AC (Coordination), Jam Aftab Ahmad, Director, Bahawalpur Arts Council, Sajjad Hussain, Director, Directorate of Public Relations, Dr. Nasir Hameed, and the members.



Burkina, Niger to quit G5 anti-militant force

OUAGADOUGOU (AFP/APP): The military leaders of Burkina Faso and Niger said Saturday they would quit the G5 anti-militant force in Africa's Sahel region, the latest blow to the fight against insurgents in one of the world's most troubled zones.

The G5, created in 2014, has secured only meagre results, with Mali also quitting the original five-nation force last year in the wake of a military coup.

Leaders of the five countries agreed to deploy a joint anti-terror task force backed by France in 2017, but the military rulers of Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali have all accused Paris of having an outside role after years of French deployments on their territories.

Burkina and Niger "have decided in full sovereignty to quit all instances of the G5 Sahel, including the joint force" as of November 29, the two countries said in a statement.

"The organisation is failing to achieve its objectives. Worse, the legitimate ambitions of our countries, of making the G5 Sahel a zone of security and development, are hindered by institutional red tape from a previous era, which convinces us that our process of independence and dignity is not compatible with G5 participation in its current form," they said.

In a veiled reference to France, they added that "the G5 Sahel cannot serve foreign interests to the detriment of our people, and even less the dictates of any power in the name of a partnership that treats them like children, denying the sovereignty of our peoples." Military leaders headed by Captain Ibrahim Traore seized power in Burkina Faso in September 2022,

vowing to improve security after years of militant attacks by groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda and Islamic State. Relations with France quickly broke down, with Traore's government ordering French forces that had been helping the under-equipped Burkina army to quit the country in February. More than 17,000 people have died in attacks since 2015 in Burkina Faso, according to a count by an NGO monitor called the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), and two million people have been uprooted by the violence. On Saturday, Burkina Faso suspended "all distribution methods" of Le Monde daily after the French newspaper published an article on a deadly militant attack in the north.

The Burkina authorities in recent months have suspended the French TV outlets LCI and France 24 as well as Radio France Internationale and the magazine Jeune Afrique.

France has also begun withdrawing its 1,500 troops from Niger following demands by the military rulers who ousted President Mohamed Bazoum in July.

Niger's foreign minister Bakary Yauo Sangare on Saturday said the new US ambassador, Kathleen FitzGibbon, who arrived in August, would soon present her letter of assignment to authorities to take up her post. Washington, which withdrew non-essential staff from its embassy in August, indicated at the time that FitzGibbon would not present her credentials to Niger's new authorities, as the United States did not recognise them.

The West African nation is battling

two militant insurgencies -- a spillover in its southeast from a long-running conflict in neighbouring Nigeria, and an offensive in the west by militants crossing from Mali and Burkina Faso.

Along with Mali, which saw a military coup in 2020, Burkina has backed Niger's military, with the three nations on Friday supporting the creation of an Alliance of Sahel States, setting up closer economic ties and mutual defence assistance.

The military regimes have also formed close ties against international pressure for a swift return to civilian rule, and to combat the long-running militant insurgencies raging in the three countries.

Only Chad and Mauritania now remain in the G5, whose military deployment is largely financed by the European Union.

The French deployment in the region goes back over a decade to 2013 when then-president Francois Hollande sent troops into Mali to help fight a militant insurgency.

But the military successes have contrasted with political failure, as democracy regressed rather than developed in a region also plagued by a flood of disinformation that Paris blames on Russia. France also began pulling its troops from Mali last year, ending what became known as the Barkhane mission. On the ground, few joint G5 operations have been carried out and the security situation has continued to deteriorate. In late November, at least 40 civilians were killed by a major militant attack against a military base at Djibo in northern Burkina Faso, according to the United Nations.

Four killed in bomb attack on Catholic mass in Philippines

MARAWI (AFP/APP): At least four people were killed and dozens wounded in a bomb attack on a Catholic mass in the insurgency-plagued southern Philippines on Sunday, with President Ferdinand Marcos blaming "foreign terrorists".

The blast happened during a morning service at Mindanao State University's gymnasium in Marawi, the country's largest Muslim city.

Police Lieutenant General Emmanuel Peralta said four people were killed and around 50 wounded in the blast that was caused by an improvised explosive device. The death toll had earlier stood at three.

Other security officials said the bombing may have been a retaliatory attack for a series of military operations against Islamist militant groups in recent days.

Photos posted on the Lanao del Sur provincial government's Facebook page showed several overturned plastic chairs, shattered glass and debris around a black patch on the floor of the gymnasium.

University student Chris Jurado, 21, told AFP from his hospital bed that the explosion happened during the first Bible reading of the morning mass at 7:00 am (2300 GMT Saturday). "It was really sudden and everyone ran," Jurado said.

"When I looked behind me people were lying on the floor. We didn't know what happened because everything happened so fast."

Rowena Mae Fernandez, 19, said

she did not know what the blast was at first -- then others started running.

"My companion and I also ran, even though we fell on the ground at one point. That was the only thing I remembered until I got out of the gym and I fell again," she said from hospital.

"My friends were crying because they saw my injury."

Marcos condemned the attack by "foreign terrorists", describing it as "senseless" and "heinous".

Mindanao State University issued a statement condemning "the act of violence", as it suspended classes and deployed more security personnel on the campus.

"We stand in solidarity with our Christian community and all those affected by this tragedy," the university said.

Marawi city Mayor Majul Gandamra urged members of the Muslim and Christian communities to remain united.

"Our city has long been a beacon of peaceful coexistence and harmony, and we will not allow such acts of violence to overshadow our collective commitment to peace and unity," Gandamra said in a statement condemning the attack.

Military chief General Romeo Brawner said the bombing may have been a revenge attack for military operations against three Islamist militant groups -- Dawlah Islamiyah-Philippines, Abu Sayyaf and Maute - in western Mindanao in recent days.

"That is one angle we are looking into," Brawner told a news conference.

"Based on the evidence that we gathered there is a big percentage that points to the Maute-ISIS."

Pro-Islamic State Maute and Abu Sayyaf militants -- including foreign and local fighters -- held Marawi under siege in 2017.

The Philippine military wrestled back the ruined city after a five-month battle that claimed more than 1,000 lives.

"There are strong indications of a foreign element (in Sunday's attack)," Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro told reporters.

Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao del Sur are part of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The country's Muslim minority were given self-rule in Bangsamoro under former president Rodrigo Duterte as part of efforts to head off the lure of violent extremism.

Bangsamoro Government Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim said he "condemned the atrocious and cowardly acts" and called for a "thorough investigation".

Militant attacks on buses, Catholic churches and public markets have been a feature of decades-long unrest in the region. Manila signed a peace pact with the nation's largest rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, in 2014, ending their deadly armed rebellion. But smaller ban

Major aftershocks jolt Philippines after magnitude 7.6 quake

MANILA (AFP/APP): A powerful magnitude 7.6 earthquake struck the southern Philippines on Saturday, the US Geological Survey reported, followed by four major aftershocks that sent residents fleeing from coastal areas before tsunami warnings were lifted.

The initial quake struck off the coast of the country at a depth of 32 kilometres (20 miles) at 10:37 pm local time (1437 GMT) about 21 kilometres northeast of Hinatuan municipality on Mindanao island, the USGS said.

Early on Sunday, over the span of several hours, four powerful aftershocks of magnitudes 6.4, 6.2, 6.1 and 6.0 rumbled through the region, the USGS said.

The initial quake triggered tsunami warnings -- which were later removed

-- across the Pacific region and sent residents in northeast Mindanao fleeing buildings, evacuating a hospital and seeking higher ground.

"Destructive tsunami is expected with life threatening wave heights," the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said on X, formerly Twitter.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii also issued an alert but later posted that the danger had passed.

"There is no longer a tsunami threat from this earthquake," it said in a message.

The Philippines seismology institute said in a bulletin at 3:23 am (1923 GMT) local time that the highest waves generated by the seismic activity were .64 meters (25 inches)

tall on Mawes Island, but that the tsunami warning had ended.

Tsunami warnings were in effect as far as Japan's eastern Pacific coast, with small waves of up to 40 centimetres observed in some areas.

Palau, a western Pacific archipelago some 900 kilometres (560 miles) off Mindanao, reported no impact.

Hinatuan police Sergeant Joseph Lambo said the quake was "very strong" but that there were no reports of casualties or major property damage.

"Appliances fell off the shelves at the police office and two TV sets were broken. The motorcycles parked outside also tumbled down," Lambo told AFP.

"Right now we don't have reports of damage or

casualties but people are evacuating because of the tsunami alert."

Lambo said the 45,000 residents in the municipality had been ordered to leave their homes and many were going on foot or in vehicles to higher ground.

A video posted on social media and verified by AFP showed bottles of drinks and other products falling off shelves in a convenience store as staff fled outside.

Another video, shot by Dennis Orong, showed people screaming as they ran along a street in Lianga, a coastal municipality of Surigao del Sur.

"I was shaking in fear, mainly because of exploding electric poles," the 26-year-old hairdresser told AFP. "It was very traumatic."

Mandela legacy battered by South Africa's troubles

SOWETO (AFP/APP): Soweto's Vilakazi Street is packed each day with tourists and hawkers outside the home of Nelson Mandela that has been meticulously kept even as the democracy pioneer's legacy has become run-down in the decade since his death.

Ntsiki Madela, who lives nearby and sells jewellery and hats on a table near the matchbox house museum at number 8115, is among many South Africans who feel let down.

While thankful that Mandela's 16-year presence in the township now draws tourists, the 47-year-old said: "I haven't seen any change from Mandela's democracy and I don't even see the need to vote."

With a legislative election due in months -- the 30th anniversary of South Africa's first democratic vote -- authorities are struggling to get people like Madela to register.

Voter numbers have fallen with every election since the first in 1994. And the people who do vote are increasingly turning against

Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) that has ruled since then.

Polls suggest the scandal-tainted ANC's vote share could fall below 50 percent for the first time as Africa's biggest economy slumbers and corruption taints its image. Unemployment is among the world's highest at 32 percent of adults and wages for those in work are low.

Despite the end of apartheid, South Africa has the world's lowest equality ranking, according to the World Bank. The government and state firms are carrying more than \$300 billion of debt and the figure worsens every day.

Street crime and murders have also grown over the past decade and some days Madela and her neighbours go without electricity for almost 12 hours a day.

"We only have enough income to feed our kids, there is constant load-shedding and the cost of living is unbearable," said Madela, referring to the chronic power cuts.

Mandela is seen around the world as a moral com-

pass for the way he wore down white minority rule and his vision of a multi-racial South Africa.

Critics say the ANC leaders who took over quickly dropped Mandela's torch. Mandela's legacy has been "undermined" by his own party officials who are "corrupt" and have "deviated" from his "moral consciousness", independent political analyst Prince Mashele told AFP.

Nic Borain, a political analyst working in financial markets, said there was a "kind of mythology" around the Mandela years that meant anyone following would struggle. The government and the ANC have as big a fight on their hands to tackle apathy as they do debt.

Former president Jacob Zuma, who was forced out of office over corruption allegations, only avoided prison because of his poor health and a remission approved this year by his successor, President Cyril Ramaphosa.

In June the graft watchdog cleared Ramaphosa of allegations that he breached

ethics by not reporting the theft of more than \$500,000 in cash hidden in a sofa at his farm. Down the road from Mandela's house, 27-year-old teacher Sive Jizana sat with friends at a popular pub. Mandela's legacy was "dying", she said. She noted the lack of running water and proper roads outside main cities. "And now we don't have electricity," she said.

Zandile Cubeni, a 24-year-old unemployed sociology graduate, said she would not join the voters' list. "A lot of my peers are jobless, we aren't getting any tangible benefits," Cubeni said, adding that Mandela's legacy "has been made out to seem like something without any flaws, that's not true." Some say Mandela's name was over-hyped. "We don't really see what Mandela and all the others did for us... we are still poor," a 43-year-old cashier, Thobile Cele, told AFP. "We simply don't even have a democracy anymore as long as... ANC is in power," said Leigh-Ann Mathys, a member of parliament for the leftist Economic Freedom Fighters party.

Venezuela to hold referendum over Essequibo land dispute with Guyana

CARACAS (AFP/APP): Venezuela on Sunday will hold a referendum that it hopes will strengthen its century-old claim to the oil-rich Essequibo territory controlled by neighboring Guyana.

"Essequibo is ours!" say posters plastered on walls lining the streets in Caracas, part of an intensive campaign by the government of President Nicolas Maduro.

"It's up to us to raise the flag of Essequibo and start a new phase in the historic recovery of this land," Maduro told a large crowd at a rally Friday in the Venezuelan capital.

The Maduro government has said it is not seeking justification to invade or annex the expansive territory, as some in Guyana, a former British colony, fear.

And regardless of the outcome when some 20 million Venezuelans vote, little will change in the short term.

The people of Essequibo are not voting, and the referendum is nonbinding. But tensions have been rising steadily since Guyana took bids in September for several offshore oil exploration

blocks, and after a major new find was announced in October. Its petroleum reserves are similar to that of Kuwait, with the highest reserves per capita in the world.

Meanwhile, Maduro's government has sharpened its rhetoric and conducted military exercises in the area. And Brazil has strengthened its own troop presence near the border with Venezuela, saying it is concerned by the "climate of tension."

Venezuela has claimed the huge territory for decades -- even as its 160,000 square kilometers (62,000 square miles) represent more than two-thirds of Guyana, and its population of 125,000 is one-fifth Guyana's total.

Caracas contends that the Essequibo River to the east of the region is the natural border between the two countries, as declared in 1777 under Spanish rule, and that the United Kingdom wrongly appropriated Venezuelan lands in the 19th century.

Guyana, however, asserts that the border was set in the British colonial era and was confirmed in

1899 by a court of arbitration. It says the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the UN's top judicial body, has validated this finding.

Guyana has asked the ICJ to block the referendum, saying it amounts to a violation of international rights -- but in vain.

On Friday, the ICJ called on Caracas to take no action that would modify the disputed lands -- but it did not mention the referendum.

And Caracas had vowed to go ahead regardless.

"We believe that justice, not force, should be the arbiter of international disputes," Guyanese President Irfaan Ali said Friday from the United Arab Emirates, where he was attending the COP28 international climate summit. Ali met there with British Foreign Minister David Cameron to discuss the controversy.

Maduro, for his part, lashed out at Ali on Friday, calling him "reckless (and) insolent" and suggesting he was working for US energy giant ExxonMobil.

The referendum Sunday includes five questions,

including proposals for the creation of a Venezuelan province to be called "Guyana Essequibo," giving the inhabitants Venezuelan citizenship, as well as a call to reject the ICJ's jurisdiction.

The Maduro government expects an overwhelmingly positive result, strengthening its claim. Opposition politicians, most of whom also support the claim, have generally been reticent about the referendum.

But Maria Corina Machado, who hopes to oppose Maduro in next year's presidential elections, has called the referendum a "distraction," saying it should be suspended and that sovereignty is not something you ask about -- "you just exercise it."

Maduro has mobilized his party and senior members of his government in a vigorous campaign for a resounding "yes" vote.

In the streets of Caracas, many Venezuelans said they are motivated to vote.

"We have a commitment to the country," said Marlis Palmes, a homemaker. "I congratulate those who agree. And let history be the judge of the others."

observed after the eruption. "It has reached to Bukittinggi city," he said, referring to the third-largest city in West Sumatra that has a population of more than 100,000.

"It is hoped for people who have activities around Marapi mountain to wear hats, glasses and masks."

Mount Marapi, which means 'Mountain of Fire', is the most active volcano on Sumatra island.

The Indonesian archipelago sits on the Pacific Ring of Fire, where the meeting of continental plates causes high volcanic and seismic activity.

The Southeast Asian country has nearly 130 active volcanoes.

Hikers evacuated as Indonesia volcano spews ash tower

PADANG (AFP/APP): A volcano in western Indonesia erupted Sunday, belching a column of ash around three kilometres into the sky and forcing the evacuation of dozens of hikers, officials said.

Mount Marapi on the island of Sumatra, with a peak of 2,891 metres, is on the third-highest alert level of Indonesia's four-step system and authorities imposed an exclusion zone around its crater.

There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties after the eruption at 2:54 pm local time (0754 GMT), but 42 hikers were unaccounted for.

A total of 70 hikers had checked in at two entry

points to Marapi since Saturday via an online booking system, according to the West Sumatra natural resources conservation agency. "The... agency team are conducting evacuations. Twenty-eight people have been evacuated and efforts are still being made (to evacuate) the rest. Hopefully there are no fatalities and everyone is safe," Dian Indriati, the interim head of the agency, said in a video statement.

Some hikers may not notify authorities about their presence when entering or leaving such areas, so the true number of unaccounted hikers remains unclear.

Hendra Gunawan, head of Indonesia's Centre of Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation, in a statement said ash was observed 3,000 metres (9,842 feet) above Marapi's peak.

"The column of ash was observed in grey colour with thick intensity leaning toward the east," Gunawan said. "The eruption is still ongoing."

Communities around the Marapi volcano and tourists are not allowed to hike the Marapi volcano within a three kilometre radius from its crater.

Ahmad Rifandi, an official at the Mount Marapi monitoring station, told AFP that ash rain was

observed after the eruption.

"It has reached to Bukittinggi city," he said, referring to the third-largest city in West Sumatra that has a population of more than 100,000.

"It is hoped for people who have activities around Marapi mountain to wear hats, glasses and masks."

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The Southeast Asian country has nearly 130 active volcanoes.

Ukraine says 1 dead after Russian drone and missile attacks

KYIV (AFP/APP): Ukraine said on Sunday a man had died in a Russian airstrike near the southern city of Kherson, adding it had downed 10 drones and a missile fired by Russia overnight.

The 78-year-old man died on Sunday morning when the village of Sadove was bombarded, said the head of the

regional military administration, Roman Mrochko.

Russia had attacked several locations in Ukraine overnight, using a total of 12 Shaded drones, Ukraine's armed forces said in its daily briefing. It said it had also intercepted a guided Kh-59 missile.

Sadove is located on the bank of the Dnipro river, which marks the

front line between

Ukrainian and Russia forces. Russia has used hundreds of Iranian-made self-detonating Shahed drones to attack targets across Ukraine since its fully-fledged invasion in February 2022. Ukraine has boosted its air defence systems since last winter, when Russia bombarded the country's energy infra-

structure, in a bid to cripple it during winter.

Russia on Sunday accused Kyiv's forces of striking several villages in its Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine. Belgorod governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said drones and artillery fire were directed at several Russian villages, without causing casualties or major damage.

Morocco gardening school cultivates hope for marginalized youth

SALÉ (AFP/APP): After Hind Bensbitia dropped out of school as a teenager, she was stuck at home with few prospects for her future -- until she stumbled across Morocco's first gardening school. Now at 20, she has already seen a change in her outlook both on her own future as well as the planet's, after joining the school in the northwestern Moroccan city of Sale.

The school provides free training mainly to dropouts and other marginalized youths threatened with unemployment. "After leaving school, I spent two years at home," said Bensbitia. "I wasn't satisfied. I wanted to be active." Three years ago, she came across the gardening school, Bouregreg Med-O-Med, by sheer coincidence. Launched by

the Spain-based Islamic Culture Foundation (FUNCI) in 2018, the school is the first of its kind in Morocco.

"Before, I never imagined making gardening my job," said Bensbitia.

"This training brought me a lot. I'm seeing the environment and the need to protect it in a different way," Bensbitia says she feels "more in my element

than anywhere else" at the school. Bouregreg Med-O-Med aims to raise awareness about climate change while promoting the social inclusion of marginalized young people, particularly those affected by unemployment, as well as championing gender equality. In October, it received the European Training Foundation's "Green Skills" award.

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The AUKUS in New Folds

The Defense Chiefs of the United States, Australia, and Britain met in Silicon Valley California to kick off their high-tech cooperation on deep space radar, AI, and quantum computing systems aimed at bolstering their armed capabilities to compete with their common adversaries including China and Russia. The trio allies under their partnership formally known as AUKUS, are currently focused on the Research and Development of highly sophisticated and cutting-edge technologies to establish their supremacy over their rivals. The alliance leaders also announced the development of a Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability that would be a reality by the end of the decade, with the capacity to peer 22,000 miles (35,000 kilometres) into space. Over the past few years, the United States turned its focus on Indo-Pacific and East Asian regions after Beijing beefed up its military presence in the South and East China Seas by constructing artificial Islands and deploying its military machine over there. Washington not only forged a strategic partnership with Australia, Japan, and India commonly known as Quad Political dialogue, but it significantly enhanced its defence and security cooperation with South Korea and Japan to confront China's growing ingress in territorial waters in the adjoining Seas in the broader Indo-Pacific region. Historically, the creation of AUKUS was primarily aimed at supporting Australian Navy war capabilities through the provision of nuclear-powered conventional submarines to deter the Chinese threat and resist the PLA Navy's offensive reconnaissance patrol in regional waters. Hence, the provision of three Virginian class submarines was a crucial step that would largely create a balance of power in the Far East. Canberra had long been toed a policy of neutrality and nonpartisan, desisting partnership and alliance with any of the global competitors, yet growing Chinese military buildup and divergence of interests with Beijing pushed Australia into the US-led western bloc. Presently, the US and the UK gradually empowering the Australian military by providing modern weapons and sophisticated defence technologies to contain Beijing's resurgence in the region and beyond. The newly launched technology initiative would not only develop and deliver advanced capabilities to all three partnering nations but likely to ignite an arms race in the competing bloc as Moscow and Beijing had already echoed their concerns over increased military activity, frequent voyages of western warships, the West's security collaboration with East Asian nations including Philippines, Veitnam and others. The global geostrategic landscapes are rapidly changing with the latest developments in the geopolitical relationships among nations across the world. Those developments surely have consequential positive or negative impacts on the states with varying interests. Presently, the tripartite alliance is augmenting its war capabilities through teamwork and collaboration that has already seen agreements with a focus on cutting-edge technologies in security, space and cyberspace domains. While, the quantum technologies will aid in navigation and weapons, as well as artificial intelligence which in turn will give rise to their strategic military capabilities in the coming years. On the other hand, Beijing has warned that three partnering countries were treading a path of error and danger after they unveiled the deal for Canberra to purchase the submarines. Now, this teamwork has achieved another milestone which will have a grave impact on Russia and China. Apparently, the chess move will surely come from the other side but at a later moment and from a different direction.

Democracy of its Kind

The constitution of Pakistan demands that each political party undertake its party election after specific intervals to affect democracy at the grassroots level and promote civic culture within the political groups. Over the years, several political groups together with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), the Awami National Party (ANP), the PML-Q, and MQM and others had made a mockery of this constitutional verdict by organizing bogus and fraud elections. The PPP's Central Core Committee never dared to choose a non-Bhutto or apart from Zardaris, as Party head over the past five decades while the Presidency never refuged out of the Sharif family in the case of PML-N. Similarly, the Wali Khan family had always been the sole inheritors of Bacha Khan's legacy and the PML-Q and PML-Functional are being labelled by Chaudharies and Pir Sab Pagharo. JUI-F was ever the personal property of Fazl-Ur-Rehman and Sheikh Rashid is the lifetime head of his one-man party. Similarly, the MQM's senior hierarchy had been revolving around a cabal of senior leaders and their blued eyes. Although, the PTI Chairman opted to remain the lifetime party head of his self-created civic group, yet there were high hopes that the Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf might introduce a new political legacy in contradiction with its adversaries in this aspect. However, the selection and announcement of Barrister Gohar Khan as the new Party Chairman by Imran Khan, which was blindly stamped by the party leaders deepened the impression of authoritarianism and dictatorship within the group. The reports suggest that all seats including provincial heads and secretary General were already decided by top leadership days before the flimsy party polls. This strategy is not much different from rest of the political groups in the country while effectiveness and reality of this mechanism would be evident in the future. Historically, party election gives birth to democratic principles allowing party workers to participate in decision making process and fostering inclusivity and transparency within the party structure. It promotes legitimacy and accountability to party leadership along with promoting healthy internal democratic practices and minimizing factionalism. Promoting healthy internal democratic practices and minimizing factionalism. Although, there is much more in the interest of country, nation, public and the democracy, all those principles and strategies do not suit feudal, power grabbers and authoritarians.

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Riyadh Expo 2030 — an unprecedented victory

Fahad M. Al-Ruwaily

Saudi Arabia won the bid for Riyadh 2030 on Tuesday, Nov. 28, facing two strong competitors with longer experience in expo candidature and organization, namely Italy and South Korea. This victory was remarkable as it occurred in the first round and with a majority surpassing two-thirds of the member states in the Bureau International des Expositions convention. It is an unprecedented victory, as stated by BIE Secretary-General Dimitri Kerkentzes during the press conference held at the end of the General Assembly with the participation of Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, head of the Kingdom's delegation to the General Assembly.

On this occasion, I extend my sincere congratulations to King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. I also congratulate the Saudi people, and I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all those who backed the Kingdom's bid and declared their support for it, most prominently the friendly French Republic. The final statement issued at the conclusion of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit to France in July 2022 affirmed France's support for Riyadh's bid to host Expo 2030, and France continued to confirm this support until the voting stage. A significant number of friendly countries at the highest level also declared their support for the bid.

It is worth noting that this great victory was the result of extensive efforts closely followed and personally overseen at all stages by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. These efforts focused on two fronts: Firstly, highlighting the capabilities of the Kingdom and the city of Riyadh to host the event and presenting a comprehensive and strong candidature dossier, also known as a bid book. This undoubtedly played a crucial role, as major countries have previously lost the competition due to the inefficiency of their dossiers or lack of confidence in the candidate city's capabilities to host an expo that includes pavilions for all countries of the world, as well as in its ability to receive and accommodate tens of millions of expo visitors easily and smoothly over a six-month period.

In my capacity as the Kingdom's representative to the BIE, I had the honor to accompany the technical team consisting of the secretary-general of the BIE and several representatives of member states with previous experience in the exhibition sector. The team visited Riyadh in March for a full week, during which it held numerous meetings, the most prominent of which were meetings with the crown prince and with various ministers involved in the expo. The team also participated in several workshops, conducted field visits to the proposed site, and closely examined Riyadh's infrastructure and the huge projects taking place under Vision 2030, some of which are nearing completion in the areas of construction, public transportation, and social and tourism services. After its return, the team submitted a detailed and comprehensive report to the relevant committee at the BIE, which the BIE member

states reviewed at the General Assembly last year and endorsed Riyadh's eligibility and competence to host the expo.

As for the second front emphasized by the crown prince, it is commitment, as he affirmed to those responsible for communicating about the Kingdom's candidature that the expo would truly be a global exhibition from the world and for the world. He emphasized the need to explain the theme he adopted for the expo, "Riyadh Expo 2030: The Era of Change: Together for a Foresighted Tomorrow." It should be clarified that the expo will represent a collective journey with all countries of the world, serving their common interests in security and stability, enhancing values of cooperation and understanding, promoting sustainability and environmental reform, and confronting common challenges.

This is what everyone involved in the Kingdom's campaign worked on and what I personally worked

with the registration phase, as the BIE regulations require that the expo be registered within a year of winning the hosting rights and completed five years before the scheduled expo date. The registration includes all the main elements of the expo, most notably the administrative, financial and legal aspects, the expo's theme and its promotion plan, the cultural program and events taking place at the expo, the master plan of the site, the promotion and communication plan, and the commercial strategy for the expo. The member states review the registration dossier in coordination with the BIE General Secretariat; then it is examined by the Executive Committee and approved by the General Assembly to become formally registered. This marks the beginning of the phase of technical works and construction required to complete it.

As Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman indicated in his congratulatory speech, hosting the event in Riyadh will represent an opportunity to offer an exceptional and unprecedented edition of the expo, with the aim of optimally investing in opportunities and offering solutions to the challenges facing our planet. Additionally, it aims to share with the world the lessons learned from the Kingdom's unprecedented transformation journey with the realization of Saudi Vision 2030. As Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan indicated in the press conference held at the conclusion of the voting process in Paris, the Kingdom will seek to live up to the confidence of the countries that strongly supported Riyadh's hosting of the expo, a matter in which the Kingdom has constantly demonstrated clear capabilities and credibility in successfully implementing its obligations and tasks, often exceeding the usual limits of what has been committed to.

As for the second front emphasized by the crown prince, it is commitment, as he affirmed to those responsible for communicating about the Kingdom's candidature that the expo would truly be a global exhibition from the world and for the world. He emphasized the need to explain the theme he adopted for the expo, "Riyadh Expo 2030: The Era of Change: Together for a Foresighted Tomorrow." It should be clarified that the expo will represent a collective journey with all countries of the world, serving their common interests in security and stability, enhancing values of cooperation and understanding, promoting sustainability and environmental reform, and confronting common challenges.

The minister held numerous meetings and communications with his counterparts in brotherly and friendly countries, and strengthened communication through the Kingdom's embassies, covering all regions and cultures of the world. Other ministers also made similar efforts within their respective domains. These efforts resulted in victory, demonstrating the strong support of Saudi diplomacy from the Kingdom's leadership and its credibility and close ties with the rest of the world. Before the vote, it became clear that Saudi Arabia would achieve a significant victory, with a large number of countries, surpassing the two-thirds majority, openly expressing their intention to vote for the Kingdom. This culminated in the achievement of this great victory in the voting process that was conducted through a secret ballot. The convention insisted on making the voting process secret to ensure the utmost independence and impartiality for countries participating in the vote, avoiding any politicization and negative pressures associated with hosting the expo.

Now, after winning the elections and confirming the international community's support for organizing Expo 2030, the actual phase of organizing the event begins. This starts

I reiterate my congratulations to the Kingdom's leadership and the Saudi people on this wonderful victory. I also reiterate my thanks to all friendly countries that provided their support for the Kingdom's bid. My thanks extends to all colleagues, ambassadors, and representatives of friendly countries who provided support and assistance. I would also like to express my thanks and appreciation to BIE Secretary-General Dimitri Kerkentzes, and his team in the secretariat, who provided me and my colleagues with great assistance during the past two years in understanding the bureau's regulations, the provisions of the convention, and the mechanisms for drafting documents related to the Kingdom's dossier and its candidature in the required manner. I also thank my colleagues at the embassy and the members of the Saudi team in charge of the candidature campaign in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant authorities, including our competent young men and women, who worked with dedication and team spirit, and exerted extensive and commendable efforts that contributed to achieving this success.

We look forward to seeing you at Riyadh Expo 2030, an expo from the world and for the world. Let us foresee the world together.

What are the chances of a permanent ceasefire?

Yossi Mekelberg

After nearly seven weeks of bloodshed, terror, and horrors in the war between Israel and Hamas, the four-day pause in the fighting, which was subsequently extended by several days, was urgently needed.

To the relief of everyone, the bombardments, the rocket launches and the shootings ceased — if only for a week. The temporary truce agreement allowed for some of the Israeli hostages held by Hamas and Palestinian prisoners held by Israel to be released, and for desperately needed humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip.

These few days of calm were the first rays of hope after one of the darkest periods in the long-running conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. But now that hostilities have resumed in their full intensity, what does this mean for the likely trajectory of the war in the days and weeks ahead?

There was no guarantee that the pause in fighting would lead to a permanent ceasefire, or even to further humanitarian truces, in the near future. However, it did signal that even though this initially seemed to be a war in which Israel would not call even a temporary halt to its military operations until it had achieved its declared objective of destroying Hamas — whatever that means — it was prepared to alter its priorities to secure the release of as many hostages as possible, even if this meant giving Hamas a chance to regroup. There is no reason to believe that, through third-party negotiations, this pattern will not repeat itself.

Moreover, the truce also indicated that despite the distorted judgment of the leaders of the Palestinian Islamist organization, which manifested itself in its most extreme form in the Oct. 7 attacks, the realization filtered through to them that it was in their own best interest to release their hostages, especially the most vulnerable among them.

The pause in fighting in the past week yielded political benefits for both sides. In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government had been under immense pressure, justifiably so, to prioritize the release of hostages. The joyful sight of dozens of them returning home from captivity eased some of that pressure.

At the same time, it handed Hamas the prize status of being seen as the power within Palestinian society capable of bringing about the release of Palestinian prisoners so that they could be reunited with their families. This, at least temporarily, strengthens its position in relation to the Palestinian Authority, and enhances its narrative that the only way to free Palestinians from Israeli jails is by holding Israeli citizens hostage.

While the truce agreement, mediated and facilitated by Qatar, Egypt, and the US, could prove to be a watershed moment in this tragic war, the final chapter is far from being written and it remains to be seen whether it will be repeated any time soon.

Understandably, much of the focus over the past week has been on the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners. Nevertheless, also of great importance was the fact that the pause in hostilities gave the people of Gaza a brief respite from the horrors of war, and allowed humanitarian aid to reach them: food, water, emergency medical supplies, and winter clothing. This is aid that is literally lifesaving for hundreds of thousands of people whose homes have been destroyed or who were forcibly displaced from northern Gaza to the south.

This mechanism for humanitarian aid must remain in place and functional even though fighting has resumed; that aid is essential for the survival of civilians of all ages.

Negotiations for the release of the remaining

Israeli hostages will only be more complex, however. Hamas has its sights set on the release of other high-value prisoners in Israeli jails, and knows they will not be freed as long as it continues to hold the most vulnerable among the remaining Israeli hostages, including children and the elderly, some of whom reportedly have serious health conditions.

The militant group is most interested in bringing about the release of Palestinians sentenced to long terms, including those Israel classifies as having "blood on their hands" and so is more reluctant to release.

It was reported that during meetings last week between Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, CIA Director William Burns, Mossad chief David Barnea, and Egypt's head of the General Intelligence Service, Abbas Kamel, negotiators outlined five categories of Israeli hostages for future release: men too old for military reserve duty, female soldiers, male reservists, active-duty male soldiers, and the bodies of those who died before or during captivity.

This suggests future negotiations could be prolonged and much more difficult and complex than the talks that led to the phased release of hostages and prisoners in the past week, especially now that Israeli military operations have resumed in full force.

Each side has objectives that clash with those of the other. They are likely to complicate the negotiations and, to a large extent, are behind the resumption of hostilities. The Israeli leadership argues that military pressure persuaded Hamas to agree to release hostages. As true as this might be, declaring the elimination of Hamas to be Israel's main objective does not exactly motivate the group to give up the main asset it is left with — hostages — unless a permanent ceasefire is agreed.

Meanwhile, any deal that results in Israel agreeing to free more Palestinian prisoners on a large scale could improve the political standing of Hamas among Palestinians, not only in Gaza but also in the West Bank and the wider diaspora.

Israeli officials could have done themselves a favor, at the very least for the sake of improving the chances of reaching a comprehensive exchange of hostages and prisoners, had they toned down the rhetoric about eliminating the Hamas leadership — or in threatening Qatar, as one senior Israeli Foreign Ministry official did in a comment about settling scores after the war because of Doha's supposed support for Hamas, a statement that defies logic at this point.

Now that the war is raging again, it remains to be seen whether the international community can convince Israel that military operations cannot continue to be conducted without regard for the massive loss of life among Palestinians and the complete destruction of Gaza, and cannot go on for much longer. There are real fears for what might happen in southern Gaza, where many of those displaced from the north of the territory have sought refuge.

It might be the case — and I hope this is not simply wishful thinking — that Israel has been reassessing the methods for achieving its war objectives and might take a longer-term view. It might realize that military force is not the only way to tackle Hamas and that achieving its objectives will primarily require political and diplomatic efforts that can guarantee a better future in which everyone involved in this conflict, and future generations, enjoys equality in terms of security, rights, and prosperity.

Even if this feels like a remote possibility right now, it is not one that is impossible to achieve.

Western policymakers should not dither over support for Ukraine

Winter has arrived in Ukraine, and there is no indication that this year will be any easier for civilians than the last. Russia has been holding back its air strikes against Ukraine in recent months to build up a larger inventory of missiles and drones for use this winter. In the past week, air strikes have increased noticeably.

Meanwhile, snow already covers much of the ground in eastern Ukraine. Where freezing temperatures have not yet arrived, a sea of mud covers the battlefield. This makes the trench warfare in Ukraine miserable for the soldiers on both sides of the conflict.

Thousands of kilometers away in Washington, DC, American lawmakers are debating whether to send more aid to Ukraine. So far, the US has spent around \$113 billion on aid for Ukraine over the course of 22 months. While on the face of it this seems like a large amount, it equates to about 0.03 percent of America's gross domestic product during the same period. Also, approximately \$70 billion of the aid will never leave the US. Instead, it remains in the US supporting the American defense industry and creating well-paid jobs.

However, what started as a bipartisan issue in the early days of the conflict has since become a partisan matter plagued by the usual politics in Washington.

Ukraine should not despair. Even though the critics of additional aid to Ukraine are vocal, they remain a minority. Between the two major parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, there remains enough support in Congress for additional aid to Ukraine. This reflects the mood of the American people too.

A poll released by the Reagan Foundation this week revealed that three-quarters of Americans believed it was important that Ukraine won the war against Russia's invasion. This included 71 percent of Republican respondents agreeing.

When asked if the US should continue sending weapons and munitions to Ukraine, almost 60 percent of Americans supported doing so, but only 50 percent of Republicans agreed. While the lower number

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is now in its 22nd month and US support for Ukraine is viewed by most Americans as being an initiative of President Joe Biden's administration. So, the fact that 50 percent of Republicans still support the Biden administration's policy of arming Ukraine is extraordinary. There is no other example where such a large percentage of Republicans support an initiative being led by Biden. For example, another recent poll showed that only 16 percent of Republicans supported his economic policies. Also, the new speaker of the US House of Representatives, Mike Johnson, recently signaled his support for additional aid to Ukraine. After Johnson was voted into the job last month, there were concerns he would block or delay a vote for more US aid to Ukraine. He has been one of a handful of Republicans who have, over the past year, consistently voted against aid to Ukraine.

From Republican respondents might be alarming when taken at face value, it actually paints a positive picture.

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Luke Coffey

policy of arming Ukraine is extraordinary. There is no other example where such a large percentage of Republicans support an initiative being led by Biden.

For example, another recent poll showed that only 16 percent of Republicans supported his economic policies. Also, the new speaker of the US House of Representatives, Mike Johnson, recently signaled his support for additional aid to Ukraine. After

Congress would pass additional aid. He said: "Of course, we can't allow (Russian President) Vladimir Putin to march through Europe. And we understand the necessity of assisting there (Ukraine)."

There also remains strong support in Europe for aiding Ukraine. In fact, recent data published by the respected Kiel Institute showed that European commitments to Ukraine were now double that of America's. As a percentage of GDP, 20 European coun-

tries ranked before the US when it came to the amount of aid provided to Ukraine.

Of course, there are the outliers. Slovakian elections in October saw a pro-Russian populist party form a new government. This week's elections in the Netherlands also saw a far-right party, that wants to stop aid to Ukraine, win the most seats. In both cases, coalitions with other political parties are required before forming a government.

This means that the anti-Ukrainian rhetoric voiced by some political parties during the campaign may not translate into major changes in Ukraine policy when a new government is formed. Meanwhile, support for arming Ukraine in Europe's larger countries such as the UK, Germany, Poland, Italy, and Romania remains strong. In recent weeks, officials from these European countries and others have been visiting Washington to make the case to US lawmakers for more aid to Ukraine.

Most Americans are worried about the bread-and-butter issues of daily life. High inflation, an increase in the price of groceries, access to affordable healthcare, and good education for children are the top issues driving US voters to the polls. In fact, most Americans do not think about Ukraine or even foreign policy issues from day to day. This is why leadership from the White House and Congress is so important when it comes to maintaining support for Ukraine.

Ukraine's highly anticipated counteroffensive that started earlier this year has not met expectations. Russia is increasing its military spending to historically high levels and has shown no desire to enter negotiations with Ukraine. It is unlikely that 2024 will be a year of peace for Ukraine. So, as winter sets in, and as Congress heats up the debate about additional aid, the war is entering a crucial period for Ukraine.

Now is not the time for Western support to be put into jeopardy or for Western policymakers to dither on additional aid for Ukraine.

IBA Karachi awards 1,184 degrees at convocation 2023

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Karachi held its convocation for the Class of 2023 at the Main Campus. It marked a momentous occasion as 1,184 graduates were conferred degrees in several disciplines. The graduating batch included 776 graduates from six undergraduate programs, 403 graduates from ten postgraduate programs, and five graduates from three PhD programs.

The Chief Guest of the ceremony was Caretaker Chief Minister of Sindh and Patron IBA, Justice (Retd.) Maqbool Baqar. Dr. Azra Raza, Chan Soon-Shiong Professor of Medicine and Clinical Director, Edward P. Evans Foundation MDS Center, Columbia University in New York attended as Guest of Honor.

The Executive Director, IBA Karachi, Dr. S Akbar Zaidi congratulated the graduating students and said, "I applaud each one of

you for reaching this significant milestone in your educational journey as your hard work has come to fruition. Graduation is a time of celebration and reflection and signifies the beginning of a new chapter in your lives. I encourage you all to excel in your selected walks of life and continue the legacy of excellence that is the hallmark of IBA."

"I am delighted to share that almost 40% of our graduates are young women and this year almost half the PhD graduates are females, which is a proud moment for the Institute as IBA takes immense pride in empowering our women in every field", said Dr. Zaidi.

Dr. Zaidi emphasized IBA's transition and said, "We are more than a business school as we have expanded our disciplines and today, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the first cohort of MS Finance for excelling in their academic pursuits and expect the same commitment from them in their professional paths." He also highlighted IBA's commitment to diversity and inclusivity by enrolling students from all socioeconomic backgrounds with currently 30% of the IBA students receiving some form of financial assistance.

Dr. Raza congratulated the graduates and said, "You are now entering a world where things are uncertain and unpredictable. But having said that the future is open to possibilities and as young, competent, empowered individuals, it is your duty to fight all the challenges for a fabulous future."

Speaking about the immense capabilities of a human brain, she quoted renowned American poet Emily Dickinson and likened the human brain to a sponge ready to soak up knowledge. She urged the graduates to be consistent in the pursuit of their conquests and encouraged them to never give up on

their dreams, even if it meant making sacrifices to reach their potential.

Narrating Pakistan's Founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah's exemplary characteristics of honesty and delivering results, she urged the young graduates to learn from his life of numerous phenomenal achievements and to emulate him in all walks of life. She also quoted famous poets, Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Mir Taqi Mir to reiterate that one must make life meaningful. She urged the graduates to be proactive in life's journey and to ask questions and make the most of every available opportunity.

Justice (Retd.) Baqar stated that he was honored to celebrate the graduation day of the country's future leaders.

He emphasized the transformative power of education at IBA, urging graduates to embody patriotism, discipline, and responsible citizenship. He stated, "Just as your IBA

journey exposed you to a diverse academic environment, remember to carry the same spirit of acceptance and respect into your interactions with the world".

Highlighting the responsibility of IBA graduates as future leaders, he encouraged them to contribute responsibly to the society and towards Pakistan's progress by embracing and celebrating diversity as Pakistan is a nation of various cultures, languages, and traditions.

The convocation ceremony featured the position holders in various degree programs who were awarded medals, shields and certificates of merit. Swimming champion, Ali Raza Khan (Class of 2024), was awarded the 'Excellence in Sports' award.



Aga Khan University's 12th Int'l Conference concluded



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Aga Khan University's Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) concluded its 12th International Conference, unveiling a dynamic platform for dialogue on 'Technology, Pedagogy, And Society: Critical Appreciation of The Present and Prospects for The Future.'

This 2 days milestone event coincided with the University's 40th anniversary, symbolizing a longstanding commitment to academic excellence.

The conference, a melting pot of diverse perspectives, brings together

thought leaders, policymakers, and practitioners to scrutinize the intersection of technology, pedagogy, and society.

Ms. Rana Hussain, Caretaker Minister for School Education, College Education, and Women Empowerment, Sindh, graced the Inaugural Session as the Chief Guest, emphasizing the imperative need to discuss technology's societal impacts.

Keynote speakers, including Sean Michael Morris, Dr. Asadul Islam and Dr. Shah Jamal Alam, illuminated the evolution of critical digital pedagogy and the essential role of formal reasoning in the age of

AI dominance. The first day featured a vibrant panel discussion on 'Implementing EdTech Reform,' addressing evidence, policy, and delivery in education.

Day 2 unfolded at the Karimabad campus, witnessing more than 200 participants engaging in over 40 workshops on diverse topics such as Teaching in the Digital Era, Educational Robotics, and Fostering Equitable Learning Spaces.

Dr. Nauman Naqvi's Lightning Talk challenged conventional thinking, advocating for a transformative journey toward sustainable existence.

Dr. Maha Bali's keynote

on 'Fostering Equitable Learning Spaces' sparked crucial dialogue on reshaping educational practices for inclusivity. A dynamic discussion, 'Practitioners' Perspectives on Technology, Pedagogy, and Society,' explored the pivotal role of pedagogies in leading EdTech reform, moderated by Azra Naseem.

The conference underscored the transformative potential in reshaping educational practices for inclusivity and empowerment. Discussions delved into revisiting traditional educational challenges, evaluating technology-supported instruction, addressing ethical concerns tied to emerging technologies, and assessing implications for workforce development.

The event highlighted the intricate connections between practice, research, and various implementation contexts, showcasing the importance of pedagogical leadership in navigating the complexities of technology in education.

Manufacturing industry sees recovery

BEIJING (APP): China's electronic information manufacturing sector registered solid recovery in the first 10 months of this year, data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology showed.

Industrial added-value of major companies in the sector rose 1.7 percent year on year in the period, with a pace of 0.3 percentage points faster than the first three quarters of this year, according to the ministry.

Specifically, the country's output of mobile phones hit 1.25 billion units, up 1.6 percent from the same period last year.

Fixed-asset investment in the sector climbed 9.6 percent year on year, 0.7 percentage points higher than the investment in the whole industrial sector.

During the same period, the combined operating revenue of major firms in the sector stood at 12.1 trillion yuan (about 1.7 trillion US dollars), down 2.9 percent year on year. The decline narrowed by 0.5 percentage points from the first three quarters of this year, the data revealed.

Automobile sector: Pak, China bright prospects to enhance partnerships

SHANGHAI (INP): Pakistan and China have bright prospects to enhance their partnerships in automobile sector, said Fahad Iqbal Butt, director of New Genuine Auto Parts, who visited the Automechanika Shanghai 2023 held this week.

Pakistani companies are looking forward establishing new partnerships in the automobile sector. "Over the past few decades, China has transformed itself to a global leader in advanced automotive technologies. Pakistan can benefit from these trends by collaborating with Chinese companies and staying updated on the latest technologies and trends in the industry," Fahad Butt said, according to Gwadar Pro.

With the goal of strengthening the presence of Pakistani companies in China and establishing new partnerships, he is confident that the expo will provide him with the platform to connect with potential suppliers, manufacturers and distributors.

He added that "I am very impressed with the growth and development of the automotive industry in China, and we see great potential for cooperation between our two countries."

Having been doing business with China for almost two decades and visiting the expo eight times, he

came over this year to develop new items related to agricultural or auto parts such as filters and bushings.

He also met with several Chinese auto companies to discuss potential collaboration, focusing on areas such as parts supply and technology transfer.

As an influential global service platform for the automotive industry showcasing automotive parts, repair, testing and diagnostic equipment and service supplies, this year's Automechanika Shanghai focuses on seven product segments covering 13 showrooms, with a comprehensive focus on innovative technologies and cutting-edge solutions for the entire automotive industry chain.

It attracted 5,652 exhibitors from 41 countries and regions and visitors from 28 countries and regions.

work policy should be created that is helpful for entrepreneurs.

Moreover, he said, the government would have to create active projects to help the industrialists and also train the civil servants and inculcate the spirit of public service in them. He said that the government should take the lead in the process of cluster mapping, it also has an important role in public-private dialogue to remove the problems faced due to policies and institutions which are obstacles in the way of industrial development.

He urged relevant government departments to take steps for consultation with business organizations and chambers, industries including hand-carpet industry at national and regional level.

He said, "the government should make a comprehensive policy together with those who have an important role in exports so that exports can increase further to earn valuable foreign exchange for the country."

High cost hurting economic growth, as inflation bounces back: PIAF

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has warned the high cost of doing business has been hurting the economic growth, as the inflation rate bounced back to 29.2% in concluding month, hurting the trade and industry the most, who faced the brunt of a staggering 520% increase in gas prices.

PIAF Chairman Faheem ur Rehman Saigol said that the most serious threat to the economy in the current fiscal year would be inflation, because it is already hitting economy due to continuous raise in oil prices and depreciation of local currency.

Quoting the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, he said that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) surged to 29.2% last month compared to a year ago. The increase was more than market expectations and has lessened the prospects for a cut in the interest rates, which stand at the country's highest ever level of 22%.

This reading, the first

announced by the PBS after the recently concluded International Monetary Fund (IMF) talks, in which the global lender also cut the inflation forecast for Pakistan to 22.8%, may strengthen the IMF's view of keeping the policy rate unchanged until core inflation starts easing out when the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meets on December 12th.

The IMF has released its executive board meetings' calendar till December 11th, and Pakistan's case has not yet been listed for the approval of the second loan tranche of \$700 million. This may make it difficult for the central bank to cut the interest rate before the board meeting.

He predicted that inflation would remain high and may even increase further due to market frictions caused by relative demand and supply gap of essential

items, exchange rate depreciation and recent upward adjustment of administered prices of petrol and diesel. The PIAF leader called for keeping check on government expenditure and high cost of debt servicing to contain budget deficit, as the Pakistan's federal budget deficit projection has been revised to history's highest to over Rs6 trillion, highlighting the unending fiscal woes that have pushed the country into a debt trap despite putting additional burden of billions of rupees on industry in the current fiscal year.

Expressing serious concern over the high jump in country's budget deficit, PIAF Chairman Faheem ur Rehman Saigol said the revision has been made in light of agreement with the International Monetary Fund, which exposed the massive underreporting of expenditures at the time of

budget presentation by the finance ministry.

This is a highly unsustainable level and has already pushed the country into a situation where debt restructuring seems to be the only viable option. The PIAF chairman maintained that the failure to reform the tax system and increase revenue collection is a major factor behind heavy domestic and foreign borrowings by the government. In view of the low level of available FX reserves, the debt management strategy of Pakistan may have to be revisited, to ensure the stability of Pakistani rupee and restoration of international capital markets' confidence in the economy of Pakistan.

He expressed surprise at the impact of the gas price hike, stating that it has surpassed market expectations. His analysis suggests that PBS included fixed

costs, such as meter rent, in the weekly inflation calculation in addition to the gas tariff hike.

The pace of inflation increased in urban areas while there was deceleration in rural areas, reported the PBS. The interim government has increased gas prices with effect from November 1st. Contrary to the claim of increasing prices up to 193%, the PBS report revealed that prices were jacked up as high as 520% for consumers.

The people's purchasing power has massively gone down, and the lenders-pushed energy policies to address fiscal issues through increasing prices have failed to yield the desired results.

On the back of an alarming increase in gas prices during the first round, the inflation rate jumped from 25.5% to 30.4% in the cities.

Chairman Akif Saeed emphasized the significant action taken by the SECP in shutting down these illicit apps engaged in the unauthorized business of providing digital loans to consumers. He further stated that stringent measures will be taken against misleading investor apps on social media platforms. Saeed urged the public to verify investment opportunities with the SECP before making any financial commitments.

Speaking on SECP's commitment to promoting financial literacy, Saeed revealed the initiation of a comprehensive awareness program named "Jum Ponji." The program aims to empower the public with essential information to make well-informed financial decisions and enhance overall financial literacy.

Saeed highlighted that SECP remains vigilant in warning the public about illegal investment platforms, urging individuals to refer to SECP for accurate and reliable information.

LAHORE (APP): Carpet Training Institute (CTI) Chairperson Ijazur Rehman said on Sunday that the government should make a coordinated policy with the stakeholders to increase exports.

Talking to a delegation of manufacturers and exporters related to hand-made carpets industry here, he added that the relevant institutions should take steps to consult business organizations, chambers at national and regional level in this regard.

The CTI Chairperson said, "The government should play its role in the construction of industrial clusters, and make a coordinated policy with the stakeholders so as to increase the country's exports, thus enhancing foreign exchange reserves."

Chairperson Ijazur Rehman called for construction and development of the industrial cluster, asserting that government has a key role in determining, direct access to capital, therefore active and frame-

work policy should be created that is helpful for entrepreneurs.

Moreover, he said, the government would have to create active projects to help the industrialists and also train the civil servants and inculcate the spirit of public service in them. He said that the government should take the lead in the process of cluster mapping, it also has an important role in public-private dialogue to remove the problems faced due to policies and institutions which are obstacles in the way of industrial development.

He urged relevant government departments to take steps for consultation with business organizations and chambers, industries including hand-carpet industry at national and regional level.

He said, "the government should make a comprehensive policy together with those who have an important role in exports so that exports can increase further to earn valuable foreign exchange for the country."

Court Notice

In the Court of Senior Civil Judge / Guardian Judge/ Aala Allaq Qazi Buner at Daggar. Application No. 58/5. Institution. 30/11/2023. Date of hearing. 8/12/2023. Mst. Taj Bibi VS General Public. Notice to General Public. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants (General Public) can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore anyone concerned will/shall not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 8/12/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court,

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has stated that the total public debt and liabilities of the country has presently been standing at Rs68 trillion in FY22-23, expressing the fear that it would go up further by Rs11.8 trillion in the current fiscal year.

The BMP chairman and ex-president of FPCCI Mian Anjum Nisar pointed out that the total public debt and liabilities would go up manifold mainly because of the rising fiscal deficit and it is estimated that fiscal deficit would escalate by Rs8.227 trillion for the current fiscal year, equivalent to 7.8 percent of GDP.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that despite hectic efforts of the government to convince

the IMF for projecting lower debt servicing, the IMF did not accept the stance of the government and projected the debt servicing on domestic and external loans standing at Rs8.627 trillion for the current fiscal year.

Ironically, the government will have to manage budget financing to the tune of Rs7.5 trillion through domestic avenues and only Rs1 trillion would be made available as budgetary support from foreign avenues. The IMF also assessed that the debt servicing might escalate up to Rs9.621 trillion for the next fiscal year.

The subsidies amount was kept unchanged at Rs1.39 trillion for the current fiscal year although the government had so far released only Rs2.5 billion during the first quarter of the current fiscal year. The defence spending was also

kept unchanged at Rs1.8 trillion for the current fiscal year.

On the fiscal side, the IMF and Pakistani sides agreed to slash the development spending at federal and provincial levels. At the federal level, the development spending was reduced from Rs843 billion to Rs782 billion for the current fiscal year.

The government had allocated Rs950 billion for PSDP projects in the current fiscal year.

For provincial level development programs, the IMF has projected reduction from Rs1,440 billion to Rs1,325 billion for the current fiscal year.

On the revenues side, the FBR's target was kept unchanged at Rs9,415 trillion for the current fiscal year. On non-tax revenue side, the IMF and Pakistan agreed to jack up collection

on petroleum levy from Rs869 billion to Rs918 billion for the current fiscal year.

He said that the country is in the middle of a deep economic crisis amid steep currency devaluation and interest rates hikes with its major debt sustainability indicators witnessing marked deterioration during the first half of this fiscal year.

Amid the crippling economic crisis, the govt will have to return \$7.5 billion as external debt in the next three years, that is by 2026. The report also noted that a major portion of the \$77.5 billion is owed to China, and has to be paid in June when a \$1 billion Chinese SAFE deposit and a roughly \$1.4 billion Chinese commercial loan would mature.

A report showed that Pakistan's share of external

debt in the total public debt rose from 37% in June to 37.2% by December, heightening the currency risks simultaneously with the rupee sinking and foreign countries shying away from extending loans.

This is synchronous with interest rates at historic highs and the currency devaluing by 56 per cent since the incumbent government came into power a year ago, reported The Express Tribune.

Further problematic is the fact that with a population of nearly 230 million may be unable to meet its external debt obligations - which will trigger a sovereign default, the USIP analysis said.

According to the debt bulletin, in dollar terms, Pakistan's total public debt stood at USD 233 billion by December, including USD 86.6 billion in external public debt.

The country needs to service 28 per cent of its debt in just one year, which is quite a big chunk and will expose the nation to all types of debt-related risks. The floating rate domestic debt is now 22.5 trillion or 68 per cent of domestic debt, which is poisonous due to interest rates at a record 20 per cent.

To overcome these, Pakistan hopes to convince China to refinance and rollover both debts, something the Chinese government and commercial banks have done in the past.

Even though Pakistan evades defaulting in 2023, the year 2024 will be even tougher for the country. This is because the debt servicing will rise to nearly \$25 billion.

This includes \$15 billion of short-term loans and \$7 billion in long-term debt,

including a vital \$1 billion repayment on a Eurobond in the fourth quarter.

On the other hand, the short-term debt repayments include \$4 billion Chinese SAFE deposits, \$3 billion Saudi deposits and \$2 billion UAE deposits.

All things considered, if Pakistan fails to repay completely, there will be a cascade of disruptive effects. Pakistan's imports could be disrupted, which could lead to a shortage of some essential goods and commodities.

The finance ministry stated that containing exposure to external debt is important to manage the exchange rate risk. The depreciation of the rupee over the last four years against international currencies has resulted in a higher value of external debt when translated into local currency.



In brief

PU wins championship

LAHORE (APP): A team of the Punjab University has won the women table tennis championship organised by Sargodha University. In the team event, PU bagged gold while silver in double and gold and silver in the single event. PU team manager Tahira Saleem and Sargodha University's Director Mahar Ahmad Haral appreciated the performance of the players.

Badminton League

DIR LOWER (APP): As per the directives of the Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower Muhammad Fawad and compliance with the policy of provincial government regarding the celebration of International Day for Persons with Different Abilities, District Sports Officer Dir Lower Ibrar Ahmad arranged Badminton Championship at Badminton Hall Mayar Tehsil Samarbagh here Sunday. On the occasion, leaders of the Persons with Different Abilities Muhammad Rehman, Hayat Muhammad, Abdur Raziq were present and players from all over the district participated in the event. The District Sports Officer distributed trophies, medals and awarded cash prizes to the winner and runners-up teams.

World MMA C'ship

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Four Pakistani athletes would feature in the World Mixed Martial Arts Championship, scheduled to be held in Bangkok, Thailand from December 6 to 10. According to President Pakistan Mixed Martial Arts Federation (PMAF) Zulfiqar Ali, the athletes participating in the event include Shahzaib, Asim Khan, Dawood Jan and Abdul Rehman while Imran Qasim would be the team coach. "Shahzaib and Asim are in good shape and their performance have been up to the mark," he said. "Initially, we had planned to send seven males and as many female athletes to participate in the championship but due to scarcity of funds it could not be materialized". Everyone is working really hard for the championship. We have also arranged the best possible training for the athletes. The World Championship represents one of the highest levels of competition which an athlete of fighter can perform in, he said.

Mbappe could win Ballon d'Or with PSG

PARIS (Agencies): Star French striker Kylian Mbappe can win the Ballon d'Or in "any team", Ronaldinho told AFP Sunday, but the Brazilian would like him to win it with Paris Saint-Germain, "a big club". "A great player like him can have the opportunity to win the Ballon d'Or in any team, but as I love PSG I would like him to do it with PSG," the 2002 World Champion said. "I hope he will win it. He is a good friend and a very great player. I like his style of play," he said during an interview with AFP in Thailand. The prestigious award still eludes the French captain, who finished this year in third place -- his best ranking to date. "Winning the big competitions will help him a lot," said Ronaldinho, who wore No.10 for PSG from 2001 to 2003. "PSG is a great club," the Brazilian said during a visit to Bangkok as an ambassador for Teqball, a novelty sport combining football and table tennis.



ISLAMABAD: Players in action during CAS-Serena Hotels International Squash Championship for Men & Women-2023 organized by Pakistan Squash Federation in collaboration with PAF & Serena Hotels.

Noor, Asim moves in Int'l Squash Championship final

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Noor Zaman and Muhammad Asim Khan have qualified for men's event final of the Chief of the Air Staff-Serena Hotels International Squash Championship to be held at Mushaf Squash Complex on Monday. Pakistan Squash Federation in collaboration with Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and Serena Hotels was organizing

Chief of the Air Staff-Serena Hotels International Squash Championship for Men & Women.

Besides Pakistan, a group of 23 world ranking Men and Women players from Malaysia, Hong Kong, Egypt & Spain were participating in the extravaganza.

Meanwhile in the men's event semifinals played on Sunday, Noor Zaman outplayed Ibrahim Elkabbani

of Egypt by 13-11, 11-6, 11-4, (40 min) while Asim Khan downed his country mate Nasir Iqbal by 12-10, 2-0 retired hurt (18 min).

However in the women event, Nadien Elhammy of Egypt beat Nour Ramy also of Egypt by 11-2, 11-6, 11-2 (20 min) while Egyptian Amina el Rihany also defeated her country mate Nour Khafagy by 4-11, 11-7, 11-5, 11-8 (48 min).

Hockey Academy opened in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD, (APP): After Lahore, Khawaja Junaid Hockey Academy has been opened here in the Federal Capital for the promotion and development of the national game.

The first training session of the Academy was held here at the Naseer Banda Hockey Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex with the support of Pakistan Sports board and Pakistan Sweet Homes.

Former International Umpire Sohail Akram Janjua has been appointed Director of Training Operations of Islamabad Khawaja Junaid Academy.

The academy would provide coaching to children between the ages of eight and twelve years two days a week. They would be provided free coaching along with free hockey sticks and kits.

Speaking on the occasion, Patron in Chief of Pakistan Sweet Homes Zamurd Khan said it was a very good initiative to attract Sweet Homes children to the national game. These children are the children of Pakistan and deserve our special attention, he said.

Khawaja Junaid Academy was also paying attention to their education and training along with teaching hockey to children through hockey.

The children of Sweet Homes will also get a chance to represent Pakistan one day by becoming good players. Our goal is to revolutionize the lives of children through hockey. After Lahore, Islamabad has now turned to bring children to hockey. We are very grateful to Pakistan Sports Board for their encouragement and patronage, he said.

Olympian Khawaja Junaid said Pakistan has given us so much and now it was our responsibility to play our role in the development of national sports.

If every Olympian comes to the ground with good intentions and teaches hockey to children, the day is not far when Pakistan can once again regain its lost position in hockey, he said.

Fatima, Shawaal lead Pakistan women to a historic victory

DUNEDIN (APP): Pakistan's women's team created history on Sunday, defeating New Zealand women by seven wickets in the first T20I at the University of Otago Oval in Dunedin.

This marked the first win for Pakistan's women's team over the New Zealand women, also known as the White Ferns, in the T20I format. Chasing 128 to win, Pakistan's opening pair of Shawaal Zulfiqar and Muneeba Ali provided a decent 40-run start to the innings.

Muneeba scored 23 off 24 balls with four dashing boundaries and was the first batter to return to the pavilion. At that stage, captain Nida Dar promoted herself up in the order and knitted 51 runs for the second wicket with right-handed batter Shawwal.

The 18-year-old Shawaal, playing her sixth T20I and first on New Zealand soil, scored her highest T20I score of 41 off 42 balls, smashing seven boundaries all around the ground with great confidence.

Following Shawaal's departure at the end of the 13th over with 91 runs on the board, Nida too was dismissed after a quick-fire

23 off 14 balls, including a four and a six.

With back-to-back wickets falling, the experienced pair of Bismah Maroof and Aliya Riaz got together and guided the team to a seven-wicket win with 10 balls to spare. Aliya returned unbeaten on 25 of 12 balls. Her innings included two fours and a six, the latter of which she struck on the second ball of the 19th over to finish the match. Bismah was undefeated on 13 of 18 balls, hitting a four.

Earlier, after opting to bat first, the White Ferns were restricted to 127 for six courtesy of a fine bowling display by the touring side.

Right-arm fast Fatima Sana, who missed the Bangladesh tour due to injury, capitalized on the overcast conditions and bowled a spell of four overs, giving away only 18 runs and bagging three wickets. Nida, Diana Baig, and Aliya took a wicket each.

For New Zealand, Maddy Green was the top run-getter, scoring 43 off 28 balls and hitting five fours. Pakistan will now take on the White Ferns in the second T20I on Tuesday, December 5, at the same venue. The match

will begin at 1300 local time, while the third and final T20I of the series will be played in Queenstown on Saturday, December 9.

Scores in brief:

Pakistan women beat New Zealand women by seven wickets.

New Zealand 127-6, 20 overs (Maddy Green 43 not out, Suzie Bates 28; Fatima Sana 3-18).

Pakistan 132-3, 18.2 overs (Shawaal Zulfiqar 41, Aliya Riaz 25 not out, Muneeba Ali 23, Nida Dar 23; Sophie Devine 2-23)

Player of the match: Fatima Sana (Pakistan)

Series schedule:

3 December: 1st T20I, Dunedin (Pakistan women beat New Zealand women by seven wickets)

5 December, 2nd T20I, Dunedin (1 p.m. local time)

9 December, 3rd T20I, Queenstown (1 p.m. local time)

12 December: 1st ODI, Queenstown (11 a.m. local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

15 December: 2nd ODI, Christchurch (2 p.m. local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

18 December: 3rd ODI, Christchurch (2 p.m. local time) (ICC Women's Championship)



Shaheen Afridi aims to upend David Warner's farewell Test series

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): In a charged prelude to the upcoming Test series, Pakistan's fiery fast bowler Shaheen Afridi has set his sights on challenging Australian batting icon David Warner, vowing to make Warner's farewell Test series a memorable contest.

Afridi shared his bold ambitions with the media in Canberra on Sunday, just before Pakistan's first practice session, igniting anticipation for an electrifying cricket showdown.

Afridi began by acknowledging the Australian opener's "great career," saying he had consistently delivered stellar performances across all

three formats.

"We would wish him good luck but not hoping for a good end for David Warner in his last Test series against us," he said with a hint of competitive spirit.

Warner made a triple century against Pakistan at Adelaide in 2019, though his recent performance in Test matches has remained mixed.

He plans to say goodbye to the format during the Pakistan series but will continue to play for Australia in white ball cricket.

"This is an important series for Pakistan as we are leading the World Test Championship's point table at the moment," the left-

arm fast bowler said.

Having faced the majority of the recently announced Australian squad, Afridi expressed the team's preparedness for the challenge that lies ahead.

"We have played against the recently announced Australia's 14-member squad, and we are all up for this challenge," he said.

"We don't have much experience of Canberra, but I am sure this four-day match against PM XI [from Dec. 6 to 9] will help us prepare well for the series against the home team starting from Perth," he added.

Pakistan will play the first test against Australia at Perth from Dec. 14-19.

Usman Qadir, Shahab Khan pick up five-fers on day three of National T20 Cup Super Eight stage



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Abbottabad's Shahab Khan, Rawalpindi's Yasir Khan and Peshawar's Mohammad Haris secured victories for their teams on the third day of Super-Eight stage of AH Group Presents Jazz Super 4C National T20 Cup 2023-24, as action unfolded across three venues in Karachi.

The fourth match of the day will be played between Lahore Whites and Karachi Whites at National Bank

Stadium with the first ball set to bowled at 2000 PKT.

Abbottabad v FATA at NBP Sports Complex

Opening batter Fakhar Zaman's knock of 69 from 48, including five fours and three sixes, helped Abbottabad post 188-5 in 20 overs after they were put in to bat first by FATA at NBP Sports Complex.

Wicketkeeper-batter Sajjad Ali (44, 35b, 4x4s, 2x6s) supported Fakhar at the top of the order. Later, cameos by Afaq Ahmed (23, 11b,

3x4s) and Shahab Khan (22 not out, 14b, 2x6s) also aided in Abbottabad's surge.

Left-arm spinners Khushdil Shah and Asif Ali returned with two wickets each.

In response, FATA could only manage 131 and were bowled out in 17.2 overs. Opening batter Samiullah Jnr hit a half-century (53, 36b, 8x4s) but his effort went in vain as FATA lost by a considerably large margin of 57 runs.

Left-arm pacer Shahab

picked up his maiden five-fer in just his fourth T20. He was supported by left-arm spinner Khalid Usman who had three wickets to his name. Shahab, for his contribution with bat and ball alike, was adjudged player of the match.

Rawalpindi v Sialkot at UBL Sports Complex

Rawalpindi won the toss and invited Sialkot to bat first at UBL Sports Complex. After Sialkot lost two wickets cheaply courtesy of right-arm pacers Kashif Ali and Mohammad Awaiz Anwar, Shoaib Malik (84 not out, 56b, 6x4s, 4x6s) and Ashir Mehmood (72 not out, 52b, 4x6s, 4x4s) stitched a 153-run partnership to take the total to 163-2 in the stipulated 20 overs.

Opening batter Yasir Khan, fresh from a century in the previous game, scored an unbeaten gutsy half-century (87 not out, 52b, 4x4s, 7x6s) to take Rawalpindi over the line in 18.4 overs and three wickets to spare. Yasir was awarded player of the match for his splendid

outing with the bat. Jahandad Khan (29, 11b, 2x4s, 3x6s) was the other contributor with the bat.

Sialkot's counterattack with the ball ensured Rawalpindi batters were challenged during the chase. Each of the Sialkot bowlers returned with at least a wicket with Sohaibullah getting two to his name.

Lahore Blues v Peshawar at National Bank Stadium

Peshawar defended a low total of 133 as the Iftikhar Ahmed-led side edged a five-run win against Lahore Blues at National Bank Stadium. Hussain Talat-led Lahore Blues could only manage 128-8 in 20 overs, as none of the batters could capitalise on their starts. Kashif Bhatti (25, 17b, 3x4s, 1x6), Imran Butt (24, 13b, 2x4s, 2x6s) and Hussain Talat (20, 25b, 1x6) were the top-scorers for the team.

Imran Khan Snr and Iftikhar returned with two scalps each.

Earlier, after being put to bat first, Peshawar were dis-

missed for 133 in the completed 20 overs. Leg-spinner Usman Qadir bagged his first five-wicket haul in T20s and crossed the 100-wicket mark in the format during his spell. Right-arm pacer Hunain Shah got two wickets to his name. Despite Lahore Blues' spirited bowling effort, it was Mohammad Haris' fiery half century (55, 31b, 5x4s, 5x6s) that was the difference between the two sides, as he was named the player of the match.

Scores in brief: Abbottabad beat FATA by 57 runs at NBP Sports Complex

Abbottabad 118-5, 20 overs (Fakhar Zaman 69, Sajjad Ali Jnr 44, Afaq Ahmed 23, Shahab Khan 22 not out; Asif Ali 2-25, Khushdil Shah 2-39)

FATA 131 all out, 17.2 overs (Samiullah Jnr 53, Salman Khan Jnr 28; Shahab Khan 5-20, Khalid Usman 3-29, Fayyaz Khan 1-19, Yasir Shah 1-23)

Player of the match – Shahab Khan (Abbottabad)

Rawalpindi beat Sialkot by three wickets at UBL

Sports Complex

Sialkot 163-2, 20 overs (Shoaib Malik 84 not out, Ashir Mehmood 72 not out; Mohammad Awaiz Anwar 1-26, Kashif Ali 1-33)

Rawalpindi 167-7, 18.4 overs (Yasir Khan 87, Jahandad Khan 29; Sohaibullah 2-32, Shoaib Akhtar 1-21, Bilal Asif 1-26, Mohammad Ali 1-34, Shahzaib Bhatti 1-47)

Player of the match – Yasir Khan (Rawalpindi)

Peshawar beat Lahore Blues by five runs at National Bank Stadium

Peshawar 133 all out, 20 overs (Mohammad Haris 55, Sahibzada Farhan 15, Iftikhar Ahmed 15; Usman Qadir 5-14, Hunain Shan 2-25, Qasim Akram 1-21, Umaid Asif 1-25)

Lahore Blues 128-8, 20 overs (Kashif Bhatti 25, Imran Butt 24, Hussain Talat 20; Iftikhar Ahmed 2-16, Imran Khan Snr 2-33, Israrullah 1-2, Niaz Khan 1-14, Azam Khan 1-22, Mohammad Ilyas 1-30)

Player of the match – Mohammad Haris (Peshawar).



In brief

101,52,62 immunized against Polio

RAWALPINDI (APP): The District Health Authority on Sunday claimed to have accomplished the Polio vaccination target set for the week-long drive started on November 27 in the district. Talking to APP, District Superintendent Vaccination Dr Muhammad Nadeem said over 101,52,62 children, below five years of age, were administered anti-polio drops during the campaign launched in all tehsils of the district. He said that during the drive 4,199 teams including 3,703 mobile teams, 866 area incharges, 330 fixed points and 245 Union Council medical officers participated in the drive to complete the task of immunization. He added that 166 transit teams also protected the children against the lethal disease at entry and exit points of the district.

10 aims seekers netted

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a decisive move to curb the issue of professional begging in Islamabad, the teams of Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates on Sunday launched a comprehensive crackdown sweeping the streets of the capital city. Under the watchful eye of Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon, the Assistant Commissioner Industrial Area Awaid Irshad Bhatti swooped into the Karachi Company area, apprehending ten professional beggars, ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabasum said that these individuals were promptly taken into custody and transferred to the police station for further processing. Meanwhile, minor children found among the beggars were sent to the Edhi Center for proper care and attention. He said that the ongoing operation, spearheaded by Assistant Commissioners, is a testament to the Islamabad administration's commitment to eradicating the menace of professional begging and ensuring the well-being of its citizens. With daily sweeps and a relentless pursuit of those exploiting the city's generosity, Islamabad is determined to transform its streets into a haven free from the burden of professional begging, the spokesman concluded.

Cracks down on price gouging

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a swift action to curb price gouging and encroachments, the Islamabad Administration on Sunday conducted a thorough inspection of the H-9 Sunday Bazaar. Led by the Assistant Commissioner Industrial Area Awaid Irshad Bhatti, the team scrutinized price lists, imposed fines on vendors for non-compliance, and also reviewed the sanitary conditions and overall functioning of the bazaar. ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabasum told APP. He said that the inspection revealed that limited parking space was causing significant traffic congestion, hindering the smooth operation of the bazaar. Addressing this issue promptly, the Assistant Commissioner Industrial Area ensured the restoration of traffic flow. This initiative is part of an ongoing campaign spearheaded by the Islamabad Administration to combat price manipulation, encroachment, and other irregularities within the city's markets. The administration is committed to upholding consumer rights and ensuring a fair and orderly market environment for all, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi cutting the ribbon to inaugurate the Sindhi Cultural Day organized by Soormiyun at PNCA.

Dr. Umar Saif unveils Pakistan's IT potential

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a groundbreaking initiative, the Pakistan-Qatar IT Conference commenced at the JW Marriott Marquis City Center in Doha, Qatar, drawing active participation from prominent Pakistani IT firms and local Qatari businesses.

The inauguration ceremony was led by the Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Dr Umar Saif. During his address at the conference, Dr Umar Saif introduced the technological prowess of Pakistan to a diverse audience, comprising both

business leaders and government executives in Qatar, according to a news release received here on Sunday. This event marks the maiden voyage of an IT delegation from Pakistan to Qatar, aiming to tap into the considerable unexplored opportunities in the region and bolster Pakistan's IT exports. The historic visit of the Pakistani delegation, spearheaded by Dr Umar Saif, began with a noteworthy event at the Pakistan embassy. Attended by the Pakistani diaspora in Qatar and representatives from 30 leading IT companies in Pakistan, the gathering set

the tone for fostering stronger bilateral relations. Jointly organized by the Pakistani Embassy, the Pakistan Software Houses Association (PSHA), and the Pakistan Business Council of Qatar, the event underscored the collaborative efforts to explore and harness the vast untapped potential in Qatar for the mutual benefit of both nations. As the conference unfolds, expectations are high for fruitful discussions and partnerships that will not only elevate Pakistan's IT industry but also contribute to the growth and development of the Qatari technology sector.

Railways upgrade 181 un-manned crossings in country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has converted approximately 181 un-manned level crossings across the country, out of 550 identified by the department over the entire railway network in over one year. "The relevant provincial government provided the finances to Pakistan Railways for the up-gradation of un-manned level crossings in the country," official sources in the Ministry of Railways told APP. They said the department was taking several steps including the up-gradation of un-manned and vulnerable railway level crossings across the country in collaboration with respective provincial governments. The sources said

there were two types of level crossings over the Pakistan Railways network, un-manned and manned level crossings, adding that the un-manned level crossings were without gate leaves. "There is a total of 1,565 un-manned level crossings over the entire railway network and as per railway policy in vogue, the up-gradation of any un-manned or manned level crossing is the responsibility of road owning authority," they added. The said that un-manned level crossings without gates leaves and gate men, were previously provided where 'Kacha path' with low traffic volume crosses the railway track to facilitate movement of locals, farmers and carts at their own risks.

However, they said, "Due to high risk of accidents on existing un-manned level crossings, construction and provision of new un-manned level crossing is completely banned on entire Railway system as per Railway policy for level crossings from 2019." The sources said that a joint survey of Pakistan Railways and the Provincial Government was also conducted in 2013-14 to identify accident-prone/vulnerable un-manned level crossings across the country. They said that it also mentioned Section 12 of the Railway Act of 1890 that the district administration or road authority should bear the expenses for the upgrade of these un-manned level crossings.

One-dish policy for weddings; admin checks over 1142 marriage halls, marquees

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District administration, in its ongoing operation launched to ensure implementation of a one-dish policy for weddings across the district, checked over 1142 marriage halls and marquees in November. According to Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi, violations of the Marriage Act 2016 were found in 81 places. He informed me that a fine amounting to over Rs 4 million was imposed on the rule violators, while FIRs were also lodged against two marriage hall and marquee owners. 10 wedding halls and marquees were also sealed during the operations. The DC said that implementation of the Marriage Act 2016 was being ensured, adding that the implementation of the Marriage Act 2016 is essential to promoting equality policy.

Marriage halls and marquees were being checked in all tehsils of the district,

including Rawalpindi city, he added.

According to a district administration spokesman, Punjab's caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi had issued instructions for strict observance of the policy of one-dish and the timely closure of banquet halls for wedding ceremonies.

Taking notice of the violation of government policy, the CM ordered the Commissioners and DCs to ensure strict implementation of the policy of one-dish and timely closure of banquet halls for wedding functions.

The CM had directed the authorities concerned to ensure that the banquet halls followed the instructions regarding one-dish and closure by 10:00 p.m.

He informed that the same policy should be observed for wedding ceremonies taking place at farmhouses. The administration had made it clear that no leniency would be observed towards the violators, the spokesman informed.

'Salam Pakistan' photography competition

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) will organize 'Salam Pakistan photography' and short tourism documentary film competitions on December 11 in connection with 'International Mountain Day'.

Talking to APP, the PTDC official said that 'Salam Pakistan' is the offi-

cial tourism brand of the country that was recently launched by the Prime Minister. He urged filmmakers and storytellers to capture the essence of our diverse and stunning landscapes, as Pakistan is amazing and rich with tourism potential.

He said, "Four to five-minute documentaries and photography competitions

on the topics of culture and mountain heritage, mountain people and their lifestyles, fascinating mountain scenery, mountain adventure, and sports will be part of the event."

"The winners of these competitions will be awarded cash prizes and awards at the sustainable tourism conference," the official added.

IRSA releases 88,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 88,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 43,200 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1494.92 feet and was 94.92 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. The water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 22,100 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1173.65 feet, which was 1244.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 6,100 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 65,900, 43,700, 41,700 and 11,700 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

PNCA celebrates Sindh Cultural Day with vibrant colors and cultural harmony

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A cultural organization, Soormiyun in collaboration with Sindh Cultural Department and Takori, painted the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) in Islamabad with vibrant hues and lively music as they celebrated Sindh Cultural Day.

The grand event aimed to showcase the rich tapestry of Sindh culture while emphasizing the importance of cultural harmony and empowering women from diverse backgrounds and fields.

Federal Education Minister Madad Ali Sindhi on Sunday graced the event as the chief guest, while Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi added prestige to the Sindh cultural program. The event revolved around providing a platform to promote cultural harmony, empower women to combat the hazards of global warming and recognize women from various walks of life. The captivating Soormiyun song resonated through the venue,

beautifully encapsulating the spirits of Soormiyun working in Islamabad. Throughout the celebration, various activities were organized to foster cultural understanding and the importance of unity.

Cultural tabloos showcasing the diversity of Sindh culture, along with panel discussions, were conducted to promote cultural harmony, peace, women's role in climate change, and gender equality through women's empowerment.

Gulnaz Sheikh, the founder of Soormiyun, expressed that these programs extend beyond a one-day event. According to Sheikh, Sindh is the land of Sufism, and Soormiyun, being Shah Latif's disciples, are spreading the core message of cultural diversity, love, peace, and gender equality within cultural values by empowering women. Gulnaz Sheikh emphasized, "Soormiyun envisions a society where there is no place for extremism but where cultural diversities flourish and are celebrated,

and today's event is a testament to our commitment to fostering these ideals", she added. The event welcomed people from all communities, not only showcasing the vibrant Sindh culture but also serving as a reminder of the power of cultural exchange in promoting understanding and unity among diverse communities. Soormiyun remains steadfast in its mission to continue organizing events that contribute to the promotion of cultural diversity, peace, love, gender equality, and women's empowerment in society. The celebration of Sindh Cultural Day serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration for a future where cultural diversity is embraced and women are empowered to realize their full potential. Gulnaz Sheikh said that empowering women was key to a better future adding, let's celebrate our differences and unite in harmony. The celebration of Sindh Cultural Day was a resounding success, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of all who attended.

Masses laud General Asim's one year as Army chief

ISLAMABAD (INP): The COAS General Asim Munir has gained widespread approval from the public for his strategic initiatives and decisive actions in combating terrorism and ensuring national security. Citizens have commended the General for his resolute efforts in combating terrorism, resulting in enhanced national security. Furthermore, his administration has been credited with substantial improvements in the country's economy, including effective measures to stabilize the fluctuating value of the Pakistani rupee against the US dollar.

As per the masses, an overwhelming majority of the population, approximately 95 percent, expresses satisfaction with the Army Chief's performance, applauding his unwavering commitment to enforcing law and order in the country. Acknowledging the challenges associated with curbing crime, General Asim Munir has been praised for implementing stringent measures, particularly in the realms of hoarding and smuggling.

The public also acknowledged the positive impact of the Army Chief's policies on

various sectors, including agriculture. Farmers have reportedly experienced relief due to the General's favorable initiatives. Moreover, the populace has expressed gratitude for the Army Chief's focus on addressing issues related to illegal aliens, foreseeing a positive outcome if such efforts persist.

In the realm of international relations, General Asim Munir has successfully navigated diplomatic challenges, fostering improved relations with other countries. Simultaneously, under his leadership, the capacity of the Pakistan Army has expanded, instilling a sense of confidence and security among the citizenry. In a display of solidarity, citizens are extending their prayers for General Asim Munir, wishing for increased strength and continued success in his endeavors for the betterment of the nation. Overall, the public sentiment suggests a positive assessment of General Asim Munir's first year as Army Chief, recognizing his contributions to various facets of Pakistan's socio-political landscape.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan had a special meeting with the Minister for Health of the United Arab Emirates, Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad Al Awais, in Dubai on the sidelines of the COP 28 UN Climate change summit.

During the meeting, Dr Nadeem invited him to attend Global Health Summit in Islamabad. He congratulated his counterpart on the successful conduct of COP 28.

Dr. Nadeem Jan also briefed his counterpart on the ongoing reform agenda in the health sector of Pakistan.

The minister informed his counterpart about the Global Health Security Summit to be held in January 2024.

The minister informed that initially the Global Health Security Summit was scheduled to be held in December 2023. However, we decided to shift GHSS

dates in January in view of COP 28 conference being hosted by UAE in December, he added. The purpose of this summit is to bring the nations together and provide an opportunity to prepare a coordinated strategy to deal with any future global epidemic.

The minister said, "We are establishing Pharma Park in Pakistan to give a boost to investment in local manufacture of medicines and vaccines."

The UAE Minister of Health praised the Global Health Security Agenda.

Global Health Security Summit is the need of the hour, he added.

The UAE Health Minister said the leadership of the UAE is interested in projects that serve the people of Pakistan. "We look forward to further strengthening our relationship and will also explore partnership in the health sector," he affirmed.

Over 8,40,000 people's data entered through 'Hotel Eye' software

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Following the special directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, the Safe City Islamabad is playing an effective role in the prevention of crimes and effective security in the federal capital.

According to the details, the Islamabad Capital Police "Hotel Eye" software is fully operational and working effectively and the software has been provided to all police stations for identification of individuals and registering the data of people staying in hotels, Guest houses or shelters homes located in Islamabad. He said that, during the last 24 hours, a total of 5,326 citizens' data have been entered through Hotel Eye software. While a total data of 8,40,857 citizens has been entered during the ongoing year.

Data of 111 suspects were also sent to the concerned police stations for legal proceedings. These data gathering is proving to be very useful in identifying the criminal elements involved in heinous & other Crimes.

ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan said that the action will be initiated against vehicles without number plates or unregistered. Safe city cameras will be utilized for the purpose of identification of such vehicles, he maintained.

The Islamabad Capital Police is using modern technology and all available

resources to maintain law and order in the city and also taking all possible steps to ensure the safety of the lives and property of the citizens, he added.

ICCPO visits Security division; orders to enhanced security measures: The Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan conducted a visit to the Diplomatic Enclave to assess security arrangements and issue directives for enhancing security measures, a public relation officer said.

He said that, the ICCPO Dr Akbar Nasir Khan interacted with officers and officials of the Islamabad Capital Police entrusted with the security of the diplomatic enclave. He issued directives to senior officers for the enhancement of security measures at the embassies.

Emphasizing the need for effective monitoring on both internal and external routes of the diplomatic enclave, the ICCPO stressed the importance of ensuring effective surveillance through the Safe City centralized camera systems. The Islamabad Capital Police remains steadfast in its commitment to maintaining a peaceful environment and ensuring the protection of the lives and property of the citizens within the federal capital.

Citizens are urged to cooperate with the police and report any suspicious activities or items by dialing helpline "Pucar 15" or at ICT-15 app.

Senior US officials to visit Islamabad to bolster bilateral talks

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan will witness back-to-back visits by senior US officials starting tomorrow, the foreign office spokesperson confirmed on Sunday. "Pakistan and the United States continue to hold consultations on a range of issues," foreign office spokesperson Muntaz Zahra Baloch said in a statement. "To advance these consultations, exchange of visits also takes place." Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Julieta Valls Noyes is scheduled to visit the country from December 4 to 6, she said.

FO spokesperson said that Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West will be visiting Islamabad from December 7 to 9 while Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Pakistan Elizabeth Horst will pay a visit from December 9 to 12. "These visits are a part of the ongoing negotiations with the US on several issues, including the situation in Afghanistan," said the spokesperson, adding that they are not only limited to the issue of Afghanistan.

‘Attack an act of terror’

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Interior has called the recent incident which caused the loss of several individuals in the capital of Herat province of Afghanistan a terrorist act. The ministry in a statement condemned the incident and expressed regret that on Friday, six compatriots, including women were martyred and two others were injured in a terrorist act by unidentified individuals in the Anjel district of Herat province.

Young Afghan migrant killed

KABAUL (Khaama Press): A young Afghan man was killed in Tehran, media reports said. The incident occurred ten days ago, and the police have since arrested the suspected perpetrator. Earlier this month, police authorities were informed about the suspicious death of a young Afghan man in an apartment in eastern Tehran. Investigations indicate that youth was the victim of severe violence and his body has been transferred to the forensic medical centre for further examination.

Kabul rejects US report on Al-Qaeda, Daesh



KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate rejects the US State Department's 2022 annual terrorism report about the activity of al-Qaeda and Daesh elements in Afghanistan, which was released by the US State Department. The Islamic Emirate's spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, told TOLONews that in the two years of the rule of the Islamic Emirate, no threat has been made to any country from Afghanistan. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has seriously started its fight against any phenomenon that incites insecurity in Afghanistan and has stood up effectively. Therefore, Afghanistan is safe. Expressing concerns about Afghanistan's soil is not true, we reject it. And all countries should recognize Afghanistan as a

safe area," Mujahid said. On November 30, the US State Department released a report dated April 2023 that focused on terrorism in 2022 and which claimed that Al-Qaeda, Daesh and other regional terrorist groups remained active in Afghanistan. "In Afghanistan, al-Qaeda elements, ISIS, and regionally focused terrorist groups remained active in the country. ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) continued to conduct terrorist attacks against Afghan civilians, particularly members of the Shia community, and the Taliban. In 2022, ISIS-K conducted cross-border attacks in Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and maintained ambitions to attack the West. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, particularly al-Qaeda in the

Indian Subcontinent, also remained intent — but lacked the capability — to directly attack the United States from Afghanistan," the report reads.

The lack of clarity in the ability of the Islamic Emirate to prevent the activities of terrorist groups has also been criticized in the report.

"While the Taliban committed to preventing terrorist groups from using Afghanistan to conduct attacks against the United States and its allies, its ability to prevent al-Qaeda elements, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and ISIS-K from mounting external operations remained unclear," the report added.

According to military experts, this report of the US is not free from the country's political views on Afghanistan.

"The reports of the US State Department, which are published annually and quarterly, are not blind to political positions of the US government," Asadullah Nadim, a military expert, told TOLONews.

This comes as Pakistan is claiming that Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and other terrorist groups have a safe haven in Afghanistan -- claims which have always been denied by the Islamic Emirate.

Poor quality of schools criticized

KABUL (TOLONews): The Acting Minister of Education, Habibullah Agha, criticized the poor quality of education in religious schools in the country.

By expressing his concerns about this issue, Habibullah Agha asked the Islamic Emirate and religious scholars to pay serious attention to raising the quality of education in religious schools.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony of about 120 students from Darul-Ulom Imam Abu Hanifa's 12th and 14th grades, the Acting Minister of Education said that the number of religious schools has increased in comparison to the past and that students are given good facilities in this area.

"In my point of view, the quality of education is becoming weaker day by day, although seeking education has become easier. There was a time that students could not find a book," Habibullah Agha noted.

Meanwhile, the officials of Darul-Ulom Imam Abu Hanifa stressed improving the quality of education in religious schools, saying that not only religious sciences are taught in this Darul-Ulom, but also contemporary sciences.

"In our Darul Uloom, not only religious sciences but also contemporary sciences are taught, so these graduates, in addition to religious sciences, also include students from contemporary sciences, and today about 120 people graduated from this Darul Uloom," said Abdulhai, head of the Imam Abu Hanifa Darul-Ulom.

A number of Imam Abu Hanifa Darul-Ulom graduates from the 12th and 14th grades asked the Islamic Emirate to provide them with employment opportunities in the country.

"There is no equivalency between knowledge and ignorance. So, we must study and be educated. Those young people who are educated and talented, the Islamic Emirate must provide them with work," a graduate said.

About four thousand students are now have enrolled to study religious and modern sciences at Darul-Ulom Imam Abu Hanifa, which was established in the Bagrami district of Kabul province in 1323 solar year.

Siraj discuss issues with UNAMA head

KABUL (TOLONews): Acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani met with UNAMA head Roza Otunbayeva, and discussed the efforts of the Ministry of Interior in the field of security and the fight against drugs as well the deportation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

According to the statement, Otunbayeva said that she met with the "representatives of different countries and all of them agree that for the purpose of combating drugs and treating drug addicts, in addition to vocational training, necessary facilities should be provided to farmers for alternative livelihood."

Haqqani was quoted in the statement as saying that the interim Afghan government has created the necessary facilities for the returning refugees in various



areas and assigned the task to various committees made up of employees from different departments in order to manage the affairs in an orderly manner.

He also stressed the importance of peace and

stability in Afghanistan, saying that the Islamic Emirate has taken necessary steps to treat its neighbors in a true and honest manner.

"Haqqani also emphasized that past problems

and shortcomings should not be linked to the Islamic Emirate and also domestic issues of neighboring countries should not cause problems for Afghan refugees living abroad," the statement reads.

Illegal meetings aim to weaken IEA: Stanikzai

KABUL (Ariana News): Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanakzai, political deputy minister of foreign affairs, has said that illegal meetings are held outside Afghanistan with the aim of weakening the country and the government.

Stanikzai made the remarks after opponents of the IEA recently met in Moscow.

"Today, we are free. We control the borders. The good and the bad of this country are in our hands, yet the enemy's plotting has not ended. The enemy is still making conspiracies," Stanikzai said in a commando graduation ceremony.

"Illegal meetings are held in surrounding and neighboring countries with the aim of weakening our country, government and army... I stress that they are expired. The people of Afghanistan do not care about them as less as a berry. They have already been tested. Each of them has 20 or 30 million dollar cases in the Ministry of Justice and prosecution offices. Each of them committed theft before fleeing," he said.

Stanikzai emphasized that Afghanistan's foreign enemies are trying to weaken the government in every

possible way because they believe that a strong government in Afghanistan is not in their interest. According to him, Afghanistan is facing many problems and dangers and the Islamic Emirate should prepare itself for a conventional warfare.

"In the past we used to fight guerrilla warfare, today we should prepare ourselves for a frontal war. This is the need. When we have a strong and self-sufficient army, the enemy will not look at us with crooked eyes and will not make conspiracies. If we are weak, they will make conspiracies," he said.

Iran enforces entry limits for Afghan refugees across 16 provinces



TEHRAN (Khaama Press): Iranian media have reported that the entry and residence of Afghan nationals have been prohibited in 16 provinces.

According to the ISNA news agency, Hamza Suleimani, the Director-General of Foreign Nationals and Immigrants Affairs in

Kermanshah Province, has reported that undocumented immigrants in these provinces will be detained and deported.

The Governor of Kermanshah has announced that since March 2023, eight phases of a plan to identify, detain, and deport undocumented

immigrants have been implemented in Kermanshah Province.

According to the report, entry, presence, and settlement in the provinces of East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan, Ardabil, Zanjan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Ilam, Lorestan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Gilan, Mazandaran, Sistan and Baluchestan, Hormozgan, and Hamedan have been declared prohibited.

The report published on Saturday states that a considerable number of Afghan workers employed by Iranian employers have been detained.

This comes as two thousand Afghan migrants forcibly and voluntarily returned to their home country on Friday.

It's worth noting that the expulsion of Afghan migrants and refugees from Pakistan and Iran has intensified in recent weeks.

HERAT (TOLONews): The families of the victims of Friday's armed attack in Herat want the perpetrators of this event to be identified and punished. At least six people, including two religious scholars and two women, were killed and two others were wounded in the attack by armed men in the west of Herat city.

"The government should take it seriously, they [the perpetrators] should be found. How long do we have to live like this?" said Ali Reza, the brother of one of the religious scholars who died in this incident.

"Security must be provided, there is a security shell in this area, how do they get past the shells? We who are workers, when we come back from work in the evening, they try our whole body," said Mohammad Ali, a relative of the deceased. Qambar, who was returning home after participating in the happy ceremony of one of his relatives, was injured in this incident. He told TOLONews about this attack: "The gun was under his blanket when he got out of the car and asked where did you come from?" our



religious scholar wanted to talk but the armed man started shooting."

"I ask the Islamic Emirate to try to find the perpetrators of these murders," said Mohammad Ali Alizada, another relative of the deceased.

Eight civilians were attacked by armed men on their way home after participating in a ceremony.

"Those who disrupt the order and security of the society, shed people's

blood and create differences between the brotherly tribes of Afghanistan, we ask our government to arrest them," said Alidad, one of the relatives of the deceased. The local authorities of Herat have condemned this incident and assured that the perpetrators of this incident will be identified and punished.

"The local administration of Herat... assures the dear nation that the security forces are trying to arrest

the perpetrators of this incident and hand them over to the law," said Nesar Ahmad Elyas, the spokesman of Herat's governor.

The Ministry of Interior has also called the attack by armed men on civilians in the west of Herat city a terrorist attack. Meanwhile, the Iranian embassy in Kabul has also condemned this incident and asked the caretaker government to identify and punish the perpetrators of this attack.

12 suffered casualties in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, the Federation of Human Rights Defenders said the deportation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan should be stopped and a delegation of Muslim scholars asked the Islamic Ummah to support the Afghans.

Casualties At least 10 people were killed and two others injured in separate incidents of violence nationwide last week.

The Ministry of Interior Affairs says unidentified gunmen shot dead six people, including two women, in the Injil district of Herat province.

Local officials say unknown gunmen shot dead a 22-year-old man in Faryab and another young man, who had killed his wife, was detained in Sar-i-Pul.

According to officials, two bodies were found in Parwan and Faryab provinces.

In the previous week, according to sources, six people had been killed and five others injured in various incidents across the country.

Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and security forces would be killed and maimed every week.

Global interaction with Kabul

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan issued a statement after an annual meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Central Asian Countries, asking for strengthening interaction and coordination with the caretaker government of Afghanistan.

Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, during a meeting with Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Otunbayeva, stressed the need for addressing issues that stopped the progress and development of Afghanistan.

Muttaqi said since the war in Afghanistan had ended, it would be better if the United Nations and the international community supported achievements of the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' (IEA) by lifting sanctions and unfreezing its assets.

He added the world should interact with Afghanistan through official addresses and should not create parallel and additional mechanisms for the country. Some opposition figures

and officials of the previous government held a meeting in Moscow a few days earlier.

Maulvi Abdul Salam Hanafi, deputy prime minister for administrative affairs, said in a meeting with the European Union's chargé d'affaires IEA desired good relations with all countries of the world, especially with neighbouring states. Muttaqi also discussed current problems and other issues with a delegation of Islamic scholars, who urged Muslim nations to support the Afghans.

Nasser Kanaani, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, said Tehran was looking for peace and stability in Afghanistan. He called regional efforts important in this regard. "The security of

Afghanistan is the security of Iran. In this framework, we believe in the usefulness of regional efforts and mechanisms to help consolidate peace and stability in Afghanistan. Our basic approach in relation to Afghanistan is to establish a government that represents the entire Afghan nation," said Kanaani.

Herat Security Dialogue

A two-day meeting was held in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, last week. It was attended by opposition figures, analysts and envoys of some countries and international organisations.

The participant exchanged views on the political and security situation in Afghanistan, as well as the status of women and provision of humanitarian assistance to the country.

Reaction to forced deportations

The World Food Programme (WFP) expressed its concern about the situation of Afghan refugees who are being deported from Pakistan daily in the cold winter season.

Alos, the UN warned most of the Afghans who were recently expelled from Pakistan did not have a place to live and would face problems finding food during the winter.

The International Federation of Human Rights Defenders (IFHRD), in a statement, called on the global community and human rights organisations to prevent the expulsion of Afghan refugees by Pakistan.

The acting interior minister says IEA remains committed to creating facil-

ities for the refugee families returning from Pakistan.

He slammed as unfair Pakistan's decision on forcibly deporting Afghan migrants. He said the move had been denounced by everyone, including IEA.

IEA denies summoning of ambassador

In response to Pakistani media reports, Kabul said that the Islamic Emirate's chargé d'affaires in Islamabad had not been summoned. He only received a message from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad.

Earlier, the Express Tribune had reported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had summoned the IEA charge d'affaires over recent attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Kabul was asked to arrest TTP leader

Hafiz Gul Bahadur and deliver him to Islamabad.

But IEA spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, rejected as groundless the reports about the summoning of the charge d'affaires.

"Based on our information, our ambassador has not been summoned, maybe he himself has explained it. But the message has reached our embassy and has been shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it is under investigation," Mujahid told TOLONews.

Continuation of humanitarian aid

Last week, EU pledged 145 million euros in aid to Afghanistan, and Turkey donated 508 tonnes of food and non-food items to help the Afghans affected by the Herat earthquake and those returning from Pakistan.

Siraj deems PM ‘selection’ between blue-eyed, super blue-eyed persons unacceptable

LAHORE (NNI): Jamaat-e-Islami chief Sirajul Haq on Sunday said that the ‘selection’ of the prime minister based on being either a blue-eyed person or a super blue-eyed person in the next general elections is not acceptable – an obvious reference to the PML-N supremo and the former PTI chairman.

The JI leader, during a press conference at Mansoor, stressed the need for a systemic change in the country, saying that it went beyond merely changing faces. He expressed his concern over the escalating injustice and despair in the country, highlighting the distress of the common man as the entire nation remains entangled in a quagmire.

“The country’s youth will continue their efforts from December 10 to February 8 for the elections. We are hopeful that the elections will be held in the country. The country will have to face severe hardships if the democracy is derailed,” he said.

The JI chief berated former rulers for prioritising stashing of their bank balances over public welfare.

According to Siraj, the past decade has been a nightmare for the people, witnessing a sequence of governments, including the PTI, a coalition govern-

ment for 16 months, and now a caretaker setup.

He pointed out that these successive governments were part of a sequence rather than a revolutionary change. He said that common Pakistanis had been disillusioned. “They have been deceived in the name of food, shelter and clothing.” Looking ahead to the upcoming elections, Siraj proclaimed that they would bring deliverance from the exploitative system and advocate for freedom in Kashmir. He asserted that the next election would serve as a means to rescue the people from oppression and tyranny, accentuating his party’s commitment to ending inflation and poverty in the country.

Siraj announced that the Jamaat-e-Islami would commence its election campaign on December 8, Friday, and claimed that only his party could ensure a corruption-free Pakistan.

He urged the masses to extend support to his party in the upcoming elections, scheduled to take place on February 8. “The country’s resources have plundered in the last 76 years. Nobody is aware that the loans taken from foreign countries have been utilised,” Haq asserted.

Peace, love, hospitality woven into tapestry of Sindhi culture: Zardari

KARACHI (NNI): Former president Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday felicitated all Sindhis on the occasion of Sindhi Culture Day.

In his felicitation message, the PPP leader said that nations are identified by their cultures, and the culture of Sindh has a history of peace, love, bravery and hospitality.

Zardari recalled that the PPP founding leader, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had established a ministry to preserve the cultures of all communities residing in Pakistan. He said that the Lok Virsa Museum in Islamabad narrates the history of the cultures of the communities residing in the country. Extending congratulations to the people of Sindh and the entire country on Sindhi Culture Day, PPP Women Wing Central President Faryal Talpur said that the culture of the Indus Valley is a mirror of a 5,000-year-old and great civilisation. She said that Sindhi topi, Ajrak, art and the Sindhi language are distinct identities.

Talpur stated that Pakistan is immensely rich in unparalleled cultural heritage, and “it is the responsibility of all of us to play our role in preserving and promoting this great heritage”. The media should also play a leadership role in promoting all cultures of Pakistan, she added.

‘JUI promotes moderation in political discourse’

MULTAN (APP): Chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Sunday expressed JUI’s commitment to fostering moderation in political discourse while maintaining and promoting religious identity.

While addressing to workers at Jhok Wanis, on occasion of Malik Sajjad Wains, a local political figure in JUI, Fazalur Rehman acknowledging the critical role of public leaders, emphasized his dedication to solving societal issues and dismantling prejudices in order to pave the way for a harmonious future.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman firmly declared to take stand against those who resorted to target Muslim Ummah. Underlining ideology, belief, and attitude as the political foundation, he stressed the importance of compassion towards the impoverished and the collective responsibility of safeguarding their lives, wealth, and honor.

The chief outlined a policy of wisdom and fairness in dispute resolution, underscoring the historical sacrifices of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam elders as a testament to the people’s trust. JUI always rejected sectarianism, Fazal added. He promised to serve people if voted to power.

He also expressed resolve to propel the party forward, uniting communities, and fostering a future marked by justice, compassion, and resilience.

Senator Maulana Abdul Ghaffor Haideri also spoke and stated that there was no allegation of corruption on any leader of JUI.

He criticized leadership of PTI stating that a man (IK) was imposed upon damaged country. JUI struggled to remove him from power, concluded Haideri.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulber Khan with other people attending the funeral prayer of martyrs of Hudur incident by terrorist attack on passenger bus.

Sindh’s diversity its strength, not weakness: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Sunday that Sindh has been a multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic unit for centuries.

Delivering his speech at the Sindhi Cultural Day ceremony here, he said Sindh had united different religions and races from different regions of the world. "Sindh's diversity is its strength, not its weakness," Murtaza Solangi remarked.

The Sindhi Cultural Day this year was linked with the celebration of Sindhi women's event, Murtaza Solangi said.

The minister said that humility and resilience were embedded in Sindhi culture like steel, which could be moulded but not broken.

He said it was significant that in the poetry of great Sindhi poet Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, seven ragas were named after women.

From Bhittai to Sheikh Ayaz, poets had highlighted the role of Sindhi women, Murtaza Solangi maintained. The way the brave women of Surmi organization showed their performance, he said it was an example for other women of Pakistan.

He was of the considered opinion that the feelings of mercy, tolerance, and forgiveness were more in women than in men.

The minister said that women had more power of tolerance and attention to detail.

He said once he asked former prime minister Shaheed Benazir Bhutto how she made it possible to work with those who in the past had tormented her and indulged in her character assassination. The minister said she replied that the cause she was working for was greater than her and she could not compromise her cause.

"Our development is not possible without recognizing the importance of women in all spheres of life",

Murtaza Solangi added. Murtaza Solangi said he was happy to see his friend and teacher Madad Ali Sindhi at the function.

The caretaker minister congratulated the people of Pakistan especially Sindhis on the occasion of Sindhi Cultural Day in Sindhi language.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia reach consensus on investment modalities: Solangi: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi Sunday said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had reached a consensus on the investment modalities, paving the path for the ratification of a much-awaited free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council, a development that has been pending for the last 19 years.

In a post on X, the minister said, "If approved, this will mark the first trade and investment agreement that the GCC has entered into with any country in the past 15 years."

Ashrafi emphasises collective efforts to promote interfaith harmony

LAHORE (APP): Special Representative to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and the Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East and Islamic Countries Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi has stressed the need for collective efforts from all stakeholders to promote interfaith harmony in the country, as it is the key pillar of development.

He was addressing the Interfaith Harmony Council conference, hosted by International Interfaith Harmony Council here at a local hotel on Sunday. The conference was arranged with an aimed to bringing together a diverse array of religious scholars and leaders from various faiths, all united under the common goal of promoting harmony and thwarting divisive agendas.

Ashrafi, who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council, said the most important thing for interfaith harmony was mutual respect between religious denominations and the acceptance of others, adding that

nobody should abandon their religion and beliefs, nor should they attack the religion and beliefs of others.

The Pakistan’s Constitution guaranteed the rights of every citizen living in the country, he remarked and mentioned that minority communities should come together for development of the country. He said that every religion teaches peace and love and discourages hatred, adding that the government and security forces had always stood shoulder to shoulder with the minority communities.

Ashrafi said that Pakistan always desires peaceful and productive relations with all neighboring countries, adding that peace is the only message of Pakistan as it is curtail for any country’s development. He said that state-of-the-art facilities were being provided to religious tourists as per direction of Caretaker Prime Minister and Army Chief.

He said Pakistan always wholeheartedly welcomed all religious tourists coming from across the

world. Kartarpur Corridor was made operational as a gesture of peace and the Sikh pilgrims were invited to visit their holy places in Pakistan. He mentioned that Muslim religious leaderships were also playing their effective role for promotion of interfaith harmony in the country, adding that Islam always advocates peace as forced marriages and forced conversions of religion was prohibited in Islam.

He said that Gaza was not an issue of Palestine or Arab nations, but of entire humanity. He asked the world what was fault of innocent children of Gaza as more than 3,500 children had been martyred in Israeli aggression since October 7. Israeli brutalities had taken the lives of more than 20,000 people in which 70 to 80 per cent were women and juveniles. Ashrafi said peace should be established by ending war in Gaza, while establishing an independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds as its capital was the only solution to the issue.

Modi’s BJP routs opposition in key India state polls

CHHATTISGARH (Agencies): Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ruling party routed the main opposition in key heartland states as votes were counted on Sunday, months before national elections in the world’s most populous country. The victories in three of the five states that voted in November further

boosted the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Modi, who is already the favourite to win his third consecutive term in office next year.

The premier’s party wrested control of Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan states from the opposition and retained Madhya Pradesh in a landslide

despite a spirited challenge. The results are seen as yet another setback for the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty scion Rahul Gandhi, 53, who led the opposition centre-left Indian National Congress party’s aggressive and personal campaign directly targeting Modi.

Gandhi’s father, grand-mother and great-grandfather were prime ministers and political stalwarts who dominated the Indian political landscape for decades. India’s once-dominant political force, the Congress party, lost the last two successive national elections in 2014 and 2019 in historic defeats to Modi and the BJP.



GAZA: Smoke from an explosion rises in Gaza, after a temporary truce between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas expired, as seen from southern Israel.

Paris attack near Eiffel Tower leaves one dead and two injured

PARIS (Reuters): A man has died and two others, including a British man, have been injured in a knife and hammer attack on a street in central Paris.

The attack occurred near the Eiffel Tower shortly before 21:00 local time (20:00 GMT) on Saturday.

A 26-year-old French national known to security services has been arrested and anti-terrorism prosecutors have opened an investigation. The man killed was a German tourist who worked as a nurse.

France’s Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin said the victim was with his wife when he was attacked and fatally stabbed on Quai de Grenelle. He said the wife’s life was saved by the intervention of a taxi driver and that the suspect fled across a nearby bridge spanning the River Seine.

After crossing to the north side of the river he attacked two more people, hitting the 66-year-old British victim in the eye

with a hammer.

The suspect was then Tasered by police and arrested on suspicion of assassination - defined in French law as premeditated murder - and "attempted assassination in relation to a terrorist enterprise".

Video published online appeared to show the moment the suspect was apprehended by armed police not far from where the attack happened.

He has been named in French media as Armand R, a 26-year-old French national with Iranian parents. The two people injured - a Frenchman aged around 60 and a British tourist - were treated by emergency services, with neither found to be in a life-threatening condition. On Sunday, Health Minister Aurélien Rousseau told French media the pair are "in good health". A police operation was initiated around the Bir-Hakeim metro station on Saturday night, and authorities urged people to avoid the area.

Mr Darmanin said the alleged attacker was heard shouting "Allahu Akbar", Arabic for "God is greatest", and told police he was upset because "so many Muslims are dying in Afghanistan and in Palestine". The suspect is also understood to have suggested France was complicit in the deaths of Palestinians in Gaza. Police said the man was released from prison in 2020 after serving four years for planning an attack, and was supposed to be following treatment for psychiatric problems.

On Saturday, a video was posted on social media in which the suspect criticised the French government and discussed what he described as the murder of innocent Muslims, AFP news agency reports. Writing on X, formerly Twitter, French President Emmanuel Macron sent his thoughts to all those affected by the "terrorist attack" and thanked the emergency services for their response.

PML-N, other parties table initial proposals for seat adjustment in Karachi

KARACHI (NNI): Different likeminded parties, which are set to give the PPP a hard time in Sindh, have prepared an initial draft for seat adjustment in Karachi, while trying to gain maximum through a joint strategy.

It is because of the fact that Karachi – the country’s largest city and economic hub – decide who will rule Pakistan and Sindh given the share of seats it has both for national provincial legislatures.

The latest delimitations announced the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) means Karachi will now have 22 National Assembly and 47 Sindh Assembly seats thanks to the huge multi-ethnic population it houses.

So, the PML-N, which initially struck a deal with the MQM-P for seat adjustment on the basis of a long-term understanding on different issues, has proposed that its candidates should be backed on four national and nine provincial constituencies – with Nawaz Sharif trying to build a national image of his party by having representation across the country.

Earlier this week, the MQM-P presented a draft constitutional amendment, seeking to empower local governments by giving them control over various subjects while ensuring financial independence. And the PML-N agrees to the idea in principle.

On the other hand, the ANP (Awami National

Party) wants one national and five provincial assembly seats covering those neighbourhoods where the Pashto-speaking people are in majority.

The JUI-F and the GDA – mainly representing the Pir Pagra-led PML-F – are eyeing five and two national as well as provincial constituencies.

On the other hand, the MQM-P is ready for seat adjustment with other parties in Malir district and the Lyari – an area which is part of Karachi South district. However, the final decision on these recommendations would be made the central leaderships of these parties after detailed consultations at a joint meeting, which is expected to be held after December 8.

PM hails UAE-led fund to mitigate climate change as highly promising for Global South

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There are many offers on the table, where we are showcasing our renewable projects, be it solar or others. The specifics of the bankable would be discussed at the working group level. I’m sure it would be part of our climate adaptation initiatives where we’re trying to adapt our energy requirements,” PM Kakar said.

Prime Minister Kakar hailed the UAE’s hosting of the global climate conference and congratulated President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed and the Government of the UAE for hosting such a fabulous event. Elaborating on the close bonds between the two nations, he paid tribute to the UAE’s Founding Father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, for laying a strong foundation for the two countries’ bilateral relations. He said that the relationship had been strengthened further converted into more opportunities, not only for the people of the UAE and Pakistan, but also for the entire region. Furthermore, the caretaker prime minister attributed the strengthening of the ties to the 1.7 million-strong Pakistani diaspora in

the UAE, whom he acknowledged contributed further to enhancing the close bond between the countries.

The Pakistani diaspora’s contributions extend beyond the UAE’s economic structure, he said, adding “Their presence has brought about important contributions towards their own communities back home.”

The PM stressed the long and sustainable partnership between the UAE and Pakistan in terms of climate mitigation, adaptation, climate, finance, among others.

He said that they had signed a number of bilateral agreements in the last few days. One of the contributing and guiding principles in translating all these agreements would be the consideration of climate change problems. “The new investment is centred on the idea of addressing climate change in the social and other economic areas. We do see a sustainable partnership between the two countries, with a convergence of interests between the two economies,” he added. The prime minister termed the MoUs between the countries as the beginning of a new chapter and expressed the hope that the joint

projects would increase with result-oriented projects in the coming decades.

He said that there was a regional awakening when it came to climate change. “The UAE plays a leading role in the region. It understands and appreciates its economic potential, relying on resources earned over almost half a century. There are plenty of opportunities around the region, where Pakistan contributes with its youth and their entrepreneurial and professional skills in diverse sectors,” he added.

The caretaker prime minister highlighted agriculture, food security, mining, IT, and industry and manufacturing sectors as potential areas for joint projects, especially given the country’s 14 million population, of which 65% are under the age of 25, and could communicate in major global languages.

While the UAE has the right kind of capital, making partnerships in various sectors viable, he stressed. “You would find Pakistan a reliable and sustainable partner, and we do trust the UAE and its leadership, President Mohamed bin Zayed blindly,” PM Kakar said.