

Bodies of climbers found
F.P. Report

NEELUM: Bodies of three climbers who went missing nine years earlier were found from Neelum Valley. A four-member rescue team conducted the largest successful search and rescue operation of the history of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The rescue team recovered the bodies from Sarwali Base Camp I and shifted them to hospital.

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First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

Plane escapes disaster
F.P. Report

KARACHI: Another plane narrowly escaped a disaster after a bird hit prevented the aircraft from taking off at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport on Saturday morning. Air Blue's flight PA-208 was about to take off when a bird collided with it. The captain applied emergency brakes halting the plane on the run way, which sparked a sudden fire in one of the plane's engines after a blast.

Vol. XXXIXI No. 225 Regd. No. 241 RABI-UL-AWWAL 03 1446 -- SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 08 2024 PESHAWAR EDITION 12 PAGES PRICE. 30

Erdogan calls for Islamic alliance against Israel

ISTANBUL (Reuters): Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday Islamic countries should form an alliance against what he called "the growing threat of expansionism" from Israel.

He made the comment after describing what Palestinian and Turkish officials said was the killing by Israeli troops of a Turkish-American woman taking part in a protest against settlement expansion in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. "The only step that will stop Israeli arrogance, Israeli banditry, and Israeli state terrorism is the alliance of Islamic countries," Erdogan said at an Islamic schools' association event near Istanbul.

He said recent steps that Türkiye has taken to improve ties with Egypt and Syria are aimed at "forming a line of solidarity against the growing threat of expansionism," which he said also threatened Lebanon and Syria. Erdogan hosted Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in Ankara this week and they discussed the Gaza war and ways to further repair their long-frozen ties during what was the first such presidential visit in 12 years.

Ties between them started thawing in 2020 when Türkiye began diplomatic efforts to ease tensions with estranged regional rivals, including the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Erdogan said in July that Türkiye would extend an invitation to Syrian President Bashar Assad "any



time" for possible talks to restore relations between the two neighbors, who severed ties in 2011 after the outbreak of the Syrian civil war.

Israel did not immediately comment on Erdogan's remarks on Saturday. Israel's military said after incident that it was looking into reports that a female foreign national "was killed as a result of shots fired in the area. The details of the incident and the circumstances in which she was hit are under review. There was no immediate comment on incident from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office.

Meanwhile, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told visiting Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas that Türkiye will continue to support the Palestinian cause and push the international community to increase pressure on Israel, his office said. The two leaders discussed recent developments and the steps to be taken for a

lasting ceasefire and peace in Gaza, Erdogan's office said in a post on X.

Erdogan condemned Israel's war in Gaza, the statement said, accusing some Western countries of remaining silent and continuing to support Israel. Erdogan also told Abbas that all countries, especially in the Muslim world, should step up efforts to ensure an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian aid to Palestinians. Abbas is set to address an extraordinary session of Türkiye's parliament on Thursday.

Israel's assault on Gaza started after the Palestinian Islamist militant group Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7. Türkiye has denounced the war and has halted all trade with Israel. It submitted a request to join South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice accusing Israel of genocide.

Türkiye's invitation to Abbas came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the US Congress on July 25, which Ankara has condemned. "We will show that Mr. Abbas has the right to speak in our parliament just as Netanyahu has the right to speak in the US Congress," Erdogan told members of his ruling AK Party on Wednesday before meeting Abbas. Erdogan, who has been a staunch supporter of Hamas, said Türkiye had also planned to invite the political leader of Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, who was assassinated in Tehran.



LONDON: Thousands holding placards during a protest against Israeli attacks on Palestinians.

SHC issues notices to govt, Nepra

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Saturday issued notices to the federal government NEPRA, federal secretary energy, K-Electric and others over capacity charges payment to the IPPs.

A petition filed in the high court pleaded that the Supreme Court had ordered forensic audit of the independent power producers (IPPs). Instead of compliance of the order of the apex court capacity charges payments being made, petitioner's counsel said. Petitioner seeks court order for suspension of the capacity payments until the forensic audit being conducted. Capacity payment refers to the payment made monthly by consumers to the power-producing companies to maintain its capacity to generate electricity, ensuring that additional demand can be met.

Pakistan proud of Air Force's courage: PM

PAF observes September 7 as Martyrs' Day

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said the entire nation is proud of Pakistan Air Force. In a message on the occasion of PAF Day, he paid tributes to sacrifices and professionalism of Pakistan Air Force.

He mentioned that on this date in 1965, the PAF created history of courage and bravery. Despite being less in number, the brave men of PAF foiled the evil intentions of the enemy. The Prime Minister said that M. M. Alam shattered the enemy's arrogance by destroying five of their aircraft within a minute.



Meanwhile, in a post on his X handle on the occasion of PAF Day, the Prime Minister said their exceptional service and prowess ensures that our skies are safe, and their determination and valour contributes to a stronger Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Air Force observed 7th September as Martyrs' Day at all PAF Bases throughout the country. The day commenced with a solemn observance, including special Du'a and Quran Khawani, dedicated to the martyrs of the 1965 & 1971 Wars, as well as those who made the ultimate sacrifice

in the line of duty since the establishment of Pakistan.

Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force was the Chief Guest during a Martyrs' Day Ceremony held at Air Headquarters, Islamabad. Speaking at the occasion, the Air Chief said that PAF has a proud history of sacrifice, valour and professionalism. He highlighted that the Martyrs' Day is an embodiment of exceptional bravery, flawless professionalism, and an unparalleled spirit of sacrifice of the Armed Forces of Pakistan.

Hailing the glorious deeds of heroism displayed by the Martyrs of Pakistan Air Force, the Air Chief said, "We owe our heroes an eternal debt of gratitude for what they have done for us, setting a supreme example of sacrifice for generations to come. On this solemn occasion, we extend our heartfelt tributes to those heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice for our motherland." Chief of the Air Staff also expressed solidarity with Kashmiri brothers and sisters in their indigenous and just struggle for self-determination.

In his concluding remarks, he reiterated his resolve to make all-out efforts for the progress and development of Pakistan in the constantly evolving global landscape and pledged that Pakistan Air Force would continue to strive hard for the advancement in space, electronic warfare, cyber, niche technologies and indigenous defence capability to ensure sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan. Later, to pay homage to the martyrs, the Air Chief laid floral wreath at the Martyrs' Monument and offered

Amna named as Pakistan's new foreign secretary

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Amna Baloch, a Grade 22 officer, has been appointed as the new foreign secretary of Pakistan. The official notification of her appointment was issued by the Establishment Division following the approval of the prime minister.

Amina Baloch, who previously served as Pakistan's ambassador to Belgium, will now take on the role of foreign secretary, one of the most critical positions in the country's diplomatic framework. Her appointment comes as Pakistan navigates complex global challenges and seeks to strengthen its international relationships. Ms Baloch is set to take charge of office on September 11 after the incumbent, Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi, retires on September 10. Qazi has been appointed as a member of Federal Public Service Commission.

The decision to appoint Baloch as foreign secretary reflects her extensive experience and expertise in international diplomacy. During her tenure as ambassador, she was instrumental in advancing Pakistan's diplomatic interests in Europe, particularly in Belgium, where she played a key role in enhancing bilateral relations.

Baloch will be Pakistan's second-ever female foreign secretary, following in the footsteps of Tehmina Janjua, the first woman to hold the position. Baloch, a seasoned career diplomat, brings extensive experience from her service in various international capitals.

Before her current role as Pakistan's ambassador to Belgium, Amna Baloch served as the high commissioner of Pakistan in Malaysia. Baloch holds a master's degree in history and began her diplomatic career by joining the Pakistan Foreign Service in 1991. Throughout her career, she has held various key positions both at the headquarters and in missions abroad, including consul general of Pakistan in Chengdu, China; minister counsellor in Colombo, Sri Lanka; joint secretary at the Prime Minister's Office; and additional secretary in the foreign minister's office.

Talks underway with IPPs to slash power tariffs: Leghari

ISLAMABAD (Reuters): The coalition government led by the PML-N is renegotiating contracts with independent power producers (IPPs) to rein in "unsustainable" electricity tariffs, Energy Minister Awaiz Leghari said as households and businesses buckle under soaring energy costs.

Rising power tariffs have stirred social unrest and shuttered industries in the \$350 billion economy, which has contracted twice in recent years as inflation hit record highs. "The existing price structure of power in this country is not sustainable," Awaiz Leghari, the federal minister heading Power Division, told Reuters in an interview.

He said discussions were underway between power producers and the government because "there is a clear understanding on both sides that the status quo can't be maintained." Leghari stressed that all stakeholders would have to "give in to a certain point" — though without compromising completely on business sustainability — and this would have to be done "as soon as possible".

Faced with chronic shortages a decade ago, Pakistan approved dozens of private projects by the IPPs, financed mostly by foreign lenders. The incentivised deals included high guaranteed returns and commitments to even pay for unused power. However, a sustained economic crisis has slashed power consumption, leaving the country with excess capacity that it needs to pay for.

Short of funds, the government has built those fixed costs and capacity payments into consumer bills, sparking protests by domestic users and industrial associations. Four sources in the power sector told Reuters changes to contracts demanded

included slashing guaranteed returns, capping dollar rates and moving away from paying for unused power. The sources requested anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media.

Energy sector viability was the focus of a critical staff level pact in May with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a \$7 billion bailout. The IMF's staff report stressed the need to revisit power deals. Pakistan has already initiated talks on reprofiling power sector debt owed to China as well as negotiations on structural reforms, but progress has been slow. Pakistan has also committed to stop power sector subsidies.

Leghari said current rates were not affordable for domestic or commercial consumers and this was hurting growth because power prices were no longer regionally competitive, putting critical exports at a disadvantage. He said the aim was to bring tariffs down to 9 US cents per unit for commercial users from about 28 cents currently.

Earlier this week, the minister had signalled that that a "permanent relief" for consumers was on the anvil. Leghari said that a detailed review of matters related to IPPs had also been completed, and the nation would soon hear 'good news' in this regard. However, any one-sided change in IPP contracts is unlikely, as Leghari stated last month that the government could not terminate agreements unilaterally, warning that such a move would create a "Reko Diq-like situation". In the past 15 years, the country has suffered losses of nearly Rs5,082 billion due to the government's failure to control the menace of circular debt, leading to an annual loss of Rs370 billion.

4 bombers killed as attack on FC HQs repulsed

F.P. Report

RAWAPINDI: A group of four Khwarij tried to attack a Frontier Corps Headquarters in Mohmand District. The attempt to enter the camp was effectively thwarted by the security forces personnel, and resultantly the Khwarij, all four suicide bombers, were sent to hell before they could cause the intended damage.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other Kharij found in the area. Pakistan security forces stand valiant, with the sheer determination and resolve, to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday paid tribute to the soldiers and officers of the Pakistan Army for foiling a terrorist attack by Khawarij terrorists on FC Headquarters in Mohmand district.

The prime minister, in a statement, commended the army personnel for eliminating four suicide bombers who attempted to storm the

CTD hunts down 5 terrorists
F.P. Report

PASNI: The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of Balochistan successfully eliminated five terrorists during an intelligence-based operation in the Pishin district. The operation was carried out in the Surkhhab refugee camp, a known hotspot for militant activity.

According to a CTD spokesperson, the operation was launched based on credible intelligence reports indicating the presence of armed terrorists in the area. During the operation, an exchange of fire occurred between the security forces and the terrorists, resulting in the death of five terrorists. In addition to neutralizing the terrorists, the CTD recovered a significant cache of arms and ammunition from their hideout, further weakening the terrorist infrastructure in the region.

camp. "The entire nation including himself salutes the brave officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army," he said. The prime minister reiterated the government's resolve to continue the fight against terrorism until its complete eradication from the country. He appreciated the efforts of Pakistan Army's soldiers and officers for cleansing Pakistan's soil of terrorist elements. "The entire nation stands united with the armed

forces in the war against terrorism," he added.

President Asif Ali Zardari on Saturday paid tribute to the security forces for a successful operation against Khawarij and foiled a terrorist attack on FC Headquarters in Mohmand. "Our security forces successfully eliminated all the four Khawarij involved in the attack," the president said in a statement issued by the President's House.

Shujaat aims to lower political tensions

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, has volunteered to reduce political tensions. In this regard, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain held important meetings in Islamabad with the heads of political parties, members of parliament, senior journalists, and government officials.

Shujaat Hussain met with former President Wasim Sajjad, Mushahid Hussain Syed, and Mohammad Ali Durrani. He was accompanied by former Federal Minister Chaudhry Wajahat Hussain, Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain, and party spokesperson Mustafa Malik. The discussions focused on the current political situation in the country.

Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain also extended his condolences and offered prayers for the mother of senior journalist Amir Ilyas Rana and the brother of Mohsin Baig, who passed away recently. Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain emphasized that politicians must set aside personal interests and biases in favor of national interests. He urged national leaders to step forward for political and economic stability.

President underscores role of literacy

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: We celebrate the transformative power of education and literacy, the pillars of our nation's future, on this International Literacy Day. This year's theme, "Promoting Multilingual Education: Literacy for Mutual Understanding and Peace," underscores the critical role of literacy in fostering unity, cultural appreciation, and peaceful coexistence.

As per Article 25A of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, education is a fundamental human right and "the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years". Today, we renew our commitment to making education accessible to all, regardless of

circumstances.

Recognizing the urgent challenge of illiteracy, Pakistan has declared a National Educational Emergency, aiming to enrol out-of-school children and educate 70 million adults. Under the Prime Minister's Roshan Pakistan Literacy Drive, the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) launched the "Each One Teach One" (EOTO) Program, which calls on every literate citizen to teach at least one illiterate person.

In order to enhance literacy, the government is providing Conditional Cash Transfers up to the higher secondary level through Benazir Taleemi Wazaif for educating underprivileged children. Stipends up to Rs 4000 for boys and Rs 4500 for girls per quarter are

being offered in all districts of Pakistan. Currently, 9.7 million children are enrolled under the programme. Furthermore, 102,000 scholarships have been given to students from low-income families to ensure that all qualified students have access to undergraduate education.

On this International Literacy Day, we need to recommit ourselves to the national cause of promoting the universal right to education. Together, we can ensure that every Pakistani has the opportunity to learn, grow, and contribute to a more educated, inclusive, and prosperous nation. Each of us has a vital role in shaping the future of our beloved country. May our collective efforts bring about lasting peace, mutual understanding, and a brighter future for all.

Courts to send back references to NAB after SC verdict

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Following the Supreme Court's (SC) NAB amendments verdict, multiple references are likely to be sent back from Accountability Courts to NAB.

Around 170 out of 189 references from Peshawar's accountability courts will be transferred to NAB. Sources revealed that each of the references being transferred includes cases related to money laundering, corruption, and

illegal assets, with a value of less than Rs 50 crore.

NAB's four courts will retain around 10 references for hearing, including some high-profile cases involving former federal minister Arbab Alamgir and his wife Asma Alamgir and former KP minister Sher Azam Wazir. Some references related to the BRT scandal and other corruption scandals will also remain with NAB. Former IG KPK Malik Naveed's reference

will be heard in the accountability court, while former Secretary Welfare Board Tariq Awan's reference will not be transferred to NAB.

Additionally, a reference likely to be filed against accused Hasan Rafiq in the BRT scandal. Yesterday, the Supreme Court (SC) reinstated the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) amendments law by accepting the review plea of the federal government.



‘Strong economy vital for strong national defence’

LAHORE (APP): National Parliamentary Taskforce on Sustainable Development Goals Convener Bilal Azhar Kayani, MNA, said on Saturday that economy was a main pillar for strong national defence.

Addressing a press conference at the PML-N Secretariat here, he said: "Only those countries are strong in terms of national defence who have strong economies." He said that whenever the PML-N government came to power, it caused economic stability in the country. He said that during the first six months after coming to power, the PML-N had worked hard and made sincere efforts to deal with challenges facing the country.

Bilal Azhar said that sincere efforts of the incumbent government had yielded positive results, adding that no doubt things were still difficult for a common man. He said that currently country's foreign exchange reserves were \$9 billion, adding that when the figure would increase up to \$15 billion, things would further improve. The convener said that the government was moving in the right direction, adding that country's currency was stable as it was essential for economic activities.

Regarding inflation, he said that it was at 23 per cent in February, and now it had reduced to less than 10 per cent. The PML-N made a promise to bring down inflation rate and it fulfilled its promise 10 to 11 months prior to the

given timeframe in this regard, he added. He said that in six months, per litre price of petrol had reduced by Rs 21 and price of 'Roti' had also reduced in Punjab.

Kayani said that policy rate of State Bank had also reduced to 19.50 per cent from 22 per cent, adding that according to his understanding, the policy rate had tendency to further reduce. Policy rate had a direct link with inflation rate, he said and hoped that it would go down further as inflation rate had reduced and this would help those who were interested in doing business. He said that remittances were backbone of country's foreign exchange reserves and in July, record figure of remittances had been noticed. He said the government was not only making efforts to control inflation but taking measures to provide maximum relief to people. He said that relief was being provided to people while remaining in the limits spelled by the International Monetary Fund.

Bilal said that the government was providing subsidy to electricity consumers consuming up to 200 units and as per the announcement of PML-N President Nawaz Sharif, the Punjab government had also provided relief to domestic consumers in Punjab consuming 201 to 500 units.

He said, "The International Monetary Fund has reached a staff level agreement with Pakistan." The IMF board approval would come after completion of procedures

related to assurances of external financing gap, he added. He said that it was very unfortunate that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder had sabotaged the IMF agreement just for his vested interests. He said during 16-month government in 2022, the PML-N had revived the IMF agreement, done by the PTI in the larger interest of the country. He said the PTI founder pushed country towards default just for the sake of power.

Bilal Azhar said the PML-N wanted the IMF programme to be the last one for the country. He said that the country had to boost its capacity of earning dollars if it wanted the IMF programme to be the last one. He said that all-out efforts were being made to take the country's export to \$58 billion by 2029. Strengthening of IT sector was vital to boost country's export, he added.

He said, "Tax to GDP ratio is 8.8 per cent, and it is not acceptable; it has to be 13 per cent to achieve desired results." Tax reforms were being made to increase tax net, he said and added that it was a national obligation to pay taxes. He said that the FBR digitalization was also very important to end corruption and to improve the FBR working. The PML-N was focusing not only on steering the country out of existing challenges but to bring ease in the lives of people. He paid tribute to Pak armed forces for making country's defence invincible through their hard work and high spirits.

QUETTA (INP): Balochistan Chief Minister (CM) Mir Sarfraz Bugti Saturday said that the provincial government will take all political parties on board to address the challenges faced by the province.

This was stated by him while hosting a reception in the honor of Secretary General of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari, provincial ministers and assembly members. Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that the incumbent was striving hard to improve the governance model to provide relief to the mass-

es and resolve the challenges. He has said that the lack of good governance, law and order and climate change were the major challenges faced by the province.

Reiterating to make collective efforts for sustainable development and resolve common challenges of the province, he said that the provision of modern education to the youth and best health facilities were among the key priorities of the provincial government and special attention was being paid to them.

The chief minister said President Asif Ali

Zardari and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari wishes for the development of Balochistan for the sake of the masses' uplifts. He reiterated the government's resolve to bring significant improvement in the education and health sectors under the guidance of the party leadership.

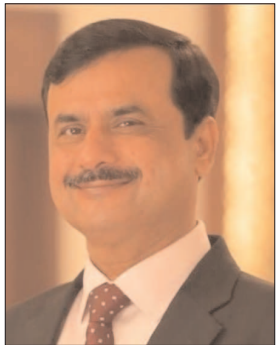
Sarfraz Bugti said that anti-sate elements were behind the unrest in Balochistan and the government has adopted a concerted approach against miscreants to bring the terrorists to their logical end.

Obituary

F.P. Report

KARACHI: It is with deep sorrow and grief that Senior General Manager (Compression), Qaiser Masood has passed away.

He served Sui Northern as Senior General Manager Distribution and General Manager for the Lahore Area.



The company's Chairman of the Board of Directors, board members, Management and employees express their profound grief and condolences over his demise.

Public Notice

We have lost the Transfer Deed for House No. 278, Street No. 7, Sector H1, Phase 2, Hayatabad, Peshawar. If anyone finds it, kindly inform us immediately. Farkhanda Nasim.

BISE postpones papers

LAHORE (APP): The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Lahore has postponed papers which were to be conducted on Sept 17.

According to the Board of Governors, there would be a public holiday on Sept 17, in connection with the Eid Miladun-Nabi celebrations. The postponed papers would be held on Sept 19, a Board announcement said. The papers that were postponed included Education, History of Pakistan and History of Islam.

Govt launches scholarship scheme

LAHORE (INP): The government of Punjab announced Chief Minister's Scholarship Scheme in a move to support talented and deserving students of the province.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Punjab Higher Education Commission and several private universities to implement the initiative. Under this initiative, the government will provide scholarships equivalent to Rs 7 billion to students this year. The Chief Minister's Scholarship Scheme is set to complete in seven years with a total budget of Rs 131 billion. However, the budget will be increased by 10 percent each year to ensure that more students will get benefit from the scheme. By the end of the program, around 30,000 students from Punjab will have gained access to financial aid, helping them pursue higher education and achieve their academic dreams.

7 Sep reminds commitment of PAF

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tesori has said in his message on the occasion of Air Force Day that September 7 reminds of the unwavering commitment of Pakistan Air Force towards the defence of air borders.

He said, 'On the occasion of the historic day, I pay tribute to the Pakistan Air Force, the guardian of the air borders of the country.' He further said that on the 7th of September, Shaheens of the Pakistan Air Force crushed the enemy.

نیشنل رنویس

ماہنامہ ڈی مہتمل شاہد کے لئے برائے مالی سال 2024-25 میں درج ذیل اشیا کی خریداری کے لئے وائبریکٹر مل ہائوس ممبر بنو تو ادوار KPPRA کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ چارٹرڈ اڈورٹسرس سے درج ذیل کمیشن مطلوب ہیں۔ جو کہ پری جنٹ کی کوورس

26-09-2024 کو وقت 11:00 بجے دوپہر تک دفتر مذمتی ہائی پائپ ہیں۔ جو کہ سی ڈی سی کے سامنے کھولے جائینگے

نمبر شمار	نام مینڈر	زیر ضمانت
1	لیڈر کی سیکیورٹی اور وائبریکٹر مل	10,000
2	مینیجنگ کمانڈر	10,000
3	مستحق اشیا	10,000
4	مینیجری	10,000
5	مینیجنگ ٹیس	10,000
6	مینیجنگ برائے لوکل پریچر	10,000
7	واحدہ آئٹم	10,000
8	سرنگل ڈیویژنل سپلائی	10,000
9	فرنیچر برت اپ پریچر	10,000

شرائط

(1) میں سے ایک ٹیکس ایڈجسٹسٹ مروجہ قانون کے مطابق کانا جائیگا۔ (2) مندرجہ بالا اشیا کے لئے علیحدہ علیحدہ ٹینڈر بند لگانے میں ڈاک کے ذریعہ بعد 10,000 کال دیجاتی ہے آئینہ کھینچ جانے کا یہ کہیں مقام ٹینڈر سرف پریچر ڈاک 1 کو مینڈکھانچ جانے کا ہے۔ اپنے ماتحت لائے گئے ٹینڈر قابل قبول نہیں ہوتے۔ (3) کمیشن ماہنامہ شاہد ہونے کے شرط رکھنا ہے اور ہاتھ سے لکھے ہوئے کمیشن زیر غور نہیں لائے جائیں گے۔ (4) مدت 30-06-2025 تک قابل عمل ہیں گے۔

مینیجنگ پریچر ڈیویژنل ہائوس ممبر

INF(P)2295/24

Governor Punjab visits family of martyred captain

LAHORE (APP): Governor Punjab, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan on Saturday paid a visit to the family of martyred captain Muhammad Ali Qureshi, recently martyred in Balouchistan in a terrorist attack by the forces of darkness. According to a spokesperson, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and offered Fateha.

Governor Punjab said the Captain Muhammad Ali Qureshi's sacrifice will always be remembered. He also met the daughter of the martyred captain on the occasion. "We are proud of the sacrifice made by Captain Muhammad Ali Qureshi for the country and sons of soil like the martyred captain are the heroes of nation's fight against terrorism," Governor Punjab said.

The governor hailed the armed forces and their martyrs who have shed their blood in keeping the 'Khawarij' at bay and making the country a safe haven for the generations to come. The armed forces will succeed in cleansing the Holy land from the forces of evil for good, he added. Governor Punjab said the families of the martyrs are jewel in the nation's crown, adding that doors of the Governor's House are open to the families of the martyrs.

OPERATION SOMNATH

NAVAL MIGHT

Pakistan Navy
www.paknavy.gov.pk

On 8th September, Pakistan Navy ships proudly upheld national honour by conducting decisive bombardment on western Indian shore, successfully neutralizing the Indian radar station at Dwarka.

A Multi Dimensional Force

Defenders of Sea Frontiers

@PakistanNavy @Pakistan_Navy @PakistanNavy @Pakistan_Navy

Work on DIK int’l airport to be started this year, says Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has said that the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority has started the process of purchasing land for the Dera Ismail Khan International Airport and work on the project would start this year.

In a statement issued here Saturday, he said that this project of significant importance would change the fate of not only DI Khan but also the southern districts. The governor expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the relevant ministry over the project.

Meanwhile, the Civil Aviation Authority has written instructions to Deputy Commissioner DI Khan to acquire 1817 acres of land for DI Khan International Airport, said a letter issued by Additional Director Estate. The letter sought acquisition of land in Moza Yarik and Galloti for construction of the project.

Meanwhile district President of PPP Tank Sardar Hidayatullah Khan Gandapur, former Nazim Union Council Gul Imam Shakir Khan Kundi called on the governor here at the governor house and discussion issues related to Tank Zam.

Faisal Karim Kundi said that construction of small dams was inevitable for development of the province and prosperity of the people, adding that the small dams in the southern districts of KP would generate electricity while thousands of acres of land would become cultivable.

He assured that delegation that this project as well as the Chashma Lift Bank Canal project would soon be inaugurated.

Sarhad Business Alliance Core body held meeting



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An important meeting of the Sarhad Business Alliance Core Committee was held under the chairmanship of former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali. The meeting was attended by Syed Zahir Ali Shah, Malik Mehar Elahi, Adnan Jaleel, Bakht Mir Jan Durrani, Ghulam Bilal Javid, Muhammad Shah-rukh Khan, Muhammad Iqbal, Mamoor Khan, Shehzad Arif, Manzoor Elahi, Muhammad Ishaq, Nisar Ullah, Syed Akbar, Arshad Siddiqui, Muhammad Riaz, Waheed Khan, Adnan Jaleel, and other members. Besides the core committee, all candi-

dates were also present in the meeting.

It was unanimously decided that the authority for candidate nominations would be handed over to a five-member committee, which would include Haji Ghulam Ali, Syed Zahir Ali Shah, Malik Mehar Elahi, Muhammad Ishaq, and Sharafat Ali Mubarak. This committee will approve and formally announce the final candidates.

The meeting also involved detailed discussions on the Sarhad Business Alliance campaign, advertisements, and other important matters. Emphasis was placed on ensuring an effective door-to-door campaign, and it

was decided that all members would engage with voters in their respective areas to mobilize them. It was also agreed that the Business Alliance would play an active role in addressing the traders' issues, restoring the chamber's lost standing, eliminating unjust taxes, and resolving the challenges faced by the business community.

In this regard, it was decided that a grand convention would be held on September 10th, hosted by Chairman Syed Sirajuddin of the Pakistan Chemists and Druggists Association. All voters will be invited to the convention to be informed about the election process and the candidates.

Partly cloudy weather for city

PESHAWAR: (APP): Partly cloudy weather with trace rain was recorded in the city on Saturday while the MET office predicted

similar weather conditions for the next 24 hours.

The MET officials said a continental air was prevailing over most parts of the

country while a shallow westerly wave was present over Kashmir and it was adjoining hilly areas.

They predicted that

mainly hot and dry weather was expected in most parts of the country.

Meanwhile, Meteorological Department informed on Saturday that a continental air is prevailing over most parts of the country.

A Shallow westerly wave is present over Kashmir and it is adjoining hilly areas.

On Saturday, hot and dry weather is expected in most parts of the country. However, rain or thunderstorm is likely at isolated places in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Potohar region, northeast/central Punjab, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

On Sunday, hot and dry weather is expected in most parts of the country. However, rain or thunderstorm is likely at isolated places in Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir and adjoining hilly areas.



PESHAWAR: Delegation of Germany visiting historical place Ghanta Ghar Bazaar.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur chairing a meeting of Local Government Department.

Experts suggests lifestyle changes

PESHAWAR (APP): The health experts addressing a symposium on Saturday stressed lifestyle changes to prevent diabetes which is rapidly growing roots affecting millions of people in Pakistan.

The seminar was addressed by leading health experts and physicians including Prof. Hafeez-ur-Rehman, Sobia Sabir Ali, Prof. Nighat Ishaq, Prof. Salman Elahi, Prof. Mir Ali Shah, Prof. Muhammad Irfan and Prof. Dr. Safiullah.

Experts urged people to change lifestyles and make healthy activities and eating habits that are considered precautions to control the rapid spread of diabetes in our society.

They said that diabetes could be controlled by creating awareness among people about the factors and reasons behind diabetes.

They said every third person is suffering from diabetes in Pakistan while every fourth person living in the country is prone to the disease.

The health experts addressing a symposium, called for a new approach to the way of life and routine exercise with healthy eating habits to control the disease in Pakistan.

Saif: PTI power show will proceed despite hurdles

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Information Advisor, Barrister Saif, has assured that all necessary measures are in place to overcome any obstacles blocking the PTI rally.

In a statement, Barrister Saif accused the "illegitimate government" of using underhand tactics to disrupt the rally, including reports of police interference and the seizure of equipment at the venue. He claimed that police from across Punjab have been deployed in Islamabad, leaving the province vulnerable.

Barrister Saif alleged that "Raj Kumari" has directed Punjab police to reach Islamabad, and expressed confidence that the rally scheduled for tomorrow will proceed despite the government's attempts to thwart it.

He predicted that September 8 would bring the news of Imran Khan's release and urged youth from across the country to attend the Islamabad rally, asserting that the government's efforts to block it would be ineffective against their enthusiasm.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has prepared Plans A, B, and C to ensure the rally's success. PTI leaders have emphasized that the event will not be canceled or postponed under any circumstances. Instructions

Admin holds open katchery on radio

PESHAWAR (APP): District Administration Swat on Saturday held an open Katchery on FM 98 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Radio to provide people a chance to register their complaints and inform authorities about their concerns.

The katchery was organized under the KP Chief Ministers' Awami Agenda Program. Deputy Commissioner Swat, Shehzad Mehbod listened to problems of people relating to cleanliness, encroachment, inspection of slaughterhouses, dengue control, issuance of passports and price of edibles.

He issued on-the-spot directives to resolve the problems of people and assured cooperation to complainants.

He also urged people to inform authorities about the concerns relating to ongoing projects and development schemes in their respective areas.

Peshawar National Marathon Race Won by Army's Qasim — Fakhar Jahan distributed prizes among athletes

Shahid Afridi

PESHAWAR: In the Peshawar National Marathon Race, athletes from the Pakistan Army dominated the event Muhammad Qasim secured the first position, Muhammad Akhtar came second, while Ali Raza finished third.

Over 3,000 athletes from various departments across the country participated in the 25-kilometer race.

The event was officially inaugurated by Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur who started the race with a symbolic run.

The closing ceremony took place at Hayatabad Sports Complex where Chief Minister's Advisor for Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jahan distributed prizes among the winning athletes.

The advisor assured the athletes that a committee would be formed to investigate and address their complaints and concerns about the marathon.

Speaking at the opening ceremony held at Chamkani BRT Station Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin



Gandapur said that the provincial government is investing significant resources to promote sports and encourage athletes.

He emphasized that youth remain the focus of the government's attention and all necessary measures are being taken to provide them with opportunities for healthy activities.

The Chief Minister also stated that athletes demonstrating exceptional performance in sports would

be supported at both the national and international levels.

He mentioned that similar national-level events would be organized in the future to provide athletes from the province with more opportunities to improve their performance.

Provincial ministers Qasim Ali Shah, Meena Khan, Advisor for Sports Syed Fakhar Jahan, Chairman of Pakistan

Athletics Federation General (Retd.) Akram Sahi, Secretary Sports, DG Sports Abdul Nasir, Deputy Director Jamshed Baloch, Organizing Secretary Jafar Shah and other important figures were also present.

The marathon race's closing ceremony took place late at night at Hayatabad Sports Complex where Chief Minister's Advisor Syed Fakhar Jahan distributed prizes to the winning athletes.

Rare blunt-nosed viper, reptiles found under severe threat due to killing by gold extractors, locals in Nizampure

PESHAWAR (APP): A rare snake species known as the blunt-nosed viper and other reptiles, especially the gecko lizard are found to be under severe threat due to killing by locals and gold extractors near the Indus River in Nizampure area of Nowshera district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The threat warning was issued by an amazing nature survivalist and wildlife rescuer, Abdul Rehman who belongs of Bahawalpur district of Punjab and recently spent around two weeks in Nizampure and Manglot National Park for his research on different wild

species.

Abdul Rehman also operates an educational YouTube channel in the name of "Wild Rush" to create awareness about the conservation of indigenous wild species.

During a visit to Nizampure on the embankment of the river Indus, Abdul Rehman found that gold extractors who sleep on the site of extraction are ruthlessly killing reptiles including rare species for safety purposes.

It merits an insertion here that a large of people carrying an extensive fleet of heavy machinery are engaged in illegal mining of gold in the Indus River at

Nizampure area of Nowshera, causing irreparable damage to valuable national assets besides severe disruption of aquatic life.

Apart from gold extractors, the locals are also involved in killing of rare snakes, blunt-nosed viper and gecko lizard, he told APP.

Talking to APP, Abdul Rehman informed that the gecko lizard is killed by people on the basis of a misconception of becoming a highly venomous species.

He said gecko are found in abundance in Nizampure and people of area are of the view that if it even touches a human,

he will die of its poisonous excretion.

Whereas blunt-nosed viper is being killed because of a new specie in the area and of its large size, Rehman believed.

He said blunt nosed viper is not a local species of Nizampure and according to locals, it started appearing in the area after the 2010 flooding.

According to limited research on the species, blunt-nosed vipers, scientifically known as *Macrovipera lebetinus*, are mostly found in the Chiltan mountain range of Baluchistan or some mountainous regions of Kashmir, Rehman told

APP.

However, to his surprise, he found the snake in Nizampure area in two different colors.

Furthermore, he continued, the size of viper which is usually around 5 to 6 feet scares locals and they forthwith kill it on sighting over a belief that it's a python and will devour their livestock.

The wildlife rescuer said he found carcasses of three snakes and also watched several videos recorded by locals of killing the viper of large sizes.

The snake found in Nizampure is also unique because of its colours

mostly yellow and blue which warrants research as how it arrived in the area and which specie is this, Rehman observed.

He said the snake is also under sever threat because of being nocturnal in nature and remains much dormant during day time, allowing people to easily attack and kill it.

During conservation, locals informed Rehman that in the daytime these snakes are found in deep sleep and they easily kill them without any resistance.

Sometime they stumble upon the snake while tilling in farmlands and the reptile did not give any

response due to deep sleep.

Being a wildlife rescuer, Abdul Rehman worked on conservation of threatened species and educated locals about the non-venomous nature of gecko lizard.

He also requested them to avoid killing snakes if found in the open. He told locals that if they found any snake within the premises of their homes, they should kill it otherwise avoid killing rare species.

Similarly, Abdul Rehman also met with gold extractors and apprised them about several non-venomous reptiles which they are killing in fear.

He also stressed that the



In brief

Rally for release of Imran held

F.P. Report

WANA: A large rally in favor of Imran Khan's release was held in Wana, the headquarters of Lower Waziristan, under the leadership of MPA Ajab Gul. Hundreds of PTI workers participated in the rally. After the rally, a large gathering was held in Wana Bazaar. Addressing the gathering, MPA Ajab Gul Wazir said that it is the great fortune of South Waziristan that its people placed their trust in Imran Khan's honesty during the elections and made the right decision, which will surely bear fruit in the country's best interest. He said that former Prime Minister Imran Khan has no personal interest and has been imprisoned for accurately representing the public's emotions and challenging America's global arrogance. He added that in the past, the politicians who were imprisoned in Pakistan could not endure the hardships of jail and fled the country, living lavishly on the wealth looted from the public. Imran Khan is the only political leader who, instead of fleeing abroad, chose to stay in prison and is ready to make every sacrifice to fight the people's case. He further stated that work on developmental projects in Lower Waziristan will soon commence, and every effort will be made to eliminate the region's backwardness. He emphasized that attention will be given to government schools and hospitals. Criticizing the central government, he said that the discriminatory treatment of the merged districts must stop.

Traffic accident leaves two dead

F.P. Report

OKARA: Two motorcycle riders died in a road accident near GT Road in the cantonment area of Okara. According to the details, two motorcycle riders were travelling from Pakpattan to Okara when their motorcycle collided with a trailer, leading to their deaths on the spot. The rescue team said two people were also injured in the accident and have been shifted to the hospital for treatment. Upon receiving the report, motorcycle rescue services and ambulances swiftly reached the accident site. The rescue teams provided initial medical assistance to the injured immediately. The deceased have been identified as Anwar and Arslan, while Asad and Ali Raza are reported to be in critical condition. All individuals involved in the accident are from Pakpattan.

Unknown men kill police official

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: A police rider was shot at, resulting in the death of one official and injuring another in Abbottabad. The incident occurred near the Sethi Mosque, where an unknown individual opened fire on the police riders and managed to escape. According to the police, the officers from the Sikandrabad police station were on patrol when they stopped a person who then began shooting. Two officials were seriously injured, and during treatment, one of them, Shahzeb, succumbed to his injuries. Another officer named Itisham was severely wounded and has been transferred to Ayub Medical Complex for treatment. DPO Abbottabad Umar Tufail stated that the police have registered a case against the unidentified assailants and have set up roadblocks throughout the city to search for them, assuring that the suspects will be apprehended soon.

Mayar: Coming meeting of AWKUM syndicate illegal

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The city mayor Himayatullah Mayar has declared the coming scheduled meeting of syndicate of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) as illegal and against the university rules and regulations.

He claimed that the syndicate meeting was scheduled on September 12, of the current month in the conference room of Garden campus of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. Himayatullah Mayar here on Saturday told media persons that meeting of syndicate of AWKUM had been called by officiating VC which was totally illegal because first there was no provision in the university rules to appoint and delegate powers of VC or Pro-VC to an officiating VC, he was only authorized to deal with day to day affairs only.

"Secondly the Supreme Court of Pakistan and Peshawar High Court has declared and issued rulings

that once a land is acquired and taken possession by the acquiring department cannot return it to its original owners rather than to pay price to them," he claimed as saying. "Thirdly acquiring departments has prepared master plan over inch by inch of the land for construction and establishment of different facilities over it.

Fourthly valuable rights and interests of general public and particularly of students are attached with the land and all people of Mardan has shown resentment over its sale. Fifthly these institutions are like living organisms which grow without any stop the existing land will become insufficient in the future as experienced in the past," he further claimed as saying.

Besides, he said that it would not only delay payments to owners and they would be remained deprived of its rightful money but this decision would also bring bad reputation for the present elected government and its representatives and

repercussions for future generations would be more severe. Mayar said that no such like example was existed in the world history that land meant for public facilities had been sold out in the past.

"Mardan is second biggest city and district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and catchment and catering area for its facilities is spread to surrounding districts and northern and northwestern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," he pointed out. He feared that it would create more unrest which would culminate into full fledged violent protests, resulting in law and order situation as well as it could cause to damage peaceful environment of Mardan. The city Mayor Himayatullah Mayar stressed the provincial government to withdraw its decision and proposed plan to sale out land of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, otherwise, the incumbent government would be responsible for the consequences.

Jirga, the lonely solution of issues: Khan Baba



F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Jirga is the only solution to all issues being faced by the citizens and government. The aim of the World Peace Jirga Programme (WPJP) is to promote business and work for the development of peace.

These views were expressed by the head of WPJP Refayattullah alias Khan Baba while addressing on the occasion of oath taking ceremony of WPJP, Torkham committee held in Landi Kotal press club dis-

trict Khyber on Saturday. He added that the country being faced various challenges however it could be resolved through dialog and jirga system. The purpose of WPJP was to play the role of bridge between the government citizens of the country and to assist the various departments to improve trade.

Efforts were under consideration to enhance trade at Torkham border, he remarked. He urged the Federal government to resolve the matter of repatriation of Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Koki Khel tribe in Jamrud that caused suspension of all trade activities at Torkham border for the last three weeks. WPJP planned to set up a scanner, facilitating the center and health center in Torkham to boost business activities at the border.

He stressed upon the traders and other concerned authorities to join hands with them to make the Torkham a hub of bossiness. At the end an oath was administered to the five members committee (Jirga) of Torkham border.

GSTA hold protest DEO Larkana

F.P. Report

LARKANA Protest demonstration was held by the Government School Teachers Association (GSTA) in Bاده city against the District Education Officer Secondary and Higher Secondary after the school hours ended. There were banners on which statements were written against the District Education Officer Secondary and Higher Secondary Gulbahar Magsi.

On this occasion, the teachers of Government Boys Higher Secondary School protested in front of the media and said that DEO Secondary and Higher Secondary Gulbahar Magsi is an anti-education officer whose arrival Education has been destroyed in all the schools of San Larkana.

They said that Gulbahar Magsi is a stigma in the education department, which should be removed and

another honest officer should be appointed so that the anxiety spread among students and teachers can be removed. He demanded the minister and the secretary to remove the corrupt and rash DEO and appoint a responsible officer, otherwise the scope of the protest will be increased.

Meanwhile, Benazir Bhutto Medical University, Larkana organized the second inter-university undergraduate conference on behalf of Martyr Ms. Benazir Bhutto Medical University. According to the details, the second undergraduate research conference was organized under the supervision of director Dr. Mir Hasan Khoso at Chandka Medical College.

The ceremony was inaugurated by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nusrat Shah. On this occasion, Registrar Prof. Safdar Ali Sheikh, Dean Prof. Yusuf Shah,

Dean Prof. Qarao Shah, Dean Prof. Muhammad Hanif Sheikh, Principal Mehr Medical College Sukkur Prof. Altaf Sheikh, Principal Chandka Professor Riyaz Ahmad Sheikh, Professor Anwar Ali Sheikh, Dr. Mir Hasan Khoso and Dr. Fauzia Chandio also accompanied HIM. Addressing the ceremony, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Nusrat Shah praised the research efforts of the students and said that this is the era of research.

He added that it is good to hear that our students are aware of the importance of research. Orak congratulated Dr. Mir Hasan Khoso for holding a successful conference, Director Orak Dr. Mir Hasan Khoso said in his address that we organized the first successful research conference in 2023 and this is the second research conference.

Commissioner directs inspection of all animal, birds in parks

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah has under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Program "Awami Agenda" visited Kotal Wildlife Park Kohat along with the authorities concerned and inspected its different parts in detail. He reviewed the measures taken for the protection and promotion of wildlife. He while issuing directions for the protection and development of wildlife in line with the "Public Agenda" Program, said that no negligence in this regard will be acceptable. The commissioner declared the food and health arrangements substandard made for birds and animals in the Wildlife Park and directed to pay special attention to it.

Motasim Billah expressed anguish over the absence of Caretaker Inspector of the Park and ordered action him. He sternly directed the authorities concerned to issue a Monthly

Calendar of regular inspection of all birds and animals from the concerned medical staff at the earliest and ensure immediate inspection and treatment of any animal or bird that is feeling sick. The commissioner directed the District Wildlife Officer and the District Administration to arrange the inspection of all animals and birds from the experts in all the wildlife parks of Kohat.

Meanwhile, Chairman DDAC Kohat and Member Provincial Assembly Shafiqullah Jan has said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has already released Rs.3.5 Million for rehabilitation of non-functional tubewells in Kohat, tender has been floated and soon after issuance of work orders, practical work will be stared.

This he said while presiding over a meeting held in his office regarding the rehabilitation of non-functional tubewells. The meeting beside others was also attended by SE PHED Khan Muhammad and XEN PHED

Salim Javed. The meeting thoroughly debated upon the revival of nonfunctional tubewells and certain decisions were taken in this respect.

Chairman DDAC Shafi Jan said, due to the lack of M&R Funds, several tube wells were closed, due to which the people of the area were facing a acute drinking water problem, but now with the grace of Allah Almighty and his tireless efforts, the required funds have been released and Insha Allah soon all non-functional tube wells will be activated which will solve the drinking water problem.

Mr. Shafi on this occasion specifically thanked the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and high-ups of the Public Health Department who played their role in solving the problem of drinking water in Kohat.

Kuli Katchery held: Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali has held Kuli Katcheri in Araah

Nazim, TMO devise strategy

F.P. Report

BUNER: Gagra tehsel Nazim Syed Salar Jihan and TMO Afsar Ali Khan have planned to provide municipal services to the people of their tehsel.

They expressed their determination that despite not getting the PFC award yet, within their limited resources maximum municipal services would be provided. They shared basic necessities of life and facilities will be provided to the people as far as possible with in own limited resources.

Talking to the media, Nazim Syed Salar Jihan and TMO Afsar Ali Khan have said that the supply of clean water and healthy environment will be ensured so that people are safe from diseases and when necessary, TMA Gagra in collaboration District Health Department would organize a joint program and will also conduct disinfectant spray and will also conduct awareness programs and will involve the selected village chairman and members and area leaders for this purpose, they shared.

World Literacy Day celebrated

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Regarding the World Literacy Day, a seminar was organized in Government Girls High School No. 1 organized by the Department of Literacy Toba Tek Singh.

The chief guest of the seminar was Additional Deputy Commissioner General Zeeshan Labbha Masih. While CEO Education Tahir Mehmood, DEO Mohammad Asghar, DO Rahila Jamil, Deputy Director Social Welfare Abdul-shakoor, District Information Officer Muhammad Shahbaz Ansari, Literacy Coordinator, civil society, media representatives and teachers were also present.

The participants of the seminar were informed about the introduction of the department and its activities in the district by District Education Officer Literacy Abida Khan. Literacy Department District 415 Literacy Providing free education to 12545 children in schools. The literacy department provides free education to girls in the centers. The role of the literacy department cannot be forgotten for increasing the literacy rate of the district.

DEO Literacy further said that the purpose of celebrating Literacy Day is to promote non-formal education, CEO Education Tahir Mehmood said that the district administration will continue to support the Department of Literacy to promote education and increase literacy. Additional Deputy Commissioner General Zeeshan Labbha Masih, said that education is the first condition for individual and collective development.

An educated society makes social and economic progress and there is sustainable and permanent peace. The Department of Literacy especially appreciates the efforts of the teachers for the promotion of education despite the limited resources.

Nation is lacking justice and merit system, alleges Siraj



F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami former chief Sirajul Haq has said the country is lacking justice and merit everywhere as people do not have access to easy and cheap justice in Pakistan. He was addressing a function at the district bar Timergara as chief guest here on Friday. The JI district chief Izazul Mulk Afkari, former presidents of the district bar Salim Khan, Syed Kifayat Yar Bukhari, Sher Hayat Khan, Jehan Bahadar and sitting president Abid Hayat, general secretary Majidullah and others also spoke on the occasion.

The JI former chief while quoting Justice Mansoor, said that 3.4 million cases were still pending in courts that speak a high volume. Siraj said the people were crying for justice.

The JI chief while addressing the district bar Timergara and earlier the monthly congregation of the JI at Ahya ul Uloom Balmab, said the nation was ruled by politicians backed by the establishment during the last 77 years. He said the establishment always kept the political governments on the ventilators. He said the major political parties like the PML-N, PPP and PTI in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for years but common men were faced with similar problems in all those provinces. The JI former chief said that people in all parts of the country had no ideal system in education, healthcare, infrastructure and judiciary.

Siraj said that all major political parties were eyeing on Gate No. 4 as none of those had internal democracy. Terming the political parties as 'property parties' the JI former chief said that democracy could not be strengthened until there was democracy in the ruling political parties. He said the JI was the only political and religious party that held regular intra-party elections and elected its office bearers from a union

council to the national level.

Talking about the problems faced by the nation, Mr Haq said the country was enriched in natural resources but those were either misused or not used. He said the rulers had mortgaged Pakistan to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and it could not even decrease the power tariff on its own. The JI former chief said that he was not hopeless about a bright future of Pakistan. He said that Pakistan was an atomic state and it stood on a powerful Islamic ideology. He said that impartial, free and transparent elections would guarantee a bright future of the country.

Defence Day celebrations: The District Affairs department in collaboration with the district administration on Friday organized a function at the government high school Balambat to mark the 59th Defence Day. Schools' children took part in the Qirat, Naat, National Songs, and debate competitions on the occasion.

The students enthusiastically sang the national Anthem of Pakistan, showcasing their patriotism. Shehzad Tariq, district youth officer, paid tribute to the martyrs of Pakistan who sacrificed their lives for the country's glory. Principal of GHS Balambat Salim Khan, delivered a keynote speech, stating that the bravery and sacrifices of the Armed Forces were matchless.

The guests, including Shahid Khan, Sardar Ali Shah, Sardar Hussain, Waqas Ahmad, M. Jasim, and Ubaid Khan, participated in the event. The function concluded with the final speech AAC Tariq Khan, who paid tribute to the services of the Armed Forces and prayed for the high ranks of martyrs in Jannah. Government and private schools and civil society organizations also arranged functions to celebrate the day with zeal and spirit. The speakers paid tributes to the Pakistan army for their bravery in the Pak-India war 1965. They said the nation always stood behind its army in defending the mother land. Special prayers were offered for the national heroes and martyrs on the occasion.

75000 seed balls broadcasted through paragliders in Dir

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: The Forest department marked the 59th Defense Day by broadcasting seedballs through paragliding at the scenic tourists' spot Laram Top. A total of 22 paragliders from parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad participated in the exercise watched by officials, area elders and social activists in a large number.

The chief conservator of forest department Asghar Khan, additional deputy commissioner Lower Dir Bashir Khan, forest conservator Malakand West Shaukat Fayyaz Khattak, president All Pakistan Paragliding Association Sajjad Shah, divisional forest officer Upper Dir Muhammad Rashid Khan, DFO Lower Dir Asif Ali Shah, sub divisional forest officer Adenzai Sajjad Khan, SDO Timergara Muhammad Younas, DSP

circle Adenzai Rafiullah and other officials of the forest department were present on the occasion.

The paragliders were taken to the Laram Top from Chakdara in official vehicles and provided with boarding and food facility for a night at the top. The chief conservator Asghar Khan while talking to Dawn said that about 75000 seedballs containing five to six seeds of diverse nature of plants, were broadcasted through paragliders in the hilly areas of Laram and Dhandra.

The conservator said that it was a unique and interesting exercise during which seeds of pine, blue pine (Kail), deodar, acacia etc were broadcasted through paragliding on the most difficult mountainous terrains. He explained that each of the paragliders was provided with several seedballs who threw them at the targeted places in the hilly areas. Mr Asghar said that

the event was part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's 'Green Growth Strategy Billion Tree plus Plantation drive.

The KP Ten Billion Tree Tsunami project director Muhammad Junaid Diar told local journalists on the occasion that the success rate of seedballs broadcasted was up to 80 percent as compared to regular plantation.

"Seed balls consist of seeds that are rolled inside a ball of soil and other substances are added to support them", he said adding the balls are then thrown from the heights on vacant lots as a form of guerilla gardening.

He said the aim of this event was to broadcast seeds to areas where it was impossible to plant through manual work. "This initiative will significantly increase the area of forests in the tourists' destinations of Laram Top in Lower Dir", he added.

lems of the area.

Deputy Commissioner Kohat while narrating the purpose of holding Katchery said that it is meant to solve the problems of the people at their doorsteps on priority basis. He declared that a committee will be formed which will be in touch with them regarding the progress on these issues.

On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner issued directions to the authorities concerned to solve administrative problems immediately. He announced the organization of a free medical camp in the area within few days, on which the lieutenant colonel assured all possible support in the camp. Holding of sports fair was also announced for youth. Later, Deputy Commissioner and others also planted saplings there as part of the monsoon plantation campaign. They also inspected all units of the hospital in which only one unit was found active. The health department was directed to activate other units on an emer-

gency basis.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Hangu Gohar Zaman Wazir has in pursuance of the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Program "Awami Agenda" chaired a meeting of District Polio Eradication Committee Readiness for the upcoming SNID September 2024 Polio campaign, which besides the District Officers of Administration was also attended by all other concerned stakeholders.

The N-STOP Officer Hangu presented the pre campaign preparation in detail and after threadbare discussion certain decisions were taken for making the Polio Campaign a success. Deputy Commissioner Hangu issued necessary instructions to all concerned to ensure quality campaign. He also appealed the people particularly parents to administer Polio Drops to their under-5 age children and cooperate with the Polio Teams to make Pakistan Polio Free.



Putin says ‘main’ goal is to capture Ukraine’s Donbas

MOSCOW (AFP): Russian President Vladimir Putin said his main aim in Ukraine after 30 months of fighting was to capture the eastern Donbas area -- and claimed that Ukraine’s Kursk counter-offensive had made that easier.

Putin was speaking a day after Russia attacked Ukraine’s western Lviv region with deadly strikes, and after recent advances by Moscow’s forces in the Donbas. Since the start of its offensive in February 2022 when it failed to capture the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, Russia has adapted its aims, concentrating instead on trying to conquer eastern Ukraine.

While Ukraine’s surprise push into Russia’s Kursk region last month caught Russian forces off-guard, Putin stressed that the move had failed to slow Moscow’s advance in occupied Ukraine. “The aim of the enemy (in Kursk) was to force us to worry, hustle, divert troops and to stop our offensive in key areas, especially in the Donbas, the liberation of which is our main primary objective,” Putin said at a forum in Vladivostok, in Russia’s far east.

Russia claims as its own the eastern Donetsk region and three other Ukrainian regions. Moscow has advanced strongly this summer and its troops are now around a dozen kilometres from the city of Pokrovsk -- a key logistics hub in east Ukraine from where thousands have now fled.

Putin said that by sending “quite well-prepared units” into Kursk, Ukraine had made Moscow’s advance in Donbas quicker. “The enemy weakened itself in key areas, our army has accelerated its offensive operations,” he argued.

Putin also claimed that Moscow’s army has begun to push out Ukrainian forces from the Kursk region, where Kyiv’s troops have held on to towns and villages for almost a month. “Our armed forces have stabilised the situation and started gradually squeezing (the enemy) out from our territory,” Putin said. It was not possible to verify those claims.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky insisted that Ukraine was “maintaining the defined lines” in the Kursk region. Russia did not mount a large-scale

response in the first days of the incursion, which became the largest on Russian soil since World War II.

Putin has since played down the significance of the Ukrainian attack but has hardened his rhetoric in recent days. “It is the holy duty of the Russian army to do everything to throw out the enemy from this territory and to protect our citizens,” he said. Earlier this week, Zelensky told US TV channel NBC that Ukraine would hold on to the territory captured in the Kursk region.

Zelensky has previously said that one of Kyiv’s “goals” in Kursk was to show Russians “what is more important to him (Putin): occupation of the territories of Ukraine or the protection of his population”. Kyiv has also said that it wants to force Moscow into “fair” negotiations. While Russian officials have rushed in recent weeks to say that the Kursk incursion makes any talks with Ukraine impossible, Putin appeared to roll back those statements.

Russia was ready to talk, he said -- but on the basis of an aborted deal reached in Istanbul in 2022, the details of which were never made public by either side. But Putin has repeatedly said that Moscow can only negotiate with Ukraine if Kyiv surrenders four of its regions -- Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. “Are we ready to negotiate with them? We have never refused to do so,” Putin said.

“But not on the basis of some ephemeral demands, but on the basis of those documents that were agreed and actually initiated in Istanbul,” he added. The Kremlin has claimed Russia and Ukraine were on the verge of a deal in the spring of 2022, shortly after Moscow launched its offensive in Ukraine. Both sides reported fresh casualties near the frontlines.

In Ukraine’s Donetsk region, a 74-year-old man died when a Russian shell hit his home in the town of Kostyantynivka, the regional prosecutor’s office said, posting a photo of a destroyed building. Ukrainian shelling killed a man in Russia’s Belgorod border region, the region’s governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Telegram.

Panama departs 130 Indian migrants

PANAMA (AFP): Panama deported 130 Indian irregular migrants who had entered the country via the inhospitable Darien jungle, under a deal on repatriations signed with the United States in July. This was the first such expulsion outside of the Americas under the deal, and the fourth in total.

Washington pledged \$6 million for migrant repatriations from the Central American nation in the hopes of reducing irregular crossings at its own southern border. Panama’s director of migration, Roger Mojica, told reporters the Indians were deported on a charter flight to New Delhi for “irregular migration.” At the same press conference, US Security Attache for Central America Marlen Pineiro said Washington was “very grateful to the government of Panama for all this support,” adding that: “Irregular migration cannot continue.”

The Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama has become a key corridor for migrants traveling overland from South America through Central America and Mexico to the United States. Despite the dangers, including attacks by criminal gangs, more than half a million undocumented migrants -- mostly Venezuelans -- crossed the Darien last year.

Transit countries such as Panama and Mexico have come under increased pressure from Washington to tackle the highly contentious migration issue in a US election year. The July deal makes provision for a first phase of deporting migrants with a criminal record, but could see the repatriation of any person entering Panama through the notoriously dangerous and rugged Darien Gap region. It was signed the same day that Panamanian President Jose Raul Mulino took office, after a campaign in which he pledged to crack down on Darien Gap crossings. With deportation, Panama has expelled 219 migrants in two weeks.

UK to send more missiles to Ukraine

LONDON (BBC): The UK will send an additional 650 short-range missiles to Ukraine to help in its fight against invading Russian forces. The new package of aid comes as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made another impassioned plea for further support from allies at a defence summit at the Ramstein air base in Germany.

Mr Zelensky told reporters that more military aid was needed to “drive Russian forces off our land”, especially in the country’s eastern Donetsk region. Also joining the summit is UK Defence Secretary John Healey, who will be announcing the £162 million package which includes the supply of further Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LLM).

Mr Healey said ahead of the summit that the new UK package would give an “important boost” to Ukraine’s air defences and showed the government was “stepping up” its support. But Prof Michael Clark, the former director-general of the defence and security think tank Royal United Services Institute, has told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme the supply will likely be “exhausted within a couple of months”.

He said Ukraine needed “more of everything at the moment” given the intensity of Russian advances and bombardments. In July, UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer committed to sending £3bn a year to Ukraine for as long as needed. Since the start of Russia’s invasion in February 2022, the UK has committed a total of £12.7bn including £7.6bn in military support.

Mr Zelensky arrived in Ramstein, just days after a Russian missile attack on the city of Poltava in central Ukraine killed at least 51 people. In his appeal to international allies, he said: “It’s important that every support package that is announced is promptly put to work on the battlefield without any delay.” The fighting in the Donetsk region depends on this - if [Russian President Vladimir] Putin does not have any achievements here, he will not have any achievements anywhere.”

Japan’s leader makes a farewell visit to Seoul

SEOUL (AP): Less than a month before leaving office, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited Seoul and reaffirmed his sympathy for the suffering of Koreans during Japan’s colonial rule, as he and his South Korean counterpart underscored the need to maintain warming ties between the Asian neighbors.

Since early last year, Kishida and conservative South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol have worked together to repair ties badly frayed over grievances stemming from Japan’s brutal 1910-45 occupation of the Korean Peninsula. As a result, the two countries revived high-level talks and withdrew reciprocal economic restrictions imposed due to wrangling over the issue of Koreans forced to work for Japanese companies during the colonial period.

But experts say challenges lie ahead after Kishida’s departure. “It’s important to uphold the efforts by our predecessors to overcome difficult periods and cooperate with the Republic of Korea for the future,” Kishida said at the start of a meeting with Yoon, according to Yoon’s office. Kishida said he has “strong pains in my heart” over the suffering of victims of forced labor, Yoon’s office said, similar to comments he made last year. On both occasions he avoided a new, direct apology for colonization.

Yoon said “difficult issues” between the two countries remain but he hoped that Seoul and Tokyo will continue their pushes to achieve “a brighter future” for them. South Korea and Japan, both key US allies in Asia, face same major challenges such as the intensifying strategic rivalry between the US and China, North Korea’s advancing nuclear arsenal and supply chain vulnerabilities.

Their cooperation is also crucial for US efforts to upgrade its regional alliances in response to increasing Chinese influence and North Korea’s nuclear threat. Kishida said close cooperation between Tokyo and Seoul is essential for regional peace and stability. Yoon said positive momentum for bilateral cooperation is necessary to reinforce a trilateral South Korea-US-Japan partnership.

No big announcement was made after the Yoon-Kishida summit, their 12th. However, the leaders reached an agreement on strengthening cooperation on protecting each other’s citizens living in third countries. Kishida’s two-day trip was arranged after he “actively” expressed hope for a meeting with Yoon to end his term on a high note in bilateral relations, South Korean officials say. He is credited with boosting Japan’s security and diplomatic partnerships with neighboring countries but suffered low popularity due to his governing



party’s political scandals.

“Prime Minister Kishida has put his personal political capital on the line to improve relations with South Korea. With President Yoon, Kishida upgraded bilateral diplomatic and security cooperation and elevated trilateralism with the United States” at a summit at Camp David in the United States last year, said Leif-Eric Easley, professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul. “This farewell summit in Seoul is meant to solidify that legacy,” he said.

Kishida’s visit still drew a bitter reaction from some South Koreans, who have criticized Yoon’s government for downplaying Japan’s colonial atrocities while trying to appease Tokyo. Yoon’s creation of a South Korean corporate fund to compensate former Korean forced laborers without Japanese contributions triggered a massive backlash from his liberal rivals at home. Dozens of protesters scuffled with police in downtown Seoul as they rallied in front of a statue of Adm. Yi Sun-shin, a 16th-century naval hero who is lionized for his role in repelling a Japanese invasion. They shouted anti-Japan slogans and held banners that portrayed Yoon as a traitor. Police detained at least two protesters who tried to climb the statue.

“If President Yoon is truly the president of the Republic of Korea, he must not let the visit become an occasion to advertise Kishida’s achievements,” said Han Min-soo, a spokesperson for the main liberal opposition Democratic Party. “Our people will no longer tolerate the Yoon Suk Yeol government under-

mining national interest with a subservient diplomacy toward Japan.” Last month, Kishida announced he won’t seek another term, clearing the way for his governing Liberal Democratic Party to choose a new standard bearer in its leadership election on Sept. 27. The winner of that election will replace Kishida as both party chief and prime minister.

Among the leading candidates is former Environment Minister Shinjiro Koizumi, who has frequently visited Tokyo’s controversial Yasukuni Shrine, which honors the country’s about 2.5 million war dead, including convicted war criminals. Japan’s neighbors view the shrine as a symbol of the country’s past militarism. “If Shinjiro Koizumi wins the race, he will likely maintain (Kishida’s) strategic external policies including toward South Korea. But whether he would continue to go to Yasukuni Shrine will be a key issue,” said Choi Eunmi, a Japan expert at the Seoul-based Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

“Can South Korea accept a new Japanese prime minister visiting Yasukuni Shrine? I doubt it,” she said. Kishida has refrained from visiting and praying at the shrine while prime minister, and instead sent ritual offerings. Another contender is former Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba, whose strong comments on Japanese military ambitions could complicate ties with South Korea, Choi said. In the longer term, South Korea-Japan relations could experience bigger changes if liberals in South Korea win back the country’s presidency after Yoon ends his single five-year term in 2027.

Hungary to send buses of asylum seekers to EU headquarters

BUDAPEST (AP): Hungary’s anti-immigrant government signaled that it is serious about implementing a plan to provide asylum seekers free one-way travel to Brussels, a measure meant to pressure the European Union into relenting on heavy fines against the country for its restrictive asylum policies.

At a news conference in the capital Budapest, State Secretary Bence Rétvári claimed the EU wanted to force Hungary to allow “illegal migrants” across its borders, and said the country would “offer these illegal migrants, voluntarily, free of charge, one-way travel to Brussels.” Backdropped by a row of passenger buses with illuminated signs reading “Röszke-Brussels” — a route that would take migrants from Hungary’s southern border with Serbia to the EU headquarters in Belgium — Rétvári said the transport would be conducted “after the implementation of the European procedure,” but did not detail what status the asylum seekers

would have upon being transported.

“If Brussels wants illegal migrants, Brussels can have them,” he said. The provocative proposal to bus migrants to Brussels, which echoes similar moves taken earlier by right-wing Republican governors in the United States, comes in response to a June ruling by the European Court of Justice that ordered Hungary to pay a fine of 200 million euros (\$216 million) for persistently breaking the bloc’s asylum rules, and an additional 1 million euros per day until it brings its policies into line with EU law.

The bloc takes issue with Budapest for forcing people seeking international protection to travel to Hungarian embassies in Serbia or Ukraine to apply for a travel permit, violating EU rules that oblige all member countries to have common procedures for granting asylum. The government of nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has said it will file legal proceedings against the EU over the fines, and has demanded

compensation for the billions it says it has spent on border protection including the construction of fences protected by razor wire on its southern borders with Serbia and Croatia.

Orbán, a consistent opponent of the EU on issues ranging from immigration to foreign policy to support for Ukraine, has cast his long-serving government as a defender of Europe’s Christian culture, and has come under fire for comments saying Hungary did not want to become a “mixed race” nation.

The EU has frozen billions for his government over breaches of the bloc’s rule-of-law and democracy standards, and some EU lawmakers have petitioned for Hungary to be stripped of its voting rights in the bloc’s executive Commission. Hungary’s government missed the first September deadline for paying the 200-million euro fine ordered by the European Court of Justice, opening the way for potentially another conflict with the EU.

Romanian prosecutors lose appeal to jail Andrew Tate

BUCHAREST (AP): A court in Romania’s capital rejected an appeal by prosecutors to jail divisive internet influencer Andrew Tate, who will remain under house arrest amid a second human trafficking investigation against him that allegedly involves minors.

The Bucharest Court of Appeal also ruled to keep Tate’s brother, Tristan Tate, under judicial control, which typically involves restricting communication with certain people and reporting periodically to the police. The brothers’ spokesperson, Matea Petrescu, said that the judge also lifted certain restrictions regarding the brothers’ communication with alleged victims in the new case. “They are free to meet and communicate with these alleged victims based on the close relationships they share and the children they have together,” she said, adding they “vehemently deny all allegations” against them.

After the court’s decision, Andrew Tate posted on X that the prosecutors had made a “desperate attempt to put us in jail with no evidence.” The ruling comes weeks after Romania’s anti-organized crime agency, DIICOT, launched raids on four homes, including the Tates’ in Bucharest and nearby

Ilfov county. After being briefly detained, prosecutors lost a request to keep the brothers in custody for 30 days, but appealed the decision. Andrew Tate, 37, and brother Tristan Tate, 36, both former kickboxers and dual British-US citizens, are already awaiting trial in Romania in a separate human trafficking case along with two Romanian women. Romanian prosecutors formally indicted all four last year.

In the new case, DIICOT said that it was investigating allegations of human trafficking, including the trafficking of minors, sexual intercourse with a minor, forming an organized criminal group, money laundering and influencing statements. The alleged crimes date between 2014 and 2024. The agency said the defendants used the coercive “loverboy” method to exploit 34 vulnerable victims who were forced to produce pornographic materials for a fee online, and that more than \$2.8 million (2.5 million euros) it generated was kept by the defendants.

An unnamed foreign man also sexually exploited a 17-year-old foreigner, DIICOT alleges, and said he kept all of the \$1.5 million (1.3 million euros) made from the criminal activity. The same man “repeatedly had sexual rela-

tions and acts” with a 15-year-old, the agency alleges. After the court’s decision, Andrew Tate wrote in a post on the social media platform X that the prosecutors had made a “desperate attempt to put us in jail with no evidence.”

Andrew Tate, who has 10 million followers on the social media platform X, is known for expressing misogynistic views online and has repeatedly said that prosecutors have no evidence against him and that there is a political conspiracy to silence him. He was previously banned from various social media platforms for misogynistic views and hate speech. One of the brothers’ lawyers, Eugen Vidineac, responded to the court’s decision by saying that it shows that Romania “is a country where the judicial system is diligent and impartial and does not succumb to sensationalism.” “We are looking forward to clearing my clients’ names and proving their innocence,” he added. After the Tate brothers’ arrest in December 2022, they were held for three months in police detention before being moved to house arrest. They were later restricted to the Bucharest municipality and nearby Ilfov county, and then to Romania.

Poland charges three Belarusian officials

WARSAW (AP): Polish prosecutors charged three Belarusian officials with using a ruse to divert a Poland-registered plane while in flight three years ago and violating the freedom of 132 people on board as they sought to arrest a dissident.

The three officials are accused of ordering the plane carrying a dissident blogger to make an unplanned landing in the Belarus capital of Minsk, leading to the arrest of Raman Pratasevich, a Belarusian blogger who was living in exile in Lithuania at the time. On May 23, 2021, the Ryanair Flight FR4978 was traveling from Athens, Greece, to the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius and was in Belarus airspace, about 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the Lithuanian border, when it was told to change direction and turn toward Minsk.

On instructions from the officials, the Belarusian flight controllers told the pilots there was a bomb threat against the jetliner and ordered them to land in Minsk. The Belarusian military scrambled a MiG-29

fighter jet in an apparent attempt to make the crew to comply with the order. The prosecutors in Poland said in a statement that because the three Belarusian officials are not in Poland, they couldn’t present them with the charges and have issued a search warrant for them. They are also seeking a European arrest warrant.

According to Polish privacy law, they identified the three men only by their first names and initials as Leonid C., a former head of Belarus air navigation, Yevgenii T., an air controller in charge at Minsk airport at the time, and Andrei A.M. the head of the Belarus State Security Committee, or KGB. The three are charged with using a false bomb threat to divert the plane and violating the freedom of the people on board, including some Polish citizens.

Belarus officials pulled Pratasevich off the plane, which was then allowed to travel on. The dissident was put on trial and sentenced to eight years in prison after being convicted of organizing mass protests following the disputed 2020 presidential election that gave

authoritarian Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko a sixth term in office. Pratasevich, who ran a Telegram messaging app channel widely used by participants in the protests, was pardoned in 2023.

The prosecutors said their case was based on recordings from the plane’s cockpit and flight recorders, as well as on the testimonies from the pilots and witnesses.

The aim of the diversion was to arrest Pratasevich, they said. According to Gazeta Wyborcza daily, the prosecutors also drew information from secretly taped conversations at the Minsk control tower, where officials were instructing controllers to divert the plane. One of the controllers reportedly recorded the conversations and later made them available to the prosecutors.

Western countries said the plane’s diversion was tantamount to hijacking and imposed strong sanctions against Lukashenko and Belarus. If brought before a court in Poland, the three officials could face up to five years in a Polish prison.

Taiwan leader sent back to jail

TAIPEI (AP): A former Taiwanese presidential candidate who was once mayor of the capital Taipei has been returned to custody as part of a sprawling corruption investigation. Ko Wen-je was returned to detention night in handcuffs after a legal panel overruled an earlier order allowing him to return home, sure. He is being held incommunicado, unable to speak to anyone outside the facility in which he is being held.

Ko’s case involves alleged illegal favors and payments from a web of business people and local level politicians brought to light by an urban redevelopment project that stood to bring investors massive profits by avoiding required reviews. He has the option of further appealing. Despite intense media attention, the case appears to be having little effect on Taiwan’s robust democracy and independent legal system. Ko heads the Taiwan People’s Party and drew support in this year’s elections from young Taiwanese looking for an alternative to

the two party system that has governed Taiwanese politics for the last two decades.

Taiwan has been dominated by the ruling Democratic Progressive Party and the remainder of the Nationalist Party that fled to Taiwan after the Communist Party’s takeover of mainland China in 1949. Ko and others were named in May in a scandal in which the developer of the downtown Core Pacific Center shopping center was given permission to massively expand the floor space available for lease during Ko’s 2014-2022 term as mayor. Ko has said he had no knowledge or involvement in the case, despite evidence suggesting he was aware and also participated in other questionable financial arrangements. He can be held for up to four months while the investigation continues.

The Taipei District Court ruled that his continued detention was necessary because of the amount of funds involved, the seriousness of the alleged crimes

and the likelihood of him working in cooperation with others involved to hide evidence and manufacture testimony. Ko finished third with about a quarter of the vote in this year’s election, which was won by the DPP’s William Lai Ching-te, whose party favors continued de-facto independence from China. The TPP won just under 3% of the seats in the legislature.

Ko did particularly well among young people despite having no clear political platform. He was unable to agree to an alliance with either the DPP or the Nationalists, leaving him with few political allies outside his own supporters, a few hundred of whom have rallied outside Taipei’s courthouse. Despite unsupported accusations of judicial persecution against the government, President Lai has not commented directly on Ko’s case. Once a major scourge on Taiwan’s democracy, political corruption has declined as a top concern amid a strengthening of the power of independent investigators.

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

*USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Russia's Eurasian alliances unraveling

DMITRY Medvedev, deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, is famous for his scintillating statements, but he occasionally suddenly fails in his scintillating activities. He is then successfully replaced by Russia's main ally, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. His most memorable statement recently involved his thoughts on Armenian politics: "Well, what kind of politics is this? Who needs Armenians besides us? Nobody needs them... What France? What Macron? Tomorrow Macron will be gone, and everyone will forget about this Armenia."

In response, protesters pelted the Belarusian Embassy in Yerevan with potatoes and eggs, while the Kazakh Foreign Ministry (Lukashenko couldn't keep silent about them either) summoned the Belarusian ambassador. These seemingly insignificant events conceal a sharp increase in tensions between Russia and its allies in the former Soviet space. Armenia also expressed extreme dissatisfaction with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's recent comments on the situation in the Caucasus.

And their dissatisfaction is understandable. When Moscow was building "Eurasian unions" in the first half of the 2010s, bribing potential members with loans and prospects of participation in a large and unified economic space, the situation looked very different from today. Back then, Russia, which was considered European, gathered allies around itself that had no access to the seas, positioning itself not only as a powerful economy but even as a "bridge to Europe" - not to mention the qualities of a military protector. Ten years later, any attractive features that Russia had at that time have been lost.

First, Moscow is embroiled in a major European war that has recently spilled over into its territory. Although it is not officially called a war, the CSTO Charter refers to the possibility of "collective defense in ... cases of threat to the security, stability and territorial integrity" of member countries. Russia is certainly not going to turn to Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan for protection, but the new situation appears to be a source of tension at the very least. I am not saying that if NATO has doubts about accepting Ukraine into its ranks because its borders are unresolved, then the presence of Russia, which could lose some of its "federal subjects," in integrative military-political associations becomes a risk for the rest of their members. And doubts loom on the horizon as to whether Moscow, which buys drones and missiles from Iran and shells from North Korea, is an adequate partner in military-technical cooperation.

Second, there are even more problems economically. Russia, of course, has greatly contributed to CIS countries' economic growth with the mass wartime outflow of its own citizens, which caused the GDP growth rate in several post-Soviet countries to double in 2023. But at the same time, membership in Eurasian associations has become highly suspect. Western partners reasonably believe that any supply of goods to these countries is a hidden export to Russia (Armenia is now shipping dozens of times more products to us than it has ever produced). Therefore, the mere fulfillment of the terms of the Eurasian Economic Union with its common customs space will be a sufficient reason for sanctions pressure from the West, if not now, then in the future. It is worth adding that Russia's main advantage - its status as the most important transit country - is being nullified as China builds routes bypassing its territory. Moscow blocks pipeline deliveries on spurious pretexts and the West refuses to formalize transit through Russia.

Third, Russia's cooperation with its allies on migration has also significantly changed recently. During the years of the "launch" of Eurasian integration, Russia was the most important destination of labor migration from Central Asia (remittances of guest workers to Tajikistan made up over 40% of its GDP). With the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Moscow set its sights on migrants as a likely mobilization resource, attempting to recruit them into the army. In addition, the growing threat of terrorism is causing a surge in persecution of people from the southern republics of the former USSR. Following the terrorist attack at Crocus City Hall, at least 100,000 Tajiks and citizens of other countries in the region left Russia. Labor migration from Central Asia, once a major pillar of post-Soviet integration, is now shifting toward Turkey and the Middle East, a trend that Moscow has absolutely nothing to counter.

All of these circumstances (not to mention the dramatic increase in China's role in Central Asia and Turkey's role in the Caucasus) are causing hysteria in and around Moscow, as we saw last week. In recent years, Russia has become the most sanctioned country in the world and a global pariah - and such powers cannot be the centers of integration associations. Therefore, the structures that Moscow has created in the post-Soviet space since the early 2000s will simply start to collapse in the very near future. Armenia has already de facto withdrawn from the CSTO and is increasing its cooperation with the EU, the condition for which will sooner or later be withdrawing from the Eurasian Economic Union.

Kazakhstan, although it often repeats its mantra that it will not "blindly" follow sanctions, is nevertheless working with Russia more and more cautiously and treats Moscow's actions with growing suspicion. Kyrgyzstan is tightening its import-export requirements by the day - and it is no secret that it has been the main intermediary in the semi-legal export of Chinese goods to Russia for years. The West should be as attentive as possible to all of these processes. The Kremlin has invested a lot of effort in post-Soviet integration - and the collapse of this initially hopeless project would be just as impactful as the defeat of Russia in Ukraine. The war that began in 2022 was largely made possible because Putin believed his rear was secure and that he only needed Kyiv to rebuild his empire. Considering all of this, undermining the Eurasian project should be the most important task of the free world - a task that can bring maximum benefits at a minimal cost.

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Bridging gaps, building futures: Transforming Pakistan's educational landscape

Ghazala Anbreen

ARTICLE 25 A of the Constitution of Pakistan says that "The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all the children of the age of 5 to 16 years in such a manner as may be determined by law."

This constitutional mandate demands for the urgency of addressing the current educational emergency. For example, in September 2024 Pak Alliance for Maths and Science in a report titled "The Missing Third of Pakistan" has highlighted that a staggering 25.3 million children age 5 to 16 are currently out of school in Pakistan representing 36 % of the country's school age population.

Reasons why our education system is not up to the mark are many. There are low enrollments and high dropout rates for primary students. Research reveals that most of the students in Pakistan fail to get enrolled in a top university and cannot find some professional job.

We will have to ensure that no child gets out of educational institutes. For this we must develop skills and get rid of stereotypical mindset that that education is only limited to medical, engineering or civil services. Many countries all over the globe including United States, Russia and many European countries continued to build their education system on modern foundations but in Pakistan Public universities got a very minimal budget. An element of struggle for financial survival was pervasive in these institutes.

In order to meet the shortfall, the institutes introduced a self-finance scheme, and many students now avail that. Over population can also be ascribed as a reason for declining educational standards. The current population of Pakistan is approximately 251.99 million as of September, 2024 based on Worldometer's elaboration of the latest United Nations data. There are admissions in huge numbers which affected the research in the universities. Policies must be formulated, and effective measures should be taken to address the quality, demand and supply.

Now we see the quality of students learning and their psychological growth has suffered a great deal. One purpose of education must be to guide students how to lead meaningful lives, instilling in them the resilience to face life's challenges and a spirit of serving humanity. Regrettably, we often see today's students yearning to get rich overnight and dreaming of a luxurious life. When these goals are not immediately achieved, they fall victim to acute exasperation.

To counter all these challenges the focus of university administration should be to engage the students in purposeful activities. But this is lacking on their part. Healthy tendencies need to be nurtured to ensure the quality education.

For any government comprehensive education reforms must be the priority. It is important to consider inclusive reforms in the curriculum. The curriculum must be technologically updated and up to the demands of present times. Measures should be taken to address the issue of lack of infrastructure and construct more of the libraries

and research centers. These research centers should focus on evidence-based research. In the absence of research, bringing out of box solutions and introducing necessary interventions becomes very difficult. Syllabus should be improvised with innovative ideas as quality of education speaks volumes for being an engine for economic growth.

It is important that due attention is given towards improving school management. This must involve modern technology and modern programming skills for enhancing employability of students and increasing the avenues of their engaging as entrepreneurs after they complete their education. There should be a considerable resource allocation for polishing the teaching quality. The continuous assessments of both the teachers and the taught as they progress is all the more essential.

Effective education policies should be formulated to root out corruption in educational sector in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for SDG 4 which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong opportunities of learning for all. There must be a serious accountability of educational institutes which fail to deliver and do not achieve the set targets and especially against the ghost teachers and ghost schools.

In 2018 Public Accounts Committee published a report according to which 2350 ghost schools were there causing 225 million Rupees losses annually. "In June 2024, Sindh Education Minister, Sardar Shah revealed that in 14,000 schools in Sindh there are no drinking water facilities while 38 primary schools in Karachi lack washroom facilities". Targeted social protection programs are necessary to reform education to address the inefficiency regarding service delivery in education sector.

On the contrary, schools showing good results must be appreciated and projected. The honorariums may be awarded to selected teachers based on their performance and student satisfaction levels. Educational institutes must instill tolerance in the students which is again scanty. There is a disparity of resources and lack of trained teachers in different schools. A uniform education system is essential to avert disintegration which are requisites for promoting cohesion and national unity.

The divide between rich and poor is getting sharper with the passage of time which negates the spirit of an Islamic society preaching equality. The segregation of Pakistani society on the basis of income, leads to a chaotic thought process and as a result students' personalities suffer a lot. Unfortunately, the peons of some private schools get the pay which is far less than the fee of a single child enrolled in the same school. No wonder this reality is quite painful that the kids of that very peon cannot get education in that private school. The students of such institutes are proficient in English language and creative, analytical and critical skills which the students of public schools are generally

devoid of. Teacher cannot pay attention to each and every student as teacher to student ratio is quite high. In Finland this ratio is approximately one to fifteen in general upper secondary programs while in Pakistan it is quite in the higher sides especially in the rural areas.

Assessment tools should align with modern professional demands to evaluate the progress of the students effectively because they also help ensure unbiased assessments although they may be out of reach for many people. A reconsideration is required to make it compatible with industrial requirements and global standards. Alongside we cannot deny the fact that these days some technology enabled learning methods are available in Pakistan, especially in subjects like Mathematics, Science, English, and Urdu. Public sector educational institutes should introduce these methods in their schools.

Funds should be given to them to set up audio visual rooms, simulation labs and studios to polish them further. The gap between teachers and students can be bridged if the students are encouraged to take part in syndicate discussions and panel discussions organized by their class teachers. These activities can be based on their subject related topics and will help to make them confident, expressive and become critical thinkers who have the capacity to question the validity of facts. Students should be encouraged to develop observation which is evidence based and nurture a participatory approach by becoming vocal and expressive. If the dialogue writing is a part of their syllabus, then the teacher must ask them to practically engage in this activity. Similarly, the Literature students be tasked with enacting and role playing the dramas they have studied recently. These activities do not require significant funds, but have a profound impact on student development. Occasionally, the students can also be asked to deliver a lecture on the stage instead of the class teacher. This will help them become motivated and overcome stage fright by facing the crowd.

Pilot programs can be started at a very low-cost by selecting schools from both rural and urban areas. The government can adopt a smart approach by using technology effectively to transform education and introduce innovative solutions to train young minds.

If we talk of teacher training programs, in most of the trainings it is observed that these are simply monologues by the speaker. Fewer practical assignments are given to the participants and the sessions are rarely interactive. The participation of teachers as audience is generally minimal. Such trainings are of no use at all and are tantamount to waste the time and resources. Hence training of trainers is also essential and there should be experts to conduct teacher assessment programs. The selection of teachers should be carried out by experts and professionals in teaching methodologies.

Education is not limited only to universities. If a child does not want to go for academic studies, he can be encouraged to learn some skill. He can be motivated to become electrician, plumber, painter or may learn skills relating to construction. Our kids should be taught that becoming doctors or engineers should not be and is not the end all and be all of life. There is much more to explore and many avenues where one can try his luck and get successful and earn a decent earning.

Therefore, vocational training programs should be conducted for unemployed youth.

We need to revamp the outdated system. Students, parents and all other stakeholders must be involved in the decision-making process. Recently Federal Secretary Education, Mohyuddin Ahmed Wani has introduced a new scheme of parent teacher meeting emphasizing the fact that in the grooming and success of a student seventy percent role is of the parent and thirty percent contribution is by the teacher. Both have to collaborate to ensure the good future of kids. The spirit is much appreciated indeed. Parent Teacher contact, in actual, is important to address the problems faced by students and helps in devising strategies to overcome them.

According to global standards public expenditure on education must be between 4 to 6 percent of GDP. Pakistan's public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was estimated at 1.7 percent in the fiscal year 2022-23 against 1.4 percent for the last fiscal year.

Budgetary allocation to education shows that education budget is not at all enough. Education budget should be increased in order to make education system perform adequately. For instance, Digi skills Training Program is a major initiative for free online training started by Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication and executed by Virtual University Pakistan. It has been offering free online courses, E-Certificates and Support System since 2018. Such programs emphasize the need for increased funding to support innovative educational solutions.

Teaching methodology also requires to be formulated based on current trends. Teachers must engage with their students and understand their aptitudes and their areas of expertise. It is unjust to treat all the students the same way because each child has a unique talent. Some children may excel in arts, or painting and they should be treated accordingly.

Our system rarely encourages entrepreneurship ventures. More often we see even the gold medalists working jobs with meagre salaries. These brilliant students should receive more financial support. The reforms in education sector in Pakistan are imperative. The success is achievable if the government and civil society both work together towards these changes. 4 to 6 percent of GDP should be allocated to education as UN has also stressed because investment in education will ensure the development of our country encompassing all aspects including economic and social development.

Resetting US-Russia ties would be a mistake

Ruth Deyermond

IS the Biden administration thinking about a "reset" of relations with Russia? A recent Politico article cited Ukrainian sources who said they were told that is the reason why Washington is prohibiting them from using US weapons against targets inside Russia. Figures in the Biden administration have forcefully denied that this is White House policy.

No matter what was said in private, and by whom, there are long-standing indications that Washington is thinking about the need to restart cooperation with the Kremlin on various issues in the medium term. If this is shaping the Biden administration's Ukraine policy, they are making an enormous mistake. To understand why another reset between the US and Russia is impossible for the foreseeable future, it is helpful to look at the last one. Resetting relations with Russia was the Obama administration's first major foreign policy initiative, launched by then-Vice President Joe Biden in early 2009. The aim was to improve Washington and Moscow's relationship after a period of very bad relations that culminated in the 2008 Russia-Georgia war.

The Reset aimed to do three interconnected things. The first was to resolve issues in the relationship that were priorities for the US, particularly those relating to nuclear weapons and the legacy of its Global War on Terror. The second aim was to stabilize the relationship by creating structures that allowed for routine interaction between the two countries, helping to take the drama out of their relations. Finally, the Reset was intended to improve the relationship so that the US could focus on its main foreign policy concerns without the Kremlin acting as a spoiler.

For two years, the Reset was a success from the Obama administration's perspective. The US and Russia tackled nuclear arms control with the New START treaty. They addressed nuclear proliferation (a major US concern) by cooperating on sanctions against Iran and North Korea. They also secured an agreement to allow US troops and supplies to transit through Russian territory and airspace to Afghanistan. To broaden the scope of the relationship and to make it more stable and predictable, they created the Bilateral Presidential Commission, a reboot of the 1990s Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission.

After 2010, the Reset failed for multiple reasons including the impact of elections in both countries; Vladimir Putin's growing anti-Westernism, disengagement by the Obama administration, and last but by no means least, Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity and the annexation of Crimea that followed it.

The Reset was a policy designed for its specific moment and it made sense at the time. But the conditions that made it both desirable and possible have vanished. It is impossible to see how it could be revived with the current Russian government.

One reason is that although the US wants to work with Russia on some of the same issues as before, cooperation in these areas no longer serves the Kremlin's interests. Biden's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan has signaled an interest in reviving arms control "without preconditions" but the Russian government takes the view (an understandable one, it has to be said) that negotiations about arms reductions are not possible if the US is behaving like an enemy.

Biden himself has said that states "don't need to agree on everything to keep moving forward on issues like arms control," which is true. But the two sides cannot move forward if they agree on nothing at all. Bilateral US-Russia

arms control discussion is not a realistic objective when Moscow regards the US as its primary enemy and Washington sees the Russian government as one of the main threats to global security. "Distrust and can't verify" is not a viable basis for arms reduction.

It is also impossible to see how arms control could work when the security environment has been so badly destabilized by escalation, not arms reduction, is the main preoccupation. As long as European states inside and outside NATO are worried about the threat of Russian aggression, this will continue to be the case.

The prospects for any re-engagement on non-proliferation issues look even worse, given that Washington's primary nuclear concerns for the last 25 years have been Iran and North Korea. These are two of the states on which Russia is now dependent for the conduct of the war against Ukraine. There is no policy area on which a renewal of US-Russia relations could be built because the two states have moved too far apart in the years since the last reset ended. Not only are there no shared interests, there are not even any compatible interests that could make cooperation possible. To make matters worse, each state has greatly strengthened relations with third parties that the other regards as enemies: the US with Ukraine; Russia with Iran and North Korea).

Even less significant improvements than a Reset 2.0 seem impossible because détente requires a minimum level of trust that is obviously absent. It is hard to think of a time since the early 1980s, or perhaps even the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, when Washington and Moscow have appeared to trust each other less than they do now.

Even if all this could be overcome, there remains the problem that Putin has put visceral anti-Westernism at the center of his presidency. One of the justifications for everything Russia has done since February 2022 is the idea that a US-led West is an existential threat to not just the Russian state but to Russian values and Russian identity. For as long as that continues, a thaw in relations must surely be impossible.

Finally, given the Kremlin's view of the West and the crude, zero-sum version of realism that drives their foreign policy thinking, any US attempt at engagement is highly likely to be seen by the Russian government merely as weakness and credulity to be exploited.

If the Biden administration is limiting Ukraine's self-defense because they want to improve relations with Russia, ironically, their actions are helping to prevent that from becoming a possibility. That is because the only chance for any meaningful improvement in US-Russia relations is a change in the type of regime governing Russia, not just a change of president.

Washington cannot reset relations with a Putin-led Russia or a Russia governed by any individual or group with the same highly aggressive, resentful, paranoid and virulently anti-Western worldview. A reset with Russia would require a reset inside Russia first. And fear of that is one of the main things that has been driving the US and Europe's cautious support of Ukraine.

It may be that no one in the Biden administration is hoping for a reset with Russia. But if they are, it suggests they are either unwilling or unable to understand how much things have changed since the early 2010s. Envisaging a future reset with Russia is not pragmatism. It is wishful thinking. Few things have done more damage to US foreign policy than that.

The Moscow Times

Is Japan’s involvement in Africa’s development outdated?

Robert Bociaga

JAPAN'S engagement with Africa, primarily through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, has long been a significant element of its foreign policy. However, as Africa becomes more assertive in shaping its development agenda, TICAD's relevance is being questioned.

While the conference has facilitated vital investments in Africa, it is often perceived as outdated. The major criticism is that TICAD has not fully aligned itself with Africa's Agenda 2063, which emphasizes self-reliance and a shift away from dependency on foreign aid. Experts say that in order to stay relevant, Japan must reevaluate its approach, ensuring that TICAD supports Africa's contemporary needs and aspirations.

TICAD was launched in 1993 to support Africa's development, focusing on peace, stability and economic growth. Over the years, TICAD has brought together African leaders, international organizations and private sector stakeholders, leading to numerous partnerships and projects. Notably, at TICAD VI in 2016, Japan pledged \$30 billion in investments, targeting infrastructure, health care and education. These investments have made significant impact, including building roads, bridges and hospitals, helping to address some of Africa's most pressing challenges.

However, despite these contributions, TICAD's approach has been seen as transactional, focusing on specific sectors rather than fostering a holistic, sustainable development strategy. This has led to concerns that TICAD is not fully addressing the root causes of Africa's challenges, such as governance, inequality and environmental degradation. Critics argue that TICAD must evolve from a donor-recipient model to one of true partnership, where African nations are empowered to lead their own development.

Agenda 2063, launched by the African Union in 2013, is a strategic framework for Africa's socio-economic transformation. It envisions a continent that is integrated, prosperous and driven by its citizens. While Japan has supported various projects under Agenda 2063, critics argue that these efforts are insufficiently aligned with Africa's long-term vision. The emphasis on short-term, sector-specific investments rather than comprehensive, sustainable development strategies suggests that TICAD is not fully meeting the needs of Africa's evolving development agenda.

Sena Voncejovi, an expert with Development Reimagined, an African-led development consultancy based in Beijing, told The Japan Times that Japan's approach needs a shift to better align with Africa's aspirations. Additionally, Japan should advocate for improved credit ratings for African countries to lower borrowing costs, contribute to rechanneling Special Drawing Rights through African financial institutions and support the 16th replenishment of the African Development Fund, the concessional arm of the African Development Bank (AfDB).

Despite the criticisms, there have been successful collaborations between Japan and African countries that highlight the potential for a more effective partnership. One notable example is the Kaizen initiative, which promotes continuous improvement in productivity and efficiency in African businesses.

This Japanese management philosophy has been adopted by several African nations, leading to significant gains in industrial performance. The success of the Kaizen initiative demonstrates the potential for Japan to contribute to Africa's development in ways that are aligned with local needs and priorities. However, there have also been missed opportunities.

For instance, Japan's investments in infrastructure, while substantial, have often lacked a long-term vision for sustainability and local capacity building. Projects like road and bridge construction, though beneficial in the short term, have sometimes been implemented without fully integrating them into the broader development plans of the host countries. This has limited their impact, as these projects are not always sustainable or aligned with the specific needs of the communities they are intended to serve.

Another missed opportunity lies in Japan's approach to education and skills development in Africa. While Japan has invested in building schools and training teachers, critics argue that these efforts have not gone far enough to address the systemic challenges facing African education systems. For example, the focus has often been on expanding access to education rather than improving the quality of education or ensuring that graduates have the skills needed to succeed in the modern economy. This has led to a situation where many African countries continue to struggle with high unemployment rates, even as more young people gain access to education.

Experts in African development are calling for Japan to rethink its engagement with the continent. Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, president of the AfDB, stresses the need for a shift from a donor-recipient relationship to a genuine partnership. "Japan must transition from a model of aid to one of collaboration, where the focus is on supporting African-owned projects that align with the continent's long-term vision," he says. Adesina emphasizes that TICAD should prioritize initiatives that are led by African nations and designed to address their specific challenges rather than imposing external agendas that may not fully resonate with

local needs. Ambassador Albert Muchanga, the African Union's commissioner for trade and industry, echoes this sentiment. He acknowledges Japan's longstanding support for Africa but points out that the traditional model of development assistance is becoming outdated. "The old model of development assistance is no longer sufficient. African nations are increasingly taking charge of their own destinies and any meaningful partnership must reflect this reality," Muchanga emphasizes. He advocates for a more collaborative approach, where Japan works alongside African countries to develop strategies that are truly aligned with their aspirations and goals.

As Africa continues to assert its self-determination, Japan's role in the continent's development must evolve. TICAD, while still valuable, needs to shift from a focus on aid and investment to one of genuine partnership and collaboration. This means aligning more closely with Agenda 2063, supporting African-led initiatives and ensuring that all projects are sustainable and integrated into the continent's long-term development plans.

Japan has the opportunity to be a key partner in Africa's journey towards self-reliance and prosperity, but this will require a fundamental shift in how it approaches its relationship with the continent. By embracing Africa's vision for its future, it can ensure that TICAD remains relevant and impactful in the years to come. Ultimately, the success of Japan's engagement with Africa will depend on its willingness to adapt to the changing dynamics of the continent. By listening to African leaders, collaborating on locally-driven initiatives and supporting the goals outlined in Agenda 2063, Japan can help build a future where Africa is fully empowered to achieve its own development objectives.

The Japan Times

Turkmenistan’s mysterious, flaming ‘Gates of Hell’

Joe Yogerst

RARELY does an industrial accident develop into a major tourist attraction. But when a Soviet exploratory team drilled for natural gas in Turkmenistan more than 50 years ago, they are said to have set off a chain reaction that created the Darvaza Gas Crater - a giant, fiery hole that eventually became the country's most sought-after sight.

Also called the "Gates of Hell" and the "Shining of Karakum," the phenomenon is caused by methane-fueled flames escaping from scores of vents along the crater floor and walls. Standing around the rim, you can feel intense heat emanating from the hole. It's especially dramatic at night, fiery tongues blazing beneath a starry sky.

Flanked by dunes and rocky outcrops in a remote part of the Karakum Desert, the crater is the top stop on almost every tour of the Central Asian nation. When travelers first started flocking to Darvaza, there were no visitor services or amenities, and you had to bring everything you needed for an overnight stay. Nowadays there are three permanent camps with overnight accommodation in yurts or tents, as well as meals and motorized transportation to the crater rim for those who don't want to walk.

The crater is roughly 230 feet (70 meters) wide and 100 feet (30 meters) deep, with vertical walls that drop sharply into a rocky debris field scattered across the bottom. A safety fence was added in 2018 to keep visitors from venturing too close to the blazing sinkhole. "It's a collapsed gas cave, which sounds about as interesting as an old gas oven," says author Ged Gillmore, who wrote about the crater in "Stans By Me: A Whirlwind Tour Through Central Asia."

"But there's this eeriness about it, and I actually found it quite creepy." However, the crater may not be around much longer, at least not in its fiery form. On several occasions, the Turkmenistan government has mentioned the possibility of somehow sealing the crater. Meanwhile, those who have been visiting Darvaza for years say the flames are much smaller than they once were.

"I would say it's only burning at around 40% of the level I first witnessed there in 2009," says Dylan Lupine, whose UK-based Lupine Travel was one of the pioneers in bringing tourists to Turkmenistan. "A much larger area of the crater had flames burning in it back then. There are less now, and they are not as high as they were." Standing on the edge of the crater, a local guide who wished to remain anonymous because he wasn't authorized to speak with the media, confirms the flames have been getting lower and lower over the last seven years and his 40 or so visits to Darvaza. "Before there were more flames than now, probably because the gas pocket is wearing out,"

he says. But that doesn't diminish the allure of a hybrid manmade/natural wonder that's especially amazing when a sandstorm blows in and obscures everything but flickering fire reaching up from the darkened pit below. No one is quite sure when the gas crater opened, apparently because the Soviet-era reports are missing, incomplete or still confidential. "There's a lot of controversy, a lot of disagreement over how it started," says George Kourounis, a Canadian adventurer and television presenter who's the only known person to have explored inside the gas crater. "I don't even know what to believe. There's so many stories and mythology with this place. It's crazy."

According to Kourounis, the most common theory is that the crater formed in 1971 and was lit on fire shortly thereafter. "But while I was in Turkmenistan, we had two old school geologists from the government come out to the crater with us, and what they told me was that the crater actually formed at some point in the 1960s and was bubbling away with mud and gas for quite some time and didn't get ignited until the 1980s." How the gas first ignited is another mystery.

"Some say it was a hand grenade," Kourounis adds. "Some say the Soviets just threw a match in. I've heard a story that a drunk farmer drove his tractor into there at some point." The local guide floats another theory: "There was a nearby village in those days, and I've heard they set the crater on fire because they didn't want the smell ruining life or the poisonous gas becoming harmful to the health of the villages. They thought it would burn out in a couple of weeks." In addition to just experiencing the thrill of plunging into a flaming crater, Kourounis was on a National Geographic-funded scientific mission to find any lifeforms that could survive in that environment, especially those that could yield clues as to what we might find under similar conditions on other planets.

During a 17-minute descent in 2013 - inside an aluminized suit with a Kevlar harness and Technora ropes of the type used on NASA Mars missions - he collected soil samples for the Extreme Microbiome Project. Later analysis revealed simple organisms, like bacteria and thermophiles, that are somehow able to survive the extreme temperatures inside the crater. The gas crater lies a four-hour drive north of Ashgabat, the national capital. Four-wheel drive is highly recommended for a journey along the rough two-lane highway and sandy desert roads that lead to Darvaza. Wandering camels are a frequent sight along the way.

Other than general stores in Bokurdak and Erbent, remote desert villages along the highway, there's nowhere to stock up on provisions after leaving Ashgabat.

Darvaza Camp is the most upscale of the three overnight options. Located around a five-minute walk from the crater rim, the camp features yurts with beds and chairs, a shaded dining area and porta-potty/outhouse-style toilets. On the opposite side of the crater, Garagum Camp offers yurts with futon-like floor pads spread across traditional Turkmenistan carpets, solar-powered interior lights and evening barbecue meals served on outdoor tables.

Garagum lies about a 10-minute walk from the crater rim and even closer to a small rocky mount where visitors can snatch a bird's-eye-view of the Gates of Hell. "Arriving at Darvaza at night is definitely the best," says Gillmore. "It's this incredible thing that you first see from a distance after hours of driving across the desert. There's no other illumination anywhere near it and you do feel like you're really at the gates of hell."

Nearly are two other accidental craters - formed around the same time and by similar drilling gone wrong - that are just as large as Darvaza but not nearly as spectacular. Near the intersection of the tarmac highway and the sandy road to Darvaza is a gas crater with much smaller flames. Farther south along the highway in the direction of Ashgabat is a water-filled crater with gas bubbles but no flames.

For years there's been talk that the Turkmenistan government will transform Darvaza into a natural gas production site by extinguishing the flames. In 2022, the state-run Neytralny Turkmenistan newspaper reported that the president had asked his cabinet to consult with scientists to find a way to extinguish the flames and close the site to tourism.

Among the reasons cited for closing the crater were the loss of a valuable natural resource, environmental damage and health concerns. Since then, there's been much discussion about the crater's predicted demise but nothing concrete to prove the government is going to dampen the flames anytime soon. "They can fill it in with cement or foam, but the gas will just escape elsewhere. We don't know how it will happen or if it will happen."

CNN Travel has reached out to government officials for comment on the future of the crater. Lupine, who visited the site again earlier this year, agrees that Darvaza may be doomed. "The locals believe this is going to be a renewed attempt to finally put out the flames," says Lupine. "There is a lot of concern amongst the locals, as they believe if the crater is extinguished then tourism to Turkmenistan will take a huge hit and many of them will be out of work." For the time being, the Darvaza Gas Crater continues to amaze visitors who make the long and arduous trek across the Karakum Desert to view Turkmenistan's accidental natural wonder.

Winter fuel rebellion is a small taste of welfare battles to come

Fraser Nelson

THE next Labour mutiny takes place next week: a rebellion over Keir Starmer's plans to cut back the winter fuel payment. It should be an easy argument to win, but the Prime Minister is visibly struggling. Giving state handouts to millionaires is obviously indefensible and the sums involved are smaller than the state pensions increase. But if he can't make this basic point, how will he navigate trickier battles? And if his backbenchers are angry over this, how might they react when they work out what's about to happen on welfare?

Ten Labour MPs have so far signed a motion on the winter fuel payment changes, saying that the misery of rising energy bills will be compounded by "a bureaucratic and unpopular means-test which undermines the benefits of universalism". Ministers could respond by saying common sense is being applied. Support should go to those who need it, not those who don't. But their bungling (one Cabinet minister absurdly claimed that the markets will crash if they don't make the cuts) has intensified the rebellion.

The Tories are pretending to be appalled at the cut. They wish they'd been able to ditch the payments, especially given that a quarter of them went to millionaire households. By all means, help the needy. But why post winter fuel cheques to expats in their Sicilian villas? Rachel Reeves is making a difficult but fair decision that the Conservatives dodged for years. But not a single Labour minister seems capable of making the case for it. They ought to be pointing out the basics. The state pension

rose by almost £700 this year and will rise by £300 next year. The income gap between the average pensioner and worker had reduced from 30 per cent to 10 per cent. Pensioners are being looked after as never before: it's the young workers, taxed to death, that someone needs to look out for. A difficult argument, certainly. But it's there to be made.

But a far bigger argument is awaiting for surging welfare, easily the biggest social calamity heading towards the country. A problem so big that every party has been too terrified to acknowledge it. When unemployment passed three million under Margaret Thatcher, the statistic seemed to scandalise the whole country. It's odd, now, that no minister has ever quoted the total number on out-of-work benefits: 5.8 million, at the last count.

Nationally, it's 13 per cent of those who could be working. A fifth of those in Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. A quarter of those in Blackpool. Most sickening of all, a worker shortage crisis exists in each of these cities. It's a staggering waste of lives, let alone money.

But it's rapidly getting worse. A welfare system discombobulated by mental-health complaints is shovelling people on to disability benefit at the rate of 1,000 a day and is expected to keep doing so every day for the next five years. What impact will this have on the communities that will be worst affected? What hope for children, when so many adults don't work? A progressive party, dedicated to poverty eradication, should be obsessed with this calamity.

But all we're hearing about welfare reform now is the need to improve Jobcentres. Such poverty costs billions, but it's happening because no one feels able to call it out. Labour seems tongue-tied: unable to find the words to describe - let alone fix - the greatest social malaise of our times.

As things stand, Liz Kendall is due to implement Tory reforms making it harder to claim incapacity benefits and ending the loophole where claiming to be suicidal was a fast-track to a full payout. More of those with mobility issues will be told to consider working from home. This is delicate ground, and battle is guaranteed.

If the Work and Pensions Secretary backs out, she'd have to somehow find the £37billion that these reforms are due to save. If she presses ahead, she can expect to be sued by all kinds of campaign groups under human rights law, equalities law and more. She'd need to be fully prepared to war with angry backbenchers and disability charities. Even if she wins, this reform would mean the cost of disability benefits jumps from £407billion now to a mere £507billion by the end of parliament. Kendall is due to speak last at the Labour Party conference, a hint that she has not yet got much to say.

The good news for Labour is that an agenda is being formed: not by a union or a think tank but by Barnsley Council in South Yorkshire. Its leader, Sir Steve Houghton, saw a social disaster: 4,000 job vacancies but just 4,030 on welfare under obligation to look for work. He found a further 6,000 who weren't working and commis-

sioned a year-long study figuring out what could be done for them.

It found horrors - even in the workplace. Specifically, that the young (under-35) worker is now as likely to report a work-limiting health condition as a middle-aged worker was 10 years ago. Disability awards for anxiety and depression are twice what they were pre-lockdown. But he also found that, on proper probing, far more people were more willing to work than the government figures predicted.

Perhaps the biggest upshot of Sir Steve's report is that, if its findings were applied nationally, it suggests three million more people willing to work than the Government seems to think. This should be seen like an oil strike: a huge engine of human potential waiting to be put to use. It just needs ministers who believe in the people and their communities - or ministers able to find the words and courage to make this a defining mission. Barnsley council enlisted Alan Milburn, a Blair-era minister, for its report. He calls it "a wake-up call for the new Labour government", saying that failure to use the skills of locals means immigration, which means populism. This is the kind of language that Kendall and Starmer could use to their party: not a Tory-style crackdown but a great social reform in the tradition of Beveridge. Not a great disaster, but a great opportunity to embark on social repair, revive the economy and vanquish populism. The political argument is there to be made and Starmer certainly has the political capital. But if he stumbles over the basics, there might not be much hope for his taking on the reforms that really matter.

Prepare for Starmer to let in millions more migrants

David Frost

THERE is now a real danger of a disconnect between the political classes and the public on immigration. Concern among voters is high and growing. According to YouGov, over two-thirds of Brits think immigration has been too high, a figure which has risen from about half two years ago. Immigration is the top issue for all voters, and has been for Tory voters since the end of the pandemic. The summer riots show how fractious the situation now is.

Yet Sir Keir Starmer and the Labour Government have no strategy for dealing with it, or at least not one they are prepared to admit in public. They say nothing at all about legal migration. On illegal arrivals, Yvette Cooper's plan seems limited to appointing a new Border Security supremo. Rumour has it that few people want that job, which is hardly surprising, since with Labour policies they are guaranteed to fail: whoever accepts the role might as well take the pay-off on the day that they are appointed. None of this matches up to the seriousness of the situation. Twelve people drowned this week in the Channel. Illegal arrivals are back above last year's levels. We are paying the French hundreds of millions every year to help, but it isn't working, to judge by the evi-

dence of French ships escorting migrant boats out to sea and into our waters. Meanwhile, we have huge levels of legal immigration. Let's just remind ourselves. In the last ten years, according to the ONS, 4 million people have moved here, and half a million Brits have moved out. Of those 4 million, 3 million are non-Europeans, and over half arrived in the last two years, very largely from India, Pakistan, Nigeria, and China, but in fact from virtually every country in the world.

The loss of control is made superabundantly clear by the fact that, even during 2020, when borders were mostly closed, 170,000 people settled here. That's too high in any year. You don't have to look much further for the source of some of the tensions which bubbled up over the summer. Yet Labour shrug their shoulders. I genuinely think they simply don't regard immigration as a problem, and it is certainly clear that they see its consequences as best dealt with by cracking down on crime and speech rather than by limiting the inward flow.

So the realistic outcome of these four to five Labour years is another 1-2 million people here, with those Brits who can get out with their money doing so - and social

tensions of all kinds getting much worse. This is the situation that the candidates for the Conservative leadership have to anticipate and deal with. There will be many more people here for asylum reasons, either illegal arrivals, or the result of some shabby Labour deal with the EU to accept them. Voters will be able to see all this happening and they will not be happy.

The Conservative difficulty is that our track record is poor and, as a result, most voters, loyal or otherwise, are not inclined to believe what we say. If that remains the situation, those voters will go elsewhere, to those they trust more. That has happened across the rest of Europe. It could happen here, too. In opposition, there is only so much we can do about this. But we must do what we can. That means providing utter clarity early on about a policy to cap migration and leave the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); it means no internal arguments about it; and it means a clear, constantly repeated, and credible plan to do it, and much else besides.

To say "other Europeans don't have a problem with the Strasbourg court, so it can't be the real issue" misses the point. They have different legal systems. They aren't trying to do what we are doing. And if

they did try, since they are in the EU, the European Court of Justice would block them anyway. Similarly, to say "we'll wait and see what the situation is in 2029" is also unsatisfactory. For unless our declared policy is to leave the ECHR, we never will leave the ECHR. To say now that it might only be necessary after another go at renegotiation, or only if we can't see another way through, is to plan to be overwhelmed by all the counter-pressures.

And it is to give a signal of infirmity of purpose to our voters - and then, by 2029, we won't have any. So "Cap the incomers and quit the Court" is the only credible policy we can have. The Tory leadership candidates should be able to see this, but sadly not all have shown complete clarity, and, with one exception, have seemed somewhat uncertain on cap or court or both. Only Robert Jenrick has been firm on both points and that, among many other reasons, is why I am supporting him.

The first step to dealing with our problems is to look accurately at reality. We need to control our borders and we won't be able to do that without leaving the ECHR. So it must be done. It can't be a very uncertain destination in six, seven, eight years' time. It must be the starting point for policy now.

The Telegraph

The war on landlords is spectacularly backfiring

Matthew Lynn

WE can put away the muskets, and retire the guillotines. The war on landlords waged by governments from both major parties for more than a decade now has been decisively won, with the few remaining people who rent out property in the kind of full-scale retreat that makes Napoleon's journey home from Russia look orderly. They are selling up in record numbers.

So the market for renters is now dramatically better right? There are plenty of high-quality apartments available at affordable rents? Well, not exactly. It turns out that we didn't need a war on landlords after all. We just need more supply - and until the Government understands that simple point, the rental crisis will only get worse and worse.

Britain's landlords are finally giving up. After tax rises, and a huge increase in the regulations they have to comply with, they now face yet another squeeze in the "horror Budget" that the Chancellor Rachel Reeves is planning for next month. They will almost certainly face a steep increase in the rate of capital gains tax they have to pay, and some form of National Insurance on rental income may be levied as well. For many, it is the final straw in what was no longer a very prof-

itable business anyway.

According to figures from Rightmove this week, the proportion of rental homes up for sale has reached an all-time high. Across the country, almost a fifth of rental properties are now for sale, up from 14 per cent a year ago, and from just 8 per cent in 2010. London is leading the way, with almost a third of the rental stock now on sale. The trend is clear. Landlords are getting out while they still can.

If that meant that home prices were coming down, and it was easier for people to buy than that might be an improvement. But of course it doesn't. House prices are still rising, by 2.5 per cent a year nationally, and with taxes rising as well as mortgage rates, buying a home is as far out of reach as ever. What it will definitely mean is this. Our broken, dysfunctional rental market is about to get even more brutal, with the few remaining landlords holding even more power over tenants who have fewer and fewer options to choose from.

Rents were already rising at a far faster rate than both inflation and incomes, with the latest data from the Office for National Statistics showing monthly payments up by 9 per cent over the course of the last year. In cities such as London, we can expect that

to accelerate sharply. 15 per cent? 20 per cent? Why not? When a third of the supply disappears, that is the least you would expect.

At the same time, we are building less than ever. In the year to March, new dwelling starts fell by 22 per cent year-on-year, down to just 134,000, while completions were also down by 12 per cent to 154,000. There are signs that planning approvals are down as well. Given that it takes time to plan and build a new property we can't expect that to change any time soon. It is even worse in the places where landlords are selling up at the fastest rate, with the London Mayor Sadiq Khan consistently missing his targets for total new homes in the capital, and for affordable housing as well.

For the young graduate embarking on a career in London, or for students heading off to one of the university towns later this month, the simple truth is this. Finding somewhere to rent will be harder than ever, and will cost more as well.

This is crazy. In reality, the UK desperately needs more decent quality homes both to buy and to rent. Another punitive round of tax rises on landlords from the new government will achieve precisely nothing. They are already getting out of the market - and that will make the rental crisis even worse.



Policy Board constituted under Ahsan Iqbal to ensure economic stability

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives and the Planning Commission of Pakistan have constituted a high-level 'Policy Board', under the visionary leadership of Professor Ahsan Iqbal to ensure economic stability in the country.

"This initiative aims to enhance transparency and improve the economic planning process of the country with the active participation of private sector and corporate leaders," a news release said on Saturday.

The Policy Board, led by Professor Ahsan Iqbal, comprises a diverse group of esteemed members from various sectors, including former federal ministers, industry leaders, academic experts and international professionals.

Notable members include Shahid Ashraf Tarar, Ex-Caretaker Federal Minister; Musadaq Zulqarnain, Chairman of Interloop Limited; Dr Rana Iqbal, Vice Chancellor of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad and Naveed Sherwani, an

IT expert from the USA.

The board has been tasked with several critical responsibilities like providing advisory on policy formulation and strategy development, offering guidance on policies and strategies aimed at promoting mid and long-term economic growth.

Additionally, it would offer insights on national and international economic issues, reviewing macro-economic trends and providing economic outlooks to inform policy decisions.

The board would also evaluate national plans and economic reports to offer recommendations, assess socio-economic trends to support evidence-based policy advice, and advice on policies to enhance national innovation and competitiveness.

Furthermore, the board would integrate sustainable development goals into national economic strategies, facilitate dialogue with key stakeholders, and promote international cooperation. Besides, it would review the impact of major economic policies to evaluate their effectiveness.

Chairing the first meeting of the Policy Board, Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the importance of this initiative in stabilizing Pakistan's economy.

He highlighted that the participation of the private sector would significantly improve the Planning Commission's performance.

The board members will play a crucial role in developing strategic frameworks and preparing short, medium and long-term plans.

Ahsan Iqbal noted that the Policy Board would ensure the implementation of the 5Es Framework, the 13th Five-Year Plan, and Vision 2030. These frameworks prioritize key sectors such as exports, digital development, environmental sustainability, energy and equity.

The experiences and recommendations of the Policy Board members would also assist in formulating the national budget, making the process more transparent and reliable.

The minister reiterated the government's commitment to transforming Pakistan into a trillion-dol-

lar economy by 2035 through the effective implementation of the 5Es framework.

He called upon private organizations, civil society and experts to collaborate in driving the nation toward stability and growth.

Members of the Policy Board expressed their appreciation for the inclusion of experts from the private and corporate sectors. They pledged their full support to the government's initiatives, recognizing the significant impact this collaboration could have on Pakistan's economic development.

The establishment of the Policy Board marks a major milestone in Pakistan's economic planning process. With the combined efforts of the government and private sector experts, Pakistan is poised to achieve sustainable development and economic stability.

The Planning Ministry's initiative under Professor Ahsan Iqbal's leadership is a testament to the government's dedication to fostering a prosperous future for the nation.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan visiting Huawei Islamabad Office.

Huawei to train 300,000 young Pakistanis in ICT skills

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, visited the office of Huawei on Saturday to discuss the modalities of an extensive training program aimed at equipping 300,000 young Pakistanis with advanced skills in Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

The meeting, which followed crucial technical discussions held on September 4th and 5th, marked a pivotal step in integrating Huawei's advanced training resources into Pakistan's educational framework. The initiative guided by the directives of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, seeks to enhance technical education by leveraging Huawei's global expertise and cutting-edge training materials.

This strategic partnership is expected to substantially elevate the quality and reach of technical education throughout Pakistan, fostering skill development and innovation. The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTEC) will act as the implementation partner under the Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Programme.

The collaboration builds upon the foundation established during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Huawei's office in China, underscoring the commitment to advancing Pakistan's technical education landscape.

Gold rates decline by Rs2,000 to Rs261,500

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.2,000 and was sold at Rs.261,500 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs.263,500 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.1,714 to Rs. 224,194 from Rs. 225,908 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.205,511 from Rs. 207,083, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs.50 to Rs.2,850 whereas that of ten gram silver went down by Rs.42.87 to Rs.2,443.41.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$11 to \$2,497 from \$2,518, the Association reported.

Trade opportunities discussed in meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): High Commissioner of Maldives to Pakistan Mohamed Thoha on Saturday emphasized the need for direct air links between Maldives and Pakistan to foster brotherly relations and promote bilateral tourism.

He made these remarks during a visit to the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), where he met with President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari to explore new avenues of bilateral cooperation, according to a press release issued here.

Thoha highlighted the rich trade and business potential between the two countries, particularly in the export of high-grade tuna from Maldives to Pakistan.

He described Pakistan as a fascinating country with hospitable inhabitants and identified opportunities for strengthening business ties in sectors like fruit and vegetable exports.

The High Commissioner

also showcased his country's investor-friendly environment, offering visa exemptions and real estate investment opportunities.

He mentioned Maldives' plans to build 36,000 apartments in Male' and invited Pakistani investors to explore this sector.

Thoha emphasized the importance of reviving the South Asian Association of Regional States (SAARC) to strengthen regional cooperation.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari commended the High Commissioner's efforts to advance bilateral business ties and suggested collaborative efforts to promote tourism.

He also highlighted the potential for exchange programs, close collaboration between Chambers of Commerce, tuna imports, climate change initiatives, and ecotourism to enhance relations.

He also invited the visiting guest to join ICCI's upcoming delegation to

Swat Valley on September 22-23, which will include Ambassadors, diplomats, and business leaders.

This trip aims to explore the valley's vast potential and uncover opportunities for collaboration and investment.

Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General United Business Group (UBG) said that Maldives carries significance for Pakistan not only because of a Muslim country but also a member of the SAARC.

He praised the High Commissioner as a dynamic personality and expressed hope for strengthened relations during his tenure.

He noted Pakistan's support for Maldivian diplomats and students, as well as Maldives' consistent support for Pakistan's candidatures in international bodies.

Attendees also included Akhtar Abbasi, Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, and Imtiaz Abbasi.

Saudi banks' real estate loans reach \$218 billion

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi banks real estate loans reached SR816.83 billion (\$217.82 billion) in the second quarter of 2024, marking an annual 12 percent rise, according to official data.

Figures from the Saudi Central Bank, also known as SAMA, indicated that this amount represents approximately 30 percent of the total banks' loan portfolio for the three-month period. Retail real estate loans made up the largest share at 79 percent, increasing by 10 percent during this period to reach SR641.72 billion.

Corporate real estate loans, although accounting for 21 percent of the total, grew at a faster annual rate of 18 percent, totaling SR175.12 billion.

The share of real estate loans within Saudi banks' total loan portfolios has steadily increased in recent years. According to data from SAMA, five years ago, these loans accounted for about 17 percent of total lending activities.

This figure rose to 18.5 percent in 2021, then jumped to 28.5 percent in 2022, and 29.6 percent in 2023. As of the second quarter of this year, real estate loans now make up 29.7 percent of the total.

This growth is being driven by several key factors, including urban development, evolving lifestyle preferences, and the rise of e-commerce. There is also a growing emphasis on sustainability, a shift towards remote work, demographic changes, and supportive government policies.

In particular, there is a notable increase in demand for various property types, ranging from residential apartments and villas to commercial offices and retail spaces. Hospitality venues are also seeing heightened interest, as mixed-use developments become more prevalent. These developments blend residential, commercial, and recreational areas, creating dynamic communities that meet a wide array of needs.

Macroeconomic trends such as population growth, urbanization, and economic

stability are further bolstering this market.

Additionally, strategic initiatives like Vision 2030, which aim to diversify the economy and attract foreign investment, are providing a robust framework for sustained growth.

Real estate companies in Saudi Arabia are increasingly focusing on affordable housing and sustainable construction, recognizing the long-term potential of these areas.

As a result, Saudi Arabia's real estate sector stands out as a compelling opportunity for investment and development, attracting both local and international players looking to capitalize on the country's evolving landscape.

According to a study by Mordor Intelligence, the Kingdom's commercial real estate market is highly fragmented and competitive, driven by increasing demand for new properties due to growing commercial activities. Developers compete based on factors such as land banks, property location, and upcoming projects, as well as construction costs, and company reputation.

The study noted that prominent real estate development companies in the market include Al Saedan Real Estate, Kingdom Holding Company, and SEDCO Development.

It also cited Jabal Omar Development Company, Makkah Construction & Development Co., and Dar Alarkan Real Estate Development Co., as well as Saudi Taiba Investment and Real Estate Development Co.

In parallel, home financing is experiencing significant growth, aligning with the government's goal to increase homeownership among Saudi nationals to 70 percent by 2030.

In 2016, SAMA revised regulations to increase loan-to-value ratios for financing companies from 70 percent in 2014 to 85 percent.

In 2017, the LTV cap was extended to 85 percent for citizens seeking their first home through banks, and further increased to 90

percent in 2018.

As the government continues to boost affordable housing supply, the creation of the Saudi Real Estate Refinance Company in 2017, a subsidiary of the Kingdom's Public Investment Fund, has strengthened the provision of mortgage-backed securities for investors.

The demand for real estate financing is expected to grow from SR280 billion in 2017 to SR500 billion by 2026, driven by robust economic growth. SRC plays a vital role in this expansion by making the housing market more accessible to both local and international investors.

According to a study by Deloitte, the lack of refinancing firms in the Saudi mortgage market had previously constrained banks' ability to expand their loan portfolios within any single sector.

However, the establishment of the Saudi Real Estate Refinance Company has changed this dynamic, allowing banks to package their loan portfolios into mortgage-backed securities that can be sold to investors.

The Saudi real estate market has been significantly impacted by fluctuations in interest rates, which are closely tied to US monetary policy due to the Saudi riyal's peg to the US dollar.

As the Federal Reserve raised the level to combat inflation, the Gulf Cooperation Council nations, including Saudi Arabia, followed suit, leading to higher borrowing costs across the region.

These elevated interest rates initially created challenges for individuals and companies seeking real estate financing in the Kingdom. The cost of credit increased, causing potential buyers to hesitate, particularly in a market that was already experiencing rising property prices.

Many prospective homeowners and investors adopted a wait-and-see approach, hoping for a reduction in rates before making major purchasing decisions.

Pakistani fruit and juice exports to China surge this year

BEIJING (APP): The latest data from the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC) shows that during the January-July period of 2024, Pakistan's frozen orange juice exports to China reached unprecedented levels, showcasing the growing demand for Pakistani produce in the Chinese market.

Commercial Counselor at the Pakistan Embassy in China, Ghulam Qadir told China Economic Net that the surge in exports can be attributed to the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreements between the two countries, as well as the concerted efforts by the Pakistani government and exporters to diversify and expand their international markets.

He added that China's growing appetite for high-quality, nutritious fruits and juices has provided a lucrative opportunity for

Pakistani producers to capitalize on this market.

"From January-July 2024 fruit juices and other related items' exports to China crossed \$1.546 million, an increase of 226% as compared to last year in the same period. Frozen orange juice commodity code (20091100) crossed \$1.54 million. Pakistani fresh mangoes are also gaining popularity in the Chinese market and in the first seven months 4,214 kg of mangoes were imported by Chinese enterprises. In contrast, Pakistan's Prime Minister also gifted Pakistani mangoes to Chinese leadership and Chinese enterprises this year", he added.

He further said that the robust export growth underscores the immense potential for further collaboration and trade between Pakistan and China in the agricultural sector. He said

that as both countries continue strengthening their economic ties, the future looks bright for Pakistani fruit and juice producers to solidify their presence in the Chinese market.

Regional Director of Direct Access Chinese enterprise, Wei Ling Chen told CEN that this year her company imported 3-5 tons of Pakistani mangoes, and before confirming importing Pakistani mangoes to China, MERAPC Solutions conducted a lot of research and came to know that Pakistan, as the birthplace of mangoes, has more than 300 varieties. She said that they chose Sindhri and Chaunsa, which are known as the best mangoes in Pakistan, and promoted these two varieties in the Chinese market so that more domestic consumers can taste the characteristics of Pakistani mangoes.

She said, "To ensure the

quality of mangoes, we choose to cooperate with high-quality mango orchards and choose the best varieties, planting techniques, picking, and packaging of mango orchards. In particular, Pakistani mangoes are purely naturally grown therefore the size is not uniform, and the skin is not so bright and beautiful, but the pure mango flavor is delicious."

She said that pure mango flavor and natural sweetness are also the biggest features of Pakistani mangoes.

She said that they also provided good product packaging, circulation, and other services. She added that they monitored all the processes from picking in the orchard, heat treatment and packaging, cold chain to Pakistan airport, air transport to China, and free shipping by SF Express in China.

FCCI holds function to honour martyrs' families, talented people

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) organised a function here on Saturday to honour families of martyrs, and present awards to local talented people, who excelled in their specific fields.

Renowned scholar, philanthropist and businessman Syed Sarfaraz Ahmad Shah, speaking at the ceremony, appreciated the efforts, saying it would produce a chain reaction and motivate elders of other cities to arrange such functions to highlight their local asset and pride at the national level.

He mentioned General Aamir Riaz of Pak Army, who hailed from Faisalabad, saying everyone appreciated the expertise and professionalism of General Riaz by dubbing him as the "brain of the army" and "engine of the army".

About Air Marshal Arshad Mahmood Malik, he said he was very humble and Allah likes humili-

ty and rewards such personalities with its unending bounties.

Akhuwat Foundation Chairman Dr Amjad Saqib said his great grandfather, grandfather and father were buried in a small village near Dijkot and he was a true Faisalabadian. He said he studied in Lyallpur, Toba Tek Singh, Kamalia, Tandianwala and Jaranwala. He shared his old memories and said that he belongs to a middle-class family. "Once, he requested his father that he intended to study at Atchison College," he recalled and added that his father kept silence and did not respond.

He asked his family members about it and he was told that his father had no means to bear the expenses of his education at that prime institution. "It was a turning point in my life, as I resolved at that time to establish a quality institution where children of low income family background can study with

dignity and pride." He said he successfully established a campus sprawling over 50 acres of land where 700 students are getting free education.

About Akhuwat, he said it was launched with an initial asset of \$100 to offer interest-free loans to help people to start their own micro-level businesses. He said that now, the Foundation had disbursed \$1bn with a recovery rate of 100 per cent. He said now he wanted to transform Faisalabad into a city of 'Muwakhat' [brotherhood] with the help of Dr Khurram Tariq.

Earlier, FCCI President Dr Khurram Tariq said the land of Faisalabad had a rich legacy of producing personalities with extraordinary talent, but it was an enigma that its residents, after shifting to other cities, forget their original identity. He said Chaudhry Rehmat Ali, who proposed the name of Pakistan, belonged to Chak No. 66-JB Dhandra.

Similarly, freedom fighter Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal hailed from Jhumra, Bhagat Singh from Chak No. 105 Banga Jaranwala, and Sir Ganga Ram was from Mangtawala.

"The first horse-drawn train from Gangapur to Buchina was his brainchild," he added.

Dr Khurram said that Pirthavi Kapoor, Mala Begum, Captain Sarwar Shaheed, former air chief Kaleem Saadat, former naval chief Zakauallah, former chairman PIA Arshad Malik, General Aamir Riaz, Dr Amjad Saqib, Zia Mohyuddin and Nusrat Fateh Ali were the sons of this soil, and they excelled in the world.

He claimed that that 90pc of players in the Kabaddi team, 50pc in swimming, 80pc in handball and Taekwondo belong to Faisalabad. He said the event had been organised to pay tribute to those personalities par excellence.

mood like this."

Earlier, European stocks also closed decisively lower after having wobbled in afternoon trading.

Tokyo's stock market was weighed down Friday by a strong yen, which has picked up against the dollar on bets of a Fed rate cut and growing expectations that the Bank of Japan would continue hiking its own borrowing costs.

Oil prices finished down more than two percent with major contracts hitting fresh multi-month

Stocks slump after disappointing US jobs data

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Global stock markets slumped Friday and oil prices tumbled following weaker than expected US jobs growth that pointed to a slowing economy.

The world's biggest economy added an estimated 142,000 jobs last month, an increase from the poor July figure, but below analysts' estimates. The unemployment rate meanwhile declined slightly from 4.3 percent to 4.2 percent.

Investors initially took the report as a glass half

full, with stocks pushing higher, but then sentiment turned and shares tumbled.

The broad-based S&P 500 ended at 5,408.42, down 1.7 percent for the day and 4.2 percent for the week.

The lackluster job growth "played right into the market's worries about (economic) slowing," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare, who noted that September has been a historically tepid period for equities.

The report comes as markets eye an expected

Federal Reserve interest rate cut.

Following the data, futures markets increased the odds of a smaller 25-basis-point reduction in rates instead of one twice that size.

Friday's data was consistent with "a weakening labor market, but not weak yet," said Steve Sosnick of Interactive Brokers.

There's been a shift in mood and sentiment is now against stocks, Sosnick said, "and it's never 100 percent clear why markets shift their



THE OVAL: Josh Hull made Pathum Nissanka his first Test wicket, England vs Sri Lanka, 3rd Test.

Pakistan team to compete in 5th World Nomad Games 2024

MULTAN (APP): Pakistan's combined contingent is all set to participate in the 5th World Nomad Games, scheduled from September 7 to 14, 2024. The opening ceremony will take place on Sept 8 in Astana, where Malik Sajjad Hussain Awan will lead the Pakistani team. The team will compete in different disciplines including Tug of War, Mas-Wrestling, Kurash, Traditional Wrestling, Mind Games, Traditional Archery and Powerful Nomad. Leading the contingent as Chef de Mission is Rana Muhammad Jameel, General Secretary of the Pakistan Tug of War Federation. The World Nomad Games are an international event that celebrates the rich nomadic traditions and ancient sports from around the world. Pakistan's participation highlights its commitment to reviving and promoting traditional sports on the global stage.

Martin roars to victory in San Marino sprint, extends MotoGP lead



MISANO ADRIATICO (AFP): Jorge Martin claimed a statement victory in Saturday's sprint race at the San Marino and Rimini Riviera MotoGP, extending his overall lead over reigning champion Francesco Bagnaia with a stunning performance. Pramac rider Martin is 26 points in front of pole-sitter Bagnaia ahead of the main event Grand Prix on Sunday after charging to an unexpected second sprint win of the season. The Spaniard, who won at Misano Adriatico last year, started in fourth on the grid but got away like lightning and was ahead of Bagnaia by the first turn. He comfortably held off Ducati's Bagnaia for the rest of the 13-lap sprint and crossed the finish line 1.495 seconds in front of his Italian rival, improving his position at the top of the

standings. "Today I expected maybe to be fighting with Pecco (Bagnaia) but I didn't expect to do that start," said Martin. "I even had a gap to keep for the last two laps so super happy. For tomorrow it's another story but I feel confident that we are in a good way, super good and super fast." Martin has not won a GP since the French back in May but his consistency has helped him accumulate a decent advantage as he searches for his first MotoGP title. The 27-year-old had finished second in both the sprint and GP at four of the previous five events and his display on Saturday means he cannot be overtaken in the standings this weekend by Bagnaia, regardless of what happens in Sunday's race. 'Disaster start' It was a big blow for

Bagnaia, who was favourite to cut the gap separating him from Martin after claiming pole position with a record-breaking fastest lap at the "Marco Simoncelli" circuit earlier on Saturday. Two-time champion Bagnaia is riding with injuries to his shoulder, neck and collarbone after crashing out of last weekend's Aragon MotoGP but looked in great form before Martin left him for dust. "I'm absolutely not happy... The start was a disaster, I lost first position and from that moment it was very difficult," said Bagnaia. "In any case, second position after what happened last week is OK. We will work to improve the start because it was a disaster and try to be in a better shape tomorrow." Bagnaia is at least helped by this weekend being the first of two in a row at the Misano, as the same circuit is being used later in September for the Emilia Romagna GP which replaces the cancelled race in Kazakhstan. Marc Marquez, a double winner at Alcaniz last weekend, had a harder time in Italy and lost ground on Martin, dropping to 77 points off the summit in third after finishing the sprint in sixth place.

Fritz defeats Tiafoe to book US Open final clash with Sinner

PARIS (Agencies): Taylor Fritz fought back to defeat compatriot Frances Tiafoe at the US Open on Friday, becoming the first American man to reach a Grand Slam final in 15 years. Fritz, the world number 12, won 4-6, 7-5, 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 and will take on top-ranked Jannik Sinner for the title on Sunday. "He overwhelmed me at the start and I was freaking out a little," said 26-year-old Fritz after securing victory with a 16th ace. "I just told myself to stay in it, hold serve and apply scoreboard pressure. "I did all I could to stay in it. If I hadn't have done that I'd regret it forever. In the final, I will come out and give it everything." Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner earlier became the first Italian man

to make the US Open final with a 7-5, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 win over Britain's Jack Draper. Andy Roddick was the last American to make a men's singles final at the Slams at Wimbledon in 2009. He was also the last man from the country to capture a Slam title when he won the 2003 US Open. Tiafoe went into Friday's match trailing 6-1 in his head-to-head record against his compatriot. However, he boasted the more impressive Grand Slam credentials, playing in his second US Open semi-final in his last three appearances. Taylor Fritz was in unknown territory, having fallen at the quarter-final stage at the Slams on four occasions. Tiafoe used that greater experience to hit back from 3-0 in the first set to clinch

the opener. Fritz, who had reached the semi-final by defeating fourth-ranked Alexander Zverev in the previous round, was unable to convert a set point in the 10th game of the second set. He succeeded at the next time of asking to level the match before handing the initiative straight back when Tiafoe broke for 1-0 in the third and held the advantage to retake the lead. In a match where there were few rallies and little real drama, Fritz levelled again in the 10th game of the fourth set when Tiafoe dumped a lazy drop shot into the net. That suddenly drained the spirit from Frances Tiafoe as Taylor Fritz raced to victory in a brutally one-sided decider in which his opponent managed just nine points.

Aisam Davis Cup participation in doubt after herniated disc diagnosis

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Tennis star and President of the Pakistan Tennis Federation, Aisamul Haq, has been diagnosed with a herniated disc. The Pakistan Davis Cup team departed from Islamabad to Barbados on Saturday, where they will compete against the host team in the Davis Cup tie on September 14. Aisam-ul-Haq was scheduled to join the team as a player, but due to his herniated disc, he was unable to travel with them. His chances of participating in the Davis Cup tie are now uncertain. The eight-member Pakistani team traveling to Barbados includes three officials. The team comprises Aqeel Khan, Muhammad Shoaib, Yusuf Khalil, and Ahmad Qureshi. The officials are Hamid Haq (captain), Muhammad Khalid (coach), Colonel (ret'd) Ziauddin Tufail (manager secretary), and Muhammad Shahid (physio). The 48 nations competing in the 2024 Davis Cup World Group I and World Group II have revealed their teams, featuring notable players such as Novak Djokovic from Serbia and Casper Ruud from Norway. In total, 228 players are set to represent their countries in the World Group I and II ties. Additionally, with 16 teams participating in the Davis Cup Finals Group Stage next week, over 300 athletes will be involved in the competition this month. Earlier this year, Tennis ace Aisamul Haq Qureshi became the first active player to hold the President's office as he sets eyes on reviving the sport in Pakistan. He is now the elected chief of the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF), replacing outgoing-president politician Salim Saifullah. Aisam's tenure will be for four years till 2028. The election of the federation took place on February 10, eight out of 15 units voted for Aisam making him the winner of the poll while retired Major General Asghar Nawaz received seven votes at the PTF SDA Tennis Complex in Islamabad. Meanwhile earlier today, Pakistan's under-12 tennis team has departed for Shymkent, Kazakhstan, to compete in the ATF Under-12 Championship, which runs from 16 to 21 September.

England Test series to be held in Pakistan, confirms PCB chief Naqvi

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday dismissed reports claiming non-availability of the venues for the upcoming three-match Test series against England, saying that the matches will be held in Pakistan. "No Tests will be played outside [the country]. Multan and Rawalpindi venues are final," the PCB chief said in an interaction with journalists during his visit to oversee the ongoing renovation work being carried out at the Gaddafi Stadium. Earlier this week, reports emerged that the schedule for next month's three-match series could be altered due to construction work at the country's major stadiums. The matches are scheduled to be held in Multan (Oct 7-11), Karachi (Oct 15-19) and Rawalpindi (Oct 24-28). But reports claimed that the Karachi Test was likely to be moved to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — Pakistan's "home venue" until cricket returned to the country. England coach Brendon McCullum on Thursday also addressed the issue while speaking to reporters at The Oval ahead of the third Test against Sri Lanka. "We don't really know (what is happening in Pakistan) but we can't pick a team until we know where we're going to play," he said. "It would be nice if, over the next couple of days, we found out." The former New Zealand captain added: "Then we'll sit down and make sure we've got the right team for the right conditions and the right opposition." England did not tour Pakistan between 2005 and 2022, owing to security concerns, with the PCB staging matches in the UAE throughout that period. Addressing the reports, Naqvi clarified that the Test series between Pakistan and England will be played in Multan and Rawalpindi. He further shared that the PCB is in contact with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and "there are no issues". 'Coaches, selectors to decide about captains' Responding to another question regarding potential shift in captaincy, the PCB chief said that the decisions regarding captains of the Pakistan men's team will be made by coaches and selectors. "I have left these matters to them," Naqvi said during an inspection of the Gaddafi Stadium construction project. Reports are making rounds regarding the change in captaincy with Mohammad Rizwan emerging as the frontrunner to lead across formats. "A workshop is scheduled for September 22, where everyone will be invited to give their suggestions, and decisions will be made afterwards," he added. "I know that if there is any mistake, it falls on me. If the team does not perform well, if there is a selection mistake, or if the coach loses, it will all reflect on me," he added while revealing that he is meeting the selection committee today as well. Sources told Geo News that the cricket board will hold a "Connection Camp" — a meeting-cum-workshop of the board's top brass — that will design the Pakistan cricket's future course of actions. Pakistan white ball head coach Gary Kirsten, red ball head coach Jason Gillespie, heads of high performance centres, senior cricketers, senior board officials as well as international and domestic directors will attend the camp meeting presided over by the PCB chief, sources added. Speaking of upcoming ICC Champions Trophy 2025 — scheduled from February to March, Naqvi said that the major tournament will be held in Pakistan despite the uncertainty regarding arch-rivals India's participation. India's participation in the tournament is uncertain as the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) seeks the government's approval to visit the country. The PCB chairman said that he has been in contact with the BCCI Secretary regarding the global eight-team tournament. "Champions Trophy will be held in Pakistan, we are in touch with the boards of the teams participating in the tournament." Lastly, Naqvi talked about Jay Shah becoming the ICC Chairman and Asian Cricket Council meeting.

Suarez's Uruguay career ends with Paraguay draw



MONTENEGRO (Agencies): Luis Suarez's 17-year Uruguay career came to a close as they were held to a goalless draw against Paraguay in a South American World Cup qualifier. Suarez, 37, announced on Monday that he is retiring from international duty. He ends as Uruguay's all-time leading scorer with 69 goals in 143 appearances since his debut against Colombia in February 2007. Suarez and his family gathered on the pitch before kick-off for a pre-game ceremony, including tributes from fans and a video message from Argentina legend and Inter Miami team-mate Lionel Messi. "Uruguay is bigger than any player. Starting tomorrow I will be another fan," he told the crowd. Uruguay second in the

Uruguay had 65% possession but struggled to break down a dogged Paraguay defence in a scrappy encounter that included 24 fouls and six yellow cards - including one for Suarez. The former Liverpool and Barcelona forward had the best chance for the home side but his first-half effort hit the post. Newcastle's Miguel Almiron had Paraguay's best effort but his shot was saved by goalkeeper Sergio Rochet. Uruguay were without five players through suspension, including Liverpool's Darwin Nunez and Tottenham's Rodrigo Bentancur, after they clashed with fans during a Copa America defeat by Colombia in July. The draw keeps Uruguay second in the

qualifying table, four points behind Argentina. Elsewhere, Brazil boosted their flagging World Cup qualifying campaign with a 1-0 win over Ecuador. Real Madrid forward Rodrygo scored the only goal as the five-time world champions moved up from sixth to fourth in the table, with the top six guaranteed a place at the 2026 World Cup. Teenage winger Estevao Willian, who is joining Chelsea when he turns 18 next year, made his debut as a second-half substitute. In Lima, third-placed Colombia needed a late goal from Liverpool's Luis Diaz to earn a 1-1 draw against Peru. Alexander Callens put Peru ahead on 68 minutes but Diaz headed the equaliser with eight minutes remaining.

England fast bowler Wood ruled out of Pakistan Test series

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): England fast bowler Mark Wood said Friday it was "rubbish news" he had been ruled out for the rest of the year with a right elbow injury. The 34-year-old express quick had already been sidelined from the concluding two matches of England's three-Test series against Sri Lanka after suffering a right thigh muscle strain while bowling in the series opener at Old Trafford. But Friday's statement from the England and Wales Cricket Board said Wood, a key member of England's squad as they build towards next year's Ashes in Australia despite a career blighted by ankle and back problems, had noticed increasing stiffness and discomfort in his elbow during the Test series against the West Indies earlier in the season. It added Wood had "managed the discomfort" while bowling in Manchester, where England won by five wickets in a Sri Lanka series they are now looking to wrap up with a 3-0 clean sweep in the ongoing third Test at the Oval. Wood will now miss England's upcoming three-Test tours of both Pakistan in October and New Zealand in December. "During what I thought was a routine check on a previously troublesome elbow, I was shocked to learn I've got some bone stress in my right elbow," Wood wrote on Instagram. "Me and the medical team felt it was a good time to get my elbow looked at as it was a bit irritated. I'd put that down to the normal niggles every fast bowler gets and which I was playing through." He added: "I work incredibly hard on my fitness, putting in extra work with coaches and physios making this even more disappointing. I will miss the rest of the year, needing time to rest and build up, (I'm) fully expecting to be back and firing in early 2025."

The ECB said Wood would aim to return in time for England's white-ball tour of India and the ICC Champions Trophy in Pakistan, scheduled to begin in February 2025. Flintoff named England Lions head coach LONDON (Agencies): Andrew Flintoff's move into coaching has grown further with his appointment as boss of England Lions for the next year. The 46-year-old former England all-rounder returned to cricket last year following a crash on the set of Top Gear that left him with severe facial injuries. He has since worked with the England white-ball team, been head coach of Northern Superchargers in The Hundred and this week is with the England Test side for the final match of the series against Sri Lanka. Flintoff will take up his new role next month. The Lions are scheduled for winter tours of South Africa and Australia, then are due to play India A and Zimbabwe at home next summer. "I'm incredibly excited to take on this role with the England Lions," said Flintoff. "It's a fantastic opportunity to work with some of the best up-and-coming talent in the country and to help shape the future of the men's game. "It's an exciting time for English cricket, and I'm passionate about inspiring the next generation to take the sport forward. We've got a strong foundation, and I believe we can create something truly special." Flintoff played 79 Tests for England between 1998 and 2009, including a starring role in the epic Ashes triumph of 2005, for which he was named BBC Sports Personality of the Year. After ending his playing career, Flintoff moved into television presenting and fronted Top Gear from 2019 until his life-changing accident in 2022. In the second series of his documentary Field Of Dreams, which concluded on BBC One last week.

French tennis player takes legal action over online abuse

PARIS (Agencies): French tennis player Alice Tubello has filed a complaint over online abuse from sports bettors following 300 hateful messages she received after a recent defeat, a source close to the case told AFP on Saturday. The 23-year-old's complaint to Paris prosecutors also denounced identity theft after a false Facebook page, now closed, was created in her name and posted slurs targeting her family. The 219-ranked player said she received a torrent of abuse after losing in the quarter-finals in Arequipa, Peru, last month to local player Dana Guzman. Tubello claimed the defeat triggered a wave of hatred from sports bettors through her social media accounts. Contacted by AFP, Tubello slammed "recurring abuses with sports betting, sponsors of the world tennis organization."

"Whether it's a victory or a defeat, every time after a match, I receive hate messages," she said. "I've even had punters come behind the fence on my property. "Security has increased at tournaments, but there is still this phenomenon of online abuse under the cover of anonymity." The content of the fake Facebook page, presenting her father as "a paedophile" or publishing racist messages, were particularly distressing. "They touched my family, I will not give up," she insisted, hopeful that investigators can identify and arrest those involved. Fellow French tennis player Caroline Garcia also recently shared some of the disparaging messages she has received in the wake of defeats, citing "unhealthy betting" as a driver of social media abuse of players. After her US Open first round defeat, Garcia shared "just a few" of the messages, including one telling her to shoot herself and another saying "I hope your mom dies soon."

"Tournaments and the sport keeps partnering with betting companies, which keep attracting new people to unhealthy betting," former world number four Garcia said. "The days of cigarette brands sponsoring sports are long gone. Yet, here we are promoting betting companies, which actively destroy the life of some people."



In brief

2 killed, 3 injured

ISLAMABAD (APP): Two people were killed and three others injured in a shooting incident following a verbal altercation over entering a building in the Margalla police station area of Islamabad. According to police and a private news channel on Saturday, the confrontation began after security guards entering the building were verbally abused. Police and rescue teams reached the spot after the incident was reported. The injured and dead bodies were shifted to the hospital.

Man killed in road accident

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested a truck driver responsible for a fatal road accident that claimed the life of a man and injured his son. The accident occurred due to the driver's speeding and negligence. The deceased was identified as Mohammad Ayaz, while his son, Hamad, sustained injuries. The incident took place a few days ago, and Hammad filed a complaint with the Wah Cantt police. Acting on the complaint, the police apprehended the truck driver, identified as Zameer, and impounded the vehicle also. SP Potohar emphasized that all necessary resources are being utilized to ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property. He stressed that it is everyone's duty to follow traffic rules, noting that fatal accidents often occur due to speeding. He urged drivers to be careful and responsible while on the road.

230,300 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 230,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 256,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1550.00 feet (maximum conservation level) and was 152.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 139,000 cusecs and 138,500 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1226.90 feet, which was 178.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 34,000 cusecs and 8,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 162,000, 161,300, 188,600 and 147,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 30,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 24,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Vehicle lifter gang busted

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police on Sunday busted a wanted member of a vehicle lifter gang and recovered a trailer with goods worth more than 35 million rupees from his possession. An ICT Police public relations officer said that under the special directions of Inspector General (IG) Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the ICT Police has intensified its crackdown against criminal elements to eliminate crime from the city. Following these directions, the Sihala police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending the wanted member of the vehicle lifter gang, he said. The accused was identified as Shoukat Khan, he added. He said the police team also recovered a stolen trailer and goods worth 35 million rupees from his possession. A case was registered against the nabbed accused, and further investigation is underway, he said.



ISLAMABAD: A view of youngsters bathing and swimming in the Rawal Dam spillway water. —APP Photo

CM's leadership brings about new era in Punjab

ISLAMABAD (APP): In charge of the Virtual Women Police Station Salwat Samrana on Saturday said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryum Nawaz, Punjab is witnessing a paradigm shift in the way women's safety and security are being addressed on priority. "Punjab is becoming a reality and women are feeling more confident and empowered than ever before", she said.

Talking to the PTV news channel, Salwat urged the media to educate women in remote areas about the services of the first Virtual Women police station as it was setting new standards for the dispensation of justice all over Punjab.

The Virtual Women Police Station is a beacon of hope for women in Punjab, providing them a platform to speak out against injustices and thus seek help. She urged women to come forward and utilize this facility without hesitation. She emphasized the crucial role of media in spreading awareness about this innovative initiative, which aims to provide a safe and secure platform for women to report crimes and seek justice. The In charge highlighted the importance of collaboration between the media, government, and civil society to create a society where women feel empowered and protected.

She said the Virtual Women Police Station is a groundbreaking initiative that has the potential to transform the lives of women in Punjab, and the media has a critical role to play in making it a success. Responding to a query, she said the virtual women's police station is equipped with trained personnel, who are sensitive to

the needs of women and handle each case with utmost care and professionalism, providing emotional support and guidance throughout the process.

The In-charge assured that the Virtual Women Police Station provides a comprehensive support system, guiding applicants throughout the process, from filing an FIR to the final verdict, ensuring a seamless and hassle-free experience. She highlighted the accessibility of the Virtual Women Police Station, operating 24/7, allowing women to reach out whenever they need assistance, using various channels, including phone, app, and video calls, making it convenient and user-friendly.

The In-charge emphasized the importance of privacy and confidentiality, stating that the Virtual Women Police Station ensures complete anonymity, allowing women to report crimes without fear of retribution or social stigma, making it a safe and secure space to seek justice.

OPF set up PGFRC to assist returned overseas

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) has set up a Pakistani-German Facilitation & Reintegration Centre (PGFRC) in Lahore with an advisory desk at Overseas Pakistani Foundation (OPF) here at the head office.

An official source told APP that the objective was to facilitate the return of overseas Pakistanis in terms of their skill development in Pakistan's social and economic fabric for gainful employment. It is being implemented

in collaboration with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and Overseas Pakistani Foundation, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development on technical assistance to the facilitation & reintegration centre for Pakistani workers has been signed.

This initiative is helping to create more job opportunities/employability for Pakistani workers, which will improve economic development in the long run. The centre provides various services including advice on training and skills development, Technical and vocational training, advice on job market trends and opportunities, advice on finding a job in Pakistan Entrepreneurship and start-up support, psychosocial support and information on the health system in Pakistan and information on living conditions, advice on getting microfinance and loans.

Police reunites missing children with families

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police, teams on Saturday from Noon, Lohi Bher, and Golra police stations in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) reunited four missing children with their families.

According to an ICT public relations officer, the police received reports from citizens about their missing children, who had not been located despite extensive searches by their families. Upon receiving these reports, the police teams utilized both technical resources and human effort to track down and safely return the children to their families.

A police official told APP that among the rescued children were two special children, highlighting the additional challenges faced during the search. He emphasized that the ICT police had made significant efforts to locate the missing children and successfully reunited them with their families.

The official underscored that children are a valuable asset and parents should exercise greater care to ensure their safety. He added that missing children can reflect a lack of parental attention and insufficient child protection measures. The public relations officer said that the

families expressed their immense relief and happiness, extending their heartfelt thanks to the police for their prompt and effective response. The ICT Police were praised for their swift and compassionate assistance, he added.

Citizens are encouraged to contact the emergency helpline "Pucar-15" or use the "ICT-15 app" to report any suspicious activity.

ICT Police organize 04 days workshop on road safety: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police Education Wing has organized a series of four-day workshops on road safety.

According to ICT public relations officer said that under the special directions of ICT Inspector General (IG) Police Syed Nasir Ali Rizvi, ICT Police education wing organized four-day workshops on road safety for government institutions drivers. He said these workshops are aimed at enhancing the driving skills and safety awareness of drivers from various government institutions.

He said that the workshop was attended by SSP Traffic Islamabad Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, education wing member, 250 drivers and other staff of the government organization. He said the workshop participants were briefed on road safety, cau-

tious driving, and other traffic laws.

He also said the ICT Police education wing educated drivers and staff on road safety, hazards of using mobile phones while driving, seatbelt usage, risks of riding motorcycles without helmets, consideration for the rights of other road users, and awareness regarding the use of headlights, zebra crossings, dangers of speeding, and other traffic laws.

Organization members praised the Islamabad Police efforts for organizing the initiative which emphasizes the importance of such workshops in educating participants about various aspects of road safety, he said. During the event, officers from the education wing advised participants to adhere to traffic laws and drive cautiously to ensure their and others' safety, he added.

On the occasion, the SSP Traffic stated that it is the responsibility of the police to inform drivers about road safety and traffic rules and that the ICT Police are fulfilling this duty in a professional manner. He further said that the protection of citizen life and property is among the top priorities of Islamabad Police. A case was registered against the nabbed accused, and further investigation is underway, he said.

ensures complete anonymity, allowing women to report crimes without fear of retribution or social stigma, making it a safe and secure space to seek justice.

IIUI seeks police help to counter unlawful protest

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Islamic University (IIU) has finalized the hostel seat allocation process, but the self-proclaimed Student Action Committee has disrupted the proceedings, taking the law into their own hands and barring the university administration and foreign students from accessing the hostels.

In response to these circumstances, the university has formally notified the police and district administration, said a news release.

Individuals affiliated with the so-called Student Action Committee have attempted to falsely portray foreign students as protesters by detaining them outside the hostels and disseminating misleading information to media outlets, suggesting that these students are also participating in the protest and being barred by the administration. However, foreign students have reached out to the administration regarding this unlawful behavior, and the university has assured them of comprehensive legal protection.

The university administration has stated that this illegal action by the Student Action Committee has compromised the transparent and peaceful accommodation of 2,700 students in the hostels.

The protesters are even preventing foreign students from carrying their belongings, prompting the university to seek assistance from law enforcement agencies and the district administration to prevent any potential incidents.

The hostel management has reaffirmed that all eligible students will receive hostel seats, and a revised allotment list has been prepared after reviewing student data to ensure uninterrupted studies when classes resume on September 9.

The management has reiterated its commitment to preventing unauthorized individuals unrelated to hostels from entering the premises under any circumstances.

Mohsin Naqvi pays tribute to Shaheens of Air Force

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has paid rich tribute to the brave Shaheens of Pakistan Air Force who are always ready to defend the aerial boundaries of the beloved country.

In his special message on account of Air Force Day on September 7, Saturday, he stated that despite limited resources, Pakistan Air Force thwarted the enemy's nefarious designs in the 1965 war.

He added that our

Shaheens established complete dominance in the skies, and MM Alam set a record by destroying five enemy planes in one minute.

In his special message on Air Force Day, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that on September 7, the brave officers of Pakistan Air Force destroyed the enemy's aerial power and wrote unmatched chapters of courage, bravery, and valour. He said that September 7, 1965, was a golden day in the history of

the Pakistan Air Force.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that the nation will always remember the unparalleled services and eternal sacrifices of the personnel of the Pakistan Air Force. He said that the entire nation pays glowing tribute to the bravery and spirit of the martyrs of the Pakistan Air Force.

He stated that the role of the Pakistan Air Force in thwarting the enemy's attack will always be remembered in history.

Speakers pay tribute to armed forces

ISLAMABAD (APP): Young Kashmiri children, representing both sides of the divided state of Jammu and Kashmir, gathered in Muzaffarabad to honour the armed forces of Pakistan for their unwavering commitment to defending the nation and supporting the noble cause of the oppressed Kashmiris.

"We honour the historic and courageous role of our armed forces in combating terrorism and safeguarding sovereignty. Their legacy of valour and sacrifices will be remembered and revered by the people of Kashmir and Pakistan for generations to come," said a reso-

lution adopted by the Sawera Student Assembly (SSA) in a powerful display of patriotism and solidarity.

The event was organized by Sawera Foundation, a not-for-profit organization headed by peace activist Tanveer ul Islam.

The foundation has been working for promotion of peace and education among the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) based impoverished Kashmiris.

Those who spoke on the occasion included Zahid Amin, a prominent Muzaffarabad-based political and social leader, M. Islam, a Kashmiri refugee leader; Zameer Naz and

senior Kashmiri journalist, Tariq Naqash.

The students, on the occasion, highlighted the significance of Defence Day, the sacrifices of the armed forces, and the role of the nation in countering the enemy's aggression.

The resolution passed on the occasion also honoured the martyrs, describing their bravery as a source of pride and inspiration for a strong, united, and resilient Pakistan.

It expressed the SSA's commitment to contributing to a prosperous and peaceful Pakistan through education, innovation, and civic engagement.

DG calls for action against illegal vehicle

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Excise and Taxation (E&T) Department of Islamabad has ramped up its efforts to curb the use of vehicles with illegal number plates and tinted windows in the Federal Capital.

In this regard, Director General (DG) Excise, Irfan Nawaz Memon chaired a meeting which was attended by the senior officials, including Director Excise Bilal Azam, to review the department's performance over the past week.

The meeting highlighted

the department's crackdown on black-glazed vehicles and non-sampled number plates.

Meanwhile, checkpoints have also been set up at various locations across the city to enforce these rules.

On the occasion, officials emphasized that strict action is being taken at these checkpoints to ensure compliance.

Furthermore, additional counters have also been established to facilitate the issuance of legal number plates.

DG Excise reiterated the importance of maintaining pressure on violators, calling for decisive action against vehicles with illegal tinted windows and illegal number plates.

Irfan Memon urged the officials for special checkpoints to further target unauthorized number plates in the city.

The department continues to take steps to ensure road safety and compliance with vehicle regulations, with officials closely monitoring the ongoing efforts.

40 technical trade centers blacklisted

ISLAMABAD (APP): Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) Licences, he added.

BEOE also provides the platform for pre-departure briefing to Emigrants and mandatory Insurance coverage to Pakistani workers abroad.

Memorandum of Understanding with Foreign Countries for Export of Manpower and Management of State Life Emigrants Insurance Fund (SLEIF) were the main functions of this department.

He said that BEOE has advised the foreign job-seekers to only reach out to the valid Overseas Employment Promoters to avert any loss of time, money, and their energies.

He said there were only 2,577 Overseas Employment Promoters (OEP) licenses that were valid as more than 5048 licenses had been pronounced invalid.

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were canceled on various grounds while 805 expired and the rest had surrendered.

They said all foreign job-seekers must visit the official webpage of BEOE regularly to get fresh and valid information and protect themselves from unauthorized OEPs.

The officials said that the BEOE was mandated to regulate emigration under the Emigration Ordinance, of 1979, promote the Emigration of Pakistani citizens, and look after the interests and welfare of the emigrants.

Among other functions, the BEOE had been advising the Federal Government on emigration policies and procedures, monitoring and supervising Overseas Employment Promoters through 7 Protectorates of Emigrants Offices, processing Overseas Employment Promoters (OEP) Licences, and giving pre-departure briefings to emigrants.

Catering services in high demand on Eid Milad un Nabi celebrations

ISLAMABAD (APP): As Pakistanis prepare to celebrate the birthday of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on September 17, the catering industry is experiencing an unprecedented surge in demand for its services where grand Milad events and processions are being held across the country to meet the requirements of their clients.

To cater to the diverse tastes of their clients, caterers are offering a wide range of cuisine, from traditional Pakistani dishes like biryani, haleem, and kebabs to modern fusion food, a report aired by a pri-

ivate news channel.

To meet the demand, caterers are hiring additional staff, including chefs, waiters, and delivery personnel. They are also investing in logistics, including transportation and equipment to ensure that food is delivered hot and fresh to the events, said a worker in the catering business.

Despite the rush, caterers are ensuring that quality and hygiene are not compromised. They are following strict food safety guidelines to ensure that food is prepared and served in a clean and safe environment, said a citizen.

The surge in demand for catering services is also giving an economic boost to the industry. Caterers are reporting an increase in profits, which is helping to sustain businesses and create jobs, said a owner of catering business.

The celebrations are also benefiting related industries, such as event management, decoration, and transportation, said a youngster. "I am so excited to celebrate the birthday of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with my family and friends," said Maria Khan, a resident of Lahore. "The food, the decorations, the prayers

everything comes together to create a truly special atmosphere."

"This is the one time of the year when the whole community comes together to celebrate," said Dr. Muhammad Hassan, a professor from Peshawar. "The Milad celebrations promote unity, love, and peace, and I'm so grateful to be a part of it." "The caterers are doing a fantastic job of providing a wide range of options for food," said Amna Butt, a working professional from Lahore. "I am especially looking forward to trying some of the traditional desserts, like gulab jamun and jalebi."

Shortages of health service

BADAKHSHAN (TOLOnews): Residents from Pamir in Badakhshan province report significant challenges, including shortages of medicine, doctors, and midwives. In Pamir residents mention that the local medical center has only one doctor and a few health workers. Haji Bhutto, a local resident, stated, "People are dying. If their illness isn't treated here and they must go to Faizabad, it will cost them 200,000 Afghanis."

The Frontier Post

Rabi ul Awal 03 1446 — Sunday, September 08, 2024

UN reacts to Taliban's ban

KABUL (Khaama Press): The UN Security Council has responded to the Taliban's directive banning Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur on HR, from visiting Afghanistan. Several members of Security Council, including US, UK and Japan have expressed that Bennett's travel ban is concerning and unacceptable. Representatives from Ecuador, France, Guyana, Malta, Mozambique, SK, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, UK, US and Japan issued joint statement.

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

Citizens demand price reductions beyond tax cuts

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Finance reported that in the past three years, various taxes have been reduced under the orders of the Islamic Emirate leader.

According to this ministry, reducing taxes in the healthcare, commercial, and agricultural sectors, for businesses, fuel tanks, and educational institutions has facilitated the growth and progress of small businesses and domestic industry.

Ahmad Wali Haqmal, spokesman for the Ministry of Finance, said: "The exemption and reduction of taxes by the Islamic Emirate have led to the growth of domestic industry and small businesses, and have provided good opportunities for their development."

Ahmad Wali Haqmal added that the ministry

aims to lower prices in the country's markets through tax reductions and exemptions on customs duties.

Meanwhile, some citizens claim that despite the reduction in taxes for businesses and fuel tanks, this has not had a positive effect on lowering prices.

Javed, a driver, said: "Taxes should be reduced further and fuel prices should also be lowered so that we can expand our businesses."

Abdul Ghafoor, another driver, said: "We ask the Islamic Emirate to pay special attention to price reductions, especially for gas and fuel, as businesses are facing a decline."

Other citizens also say that without serious monitoring of commodity prices, tax reductions will only benefit traders.

According to them, improving the tax collection system and increasing transparency could help reduce tax evasion and increase financial fairness.

Bilal, a shopkeeper, said: "If you go to the shopkeeper, he says he bought from traders; if you go to traders, they say they bought from outside. The costs have increased for us and the tax has gone up, but when you ask about taxes, they say they have reduced them."

Lutfullah Rahman, a resident, said: "We request the government send responsible individuals to the markets to reduce material prices so that our fellow citizens can be at ease."

This comes as a month ago, the Islamic Emirate reduced taxes on restaurants, hotels, and fuel and gas stations.

Upgradation for district hospital demanded

HELMAND (TOLOnews): Residents of Marja district in Helmand are calling for solutions to existing health challenges and are requesting authorities upgrade the district's 10-bed hospital to 50 beds.

The 10-bed hospital in Marja district is not meeting the needs of the district's residents due to a shortage of medical equipment and experienced doctors, forcing them to transfer patients to Lashkargah city for treatment.

Ahmad Javid, a resident of Marja district, said: "Marja district is very large, almost as large as four districts combined; it is very big."

Gul Ahmad, another resident, said: "This hospital needs to be expanded because there are no ultrasound machines or other essential equipment to solve the people's problems."

Abdul Salam, another resident, said: "This hospital is very small; we want it to be expanded because the district is large, and this is not enough."

However, local officials in the Marja district state that they have discussed the issue of upgrading the hospital and the lack of medical equipment with the provincial administration.

Naqibullah Azimi, Deputy Director of Marja Hospital, said: "This hospital is the only 24-hour hospital for the densely populated Marja district and provides services to the people of this district."

Marja district, located in the west of Lashkargah city, Helmand, has been deprived of development projects due to two decades of conflict and currently lacks access to basic life services.

Construction work of road completed

KABUL (BNA): A new road, spanning 50 kilometers in length and 10 meters in width, has been completed by the Special Brigade's machinery team in Panjshir, effectively connecting the province to Badakhshan.

According to Saifuddin Laton, the spokesman for Panjshir province, efforts are underway to complete the remaining 250 kilometers of the road, which will link the districts of Kuranw-Munjan, Yamgan, Jurm, and Baharak in Badakhshan to Panjshir.

Hafiz Mohammad Agha Hakim, Governor of Panjshir, lauded the engineering team's road construction efforts and affirmed that the development of the Panjshir-Takhar road will commence shortly.

Furthermore, Hafiz Naqibullah Farqani, Commander of the Engineering Unit of the Special Brigade in Panjshir, stated that the road is being constructed with a solid foundation and will be gravel-laid, with the project anticipated to be completed within three months.

Additionally, residents of Badakhshan have expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, emphasizing that the completion of the remaining sections of the road will significantly enhance economic activities and improve healthcare access in the region.

IEA sets up commission for counter-narcotics



KABUL (Ariana News): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, said in a meeting on the occasion of the High Commission for Counter-Narcotics opening that the Islamic Emirate has been successful in the fight against narcotics.

However, Kabir has considered providing alternative crops to farmers as one of the international community's responsibilities.

"The Islamic Emirate does not allow anyone to use Afghanistan's soil against anyone. It does not allow anyone to use Afghanistan for smuggling or international crimes,"

said Kabir. In this area, the cooperation of countries in the region and the world is important. We must focus on the way that the countries of the region and the world avoid the harm of drugs," he added.

Acting Ministers of Interior Affairs Sirajuddin Haqqani and National Defense Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid also said in this meeting that the Islamic Emirate is committed to a serious fight against drugs.

They have emphasized that in the last three years, nearly 80,000 operations have been carried out in

this area and more than 20,000 smugglers have been arrested.

"Today, the Islamic Emirate has progressed in countering narcotics, but the world is largely silent for this issue and does not fulfill its responsibility. We want them to fulfill their responsibility," said Yaqoob Mujahid.

"The international community should help the Islamic Emirate in the field of alternative livelihoods," said Haqqani.

Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi also said that the creation of this commission and the serious fight against drugs can pro-

vide the basis for the expansion of world relations with the current system.

This commission has the task of coordinating the fight against drugs and providing facilities to farmers in the field of alternative cultivation, and about 27 government departments are members of this commission.

Meanwhile, a number of other participants stressed that this year's rains and floods have damaged Afghanistan's agriculture sector and asked the international community to cooperate with the people of Afghanistan in this sector.

Childhoods lost amid dust of Jawzjan's brick kilns

JAWZJAN (TOLOnews): The Department of Labor and Social Affairs of Jawzjan reported that over 14,000 children in this province are engaged in hard labor.

Noorullah Musafir, the head of the Labor and Social Affairs of Jawzjan, said: "We have surveyed 14,000 children underage who are engaged in hard labor, and the plans and programs for the future are to find suitable work for them, whether in terms of education and training or other sectors so that they can be freed from this

predicament." Meanwhile, some children say that due to economic challenges, they are forced to engage in hard labor.

In Sheberghan, the capital of Jawzjan province, many children, instead of going to school, are busy working in brick factories.

Instead of playing childhood games, they engage in strenuous work to provide for their families' living expenses.

Habib-ur-Rahman, a child laborer, said: "Out of necessity, we are making bricks here; we need to be

helped to study because it is time for us to learn."

Yaseen, another child, says: "I come here out of necessity to make bricks; educational opportunities should be provided for us."

The families of these children, whose daily income does not exceed 200 Afghani, are not only worried about economic challenges but are also deeply concerned about their children being deprived of education and call on the authorities to address their problems.

Abdul Sattar, a laborer,

said: "If we had the means, we would send our children to school. Today, we are wandering from place to place due to poverty and compulsion. We face many problems, and we spend our days in the scorching heat, working with bricks and mud."

Previously, a number of child laborers in other provinces of the country had also requested that the interim government authorities provide educational opportunities and address the economic challenges faced by their families.

Turkish TIKA Agency provides aid package to help orphans

KABUL (BNA): The Turkish TIKA Cooperation and Coordination Agency has provided aid worth \$50,000 to meet the needs of 100 orphans in Baghlan kindergartens. The assistance includes hygiene supplies, stationery, clothing, and other essentials.

Qari Nasratullah Parsa, Head of Labor and Social Affairs in Baghlan, told Bakhtar Agency that the aid package consists of clothing, washing machines, hygiene materials and supplies, blankets, shoes, quilts, coolers, and stationery, all intended to support the needs of 100 orphans in the province's kindergartens.

Mikail Tash Demir, the Coordinator of the TIKA Office in the Northern



Zone, reaffirmed his country's commitment to continuing its support for

Afghanistan. He emphasized that the foundation aims to work on the educa-

tion and capacity building of Afghan children in the long term.

Turkish police detain 17 Afghan refugees

KABUL (Khaama Press): Following the detention and deportation of Afghan refugees in Turkey, officials have announced the arrest of 17 refugees in the city of Erzurum.

Turkish media reported on Friday, September 6 that these refugees were detained in the Kiskale area from a vehicle. The report indicates that these refugees were fined approximately \$9,000 for their "illegal" presence in the country.

Additionally, Turkish authorities have announced the arrest of two individu-

als on charges of human trafficking. This comes amidst a broader trend of increased deportation and detentions of "illegal" Afghan refugees from Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran.

Previously, Turkey's coast guard had reported the detention of 142 "illegal" refugees. According to reports, Turkey has detained and returned over 4,000 refugees to Afghanistan from various cities since the beginning of this year.

Turkish officials have stated that operations to combat the entry and

detention of illegal migrants will continue across the country. Official statistics indicate that over 300,000 Afghan migrants are currently living in Turkey.

Turkey's ongoing crackdown on illegal immigration reflects broader regional concerns about refugee management and border security.

The increasing number of detentions and deportations underscores the country's efforts to address illegal migration while balancing humanitarian considerations.

Restoration of Hakim Nasir Khusraw's Tomb begins in Badakhshan



BADAKHSHAN (Khaama Press): The restoration and renovation of Hakim Nasir Khusraw Balkhi's tomb, one of the oldest historical monuments in Badakhshan, have begun.

Engineer Zabiullah Amiri, the head of the Information and Culture Department of Badakhshan Province, who visited the site in the village of Hazrat Syed in the Yamgan district to oversee and assess the work, stated that the restoration is expected to be completed and operational within the next two months.

He added that this monument is approximately 900 years old and had suffered significant damage during the past 20 years of conflict

and heavy weaponry. According to him, it was in urgent need of restoration.

During this visit, Ahmad Zahir Kabiri, head of Radio Television of Badakhshan, and several Information and Culture Department staff members accompanied him. They requested the contracting company to use materials and techniques similar to those used in the original construction of the monument.

Syed Ghiathuddin, a resident of the village of Hazrat Syed in the Yamgan district, who lives near the historical site of Hakim Nasir Khusraw, expressed his satisfaction with the commencement of the restoration. He mentioned,

"The tomb of Hakim Nasir Khusraw Balkhi, located in our area, attracts hundreds of visitors annually. However, due to the neglect of cultural authorities in the past regime, the historical site was at risk of collapse. Fortunately, today we are witnessing the start of its restoration, and I hope other historical sites in Badakhshan will also be restored."

He urged the officials of the Badakhshan Information and Culture Department to employ local residents as guards to protect and maintain this historical site and prevent further damage.

Hakim Abu Mo'in Nasir bin Khusraw bin Harith

Qubadiani Balkhi is renowned as one of the great Persian poets, thinkers, and writers of the 5th century AH. Born in 394 AH in the village of Qubadian in Balkh, he also called himself "Marwazi" due to his time spent in Merv. He began studying and acquiring knowledge from a young age.

Nasir Khusraw authored numerous works, many of which have been lost over time. As he himself said about his writings: "Do not look at my frail body, for my work transcends this starry world."

His most important and famous work is the "Safarnamah" (Book of Travel), which summarizes

his seven-year journey and has been translated into multiple languages.

Although Nasir Khusraw traveled to various cities across the world, he eventually settled in Badakhshan after being invited by Amir Ali bin Asad, a local Ismaili leader. He spent the remaining 20 to 25 years of his life in Yamgan, Badakhshan.

Restoring Hakim Nasir Khusraw Balkhi's tomb is a significant step in preserving a vital piece of historical and cultural heritage. The efforts to revive this ancient monument not only honor the legacy of a notable historical figure but also enhance the cultural identity of the region.

Israeli strikes in Gaza kill 61 as UN pursues vaccinations

CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli military strikes across the Palestinian Gaza Strip killed at least 61 people in the space of 24 hours, local medics said on Saturday, as Israeli forces battled Hamas-led militants in the territory. Eleven months into the war, numerous rounds of diplomacy have so far failed to clinch a ceasefire deal to end the conflict and bring the release of Israeli and foreign hostages held in Gaza as well as many Palestinians jailed in Israel.

An Israeli air strike in on the Halima Al-Sa'diyya school compound serving as a shelter for displaced people in the Jabalia urban refugee camp killed at least eight people and wounded 15 others, medics said. The Israeli military said the strike had targeted a Hamas command center inside the compound. It accused Hamas of repeatedly exploiting civilians and civilian infrastructure for military purposes, an allegation Hamas denies.

Five more people were killed in a strike on a house in Gaza City. The armed wings of the Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Fatah groups said they had fought Israeli troops in Gaza City, in central areas and in the south with anti-tank rockets and mortars, and in some incidents detonated bombs to target tanks and other army vehicles.

The two warring sides continued to blame one another for the failure of mediators, including Qatar, Egypt and the United States, to broker a ceasefire. The US is preparing to present a new proposal, but the prospects of a breakthrough appear dim as gaps between the sides remain large. CIA Director William Burns, the chief US negotiator, told an event in London that a more detailed proposal would be made in the coming days. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said it was incumbent on both Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, which ran Gaza before the war and was responsible for the Oct. 7 killing spree against Jews in Israel that triggered it, to make concessions to reach a deal.

On Saturday, senior Hamas official Hossam Badran said the group had made no new demands and remained committed to a July 2 proposal put forward by the United States, accusing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of attaching new conditions that would not end the war. Netanyahu says it was Hamas that introduced unacceptable conditions.

Despite the deadlock, the United Nations, in collaboration with local health authorities, has pursued a campaign to vaccinate 640,000 children in Gaza after its first polio case in around 25 years. Limited pauses in the fighting have allowed the campaign to proceed. UN officials said

UN calls for full inquiry into West Bank shooting

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The UN independent investigator on the right to food accused Israel of carrying out a "starvation campaign" against Palestinians during the war in Gaza, an allegation that Israel vehemently denies. In a report this week, investigator Michael Fakhri claimed it began two days after Hamas' surprise attack in southern Israel that killed some 1,200 people, when Israel's military offensive in response blocked all food, water, fuel and other supplies into Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said accusations of Israel limiting humanitarian aid were "outrageously false." "A deliberate starvation policy? You can say anything — it doesn't make it true," he said in a press conference.

Following intense international pressure — especially from close ally the United States — Netanyahu's government gradually has opened several border crossings for tightly controlled deliveries. Fakhri said limited aid initially went mostly to southern and central Gaza, not to the north where Israel had ordered Palestinians to go. A professor at the University of Oregon School of Law, Fakhri was appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council as the investigator, or special rapporteur, on the right to food and assumed the role in 2020. "By December, Palestinians in Gaza made up 80 percent of the people in the world experiencing famine or catastrophic hunger," Fakhri said. "Never in post-war history had a population been made to go hungry so quickly and so completely as was the case for the 2.3 million Palestinians living in Gaza." Fakhri, who teaches law courses on human rights, food law and development, made the allegations in a report to the UN General Assembly circulated.

they were making progress, having reached over half of the children needing the drops in the first two stages in the southern and central Gaza Strip. On Sunday, the campaign will move to the northern Gaza Strip. A second round of vaccination will be required four weeks after the first. The latest bloodshed in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict was triggered on Oct. 7 when group Hamas attacked Israel, killing 1,200 and taking about 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Israel's subsequent assault on the enclave has killed over 40,900 Palestinians, according to the local health ministry, while also displacing nearly the entire population of 2.3 million, causing a hunger crisis and leading to genocide allegations at the World Court, which Israel denies. Meanwhile, the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza entered its 12 month Saturday with little sign of respite for the Palestinian territory or hope for Israeli hostages still held captive. The chances of a truce that would also swap Palestinian prisoners jailed by Israel for hostages held by Hamas appear slim, with both sides sticking doggedly to their positions. Hamas, whose October 7 attack on Israel sparked the war, is demanding a complete Israeli withdrawal, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insists troops must remain along the Gaza-Egypt border.

The United States, Qatar and Egypt have all been mediating in an effort to bring about a ceasefire in the war that authorities in the Hamas-run Gaza say has killed at least 40,939

people. According to the United Nations human rights office, most of the dead are women and children.

Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,205 people, mostly civilians including some hostages killed in captivity, according to official Israeli figures. Of 251 hostages seized by Palestinian militants during the attack, 97 remain in Gaza including 33 the Israeli military says are dead. Scores were released during a one-week truce in November. Israel's announcement last Sunday that the bodies of six hostages including a US-Israeli citizen had been recovered shortly after being killed sparked grief and anger in Israel. Marking the anniversary, UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA) chief Philippe Lazzarini posted on X on Saturday: "Eleven months. Enough. No one can take this any longer. Humanity must prevail. Ceasefire now."

International pressure to end the war was further underlined by shooting dead in the West Bank of a Turkish-American activist demonstrating against Israeli settlements in the occupied territory. The family of 26-year-old Aysenur Ezgi Eygi has demanded an independent investigation into her death, saying on Saturday her life "was taken needlessly, unlawfully, and violently by the Israeli military." The UN rights office said Israeli forces killed Eygi with a "shot in the head." Türkiye said she was killed by "Israeli occupation soldiers," and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the Israeli action as "barbaric."



ISLAMABAD: Mission Commander along with Commanding Officer PNS Shamsheer called on Brig Abdulah Faraj Al Muhairi, Deputy Commander UAE (N), during ships visit to UAE.

Illegal bus stands to be eliminated, says Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that despite the provision of a free shuttle service to the new terminal in Karachi, some bus operators have filed cases on false and fabricated grounds. Some operators are resisting legal action or pursuing personal interests, attempting to pressure public office holders.

In a statement, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control, Sharjeel Inam Memon, said that the transfer of terminals will be ensured under all circumstances, pressure is being exerted, but the work will continue regardless.

He stated that the purpose of shifting the terminals outside the city of Karachi is to eliminate illegal bus stands from city roads. The transport department is committed to upholding the rule of law and complying with court orders.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the establishment of bus terminals outside the city limits is in accordance with court orders. All stakeholders should respect and cooperate with the law. The Sindh government is aware of the challenges faced by transporters and aims to resolve the sufferings of the citizens without adversely affecting the transporters' businesses.

He clarified that negotiations with the transporters will continue, with measures being taken to consider the interests of all stakeholders. The Transport Department is committed to ensuring smooth and legal transport operations within the capital city of Sindh.

JI rejects taxes in electricity bills

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Emir Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Hafiz Naemur Rehman has said that excessive taxes in the electricity bills are not acceptable and should be removed.

Talking to the media persons in Lahore on Saturday, he said that there were 36 disproportionate taxes imposed in the electricity bills and demanded to abolish them. Hafiz Naemur criticized the Rs14 insufficient relief provided by the Punjab government on electricity bills but argued that such relief should be implemented nationwide.

He mentioned that the recent shutter-down strike organized by his party was successful and further said that they planned to hold more strikes and seek legal remedies if necessary. The JI chief claimed that the ongoing terrorism in the country had links to India and the United States.

PHC CJ inaugurates Judicial Complex

F.P. Report

MANSEHRA: Chief Justice (CJ) Peshawar High Court (PHC), Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim on Saturday inaugurated Tehsil Judicial Complex Oghi, District Mansehra. He was accompanied by Justice Ijaz Anwar, Senior Puisne Judge, Justice Muhammad Naeem Anwar, Justice Ijaz Khan, Registrar Peshawar High Court.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Guest termed judicial complex is a milestone to enhance efficiency and accessibility of judicial system.

PNS Shamsheer, Haibat visit UAE

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ships SHAMSHEER and HAIBAT visited port Mina Zayid Abu Dhabi UAE, to participate in Ex NASL AL BAHR. Upon arrival, Pakistan Navy Ships were received by Senior Officials of UAE Navy and Defence Attaché of Pakistan.

Mission Commander along with Commanding Officers PNS SHAMSHEER and PNS HAIBAT called on Brig Abdulah Faraj Al Muhairi, Deputy Commander UAE (Navy). During the interactions, matters of mutual interests were discussed and enhancement of bilateral ties in all spheres was reaffirmed. In addition, conduct modalities of Ex NASL AL BAHR were also deliberated with host navy.

During the port stay, Assistant Minister for Security and Maritime Affairs of UAE; Salem Saeed Al Jabri, Ambassador Pakistan to UAE, senior leadership of UAE Armed Forces and notables from Pakistani community also visited the ship. Students and Pakistani community displayed excitement during their visits onboard Ship. Officers and men of both the navies also conducted cross visit of naval units and participated in joint sports activities.

After the port call, PNS SHAMSHEER & PNS HAIBAT will participate in Ex NASL AL BAHR. The exercise is aimed to enhance interoperability, display operational readiness and consolidate existing strong bilateral relations between the two navies.

Naval Chief message on Navy Day

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: September 8th (the Navy Day) is a remarkable day in our naval history, where our fearless warriors, driven by unshakeable resolve, struck against the enemy with absolute impunity and bravado. This day stands as an enduring tribute to the selfless sacrifices of our gallant officers and sailors, whose exemplary valour continues to inspire generations and inflame the spirit of patriotism across the nation.



The Navy Day is an occasion to commemorate a series of extraordinary operations that embody the unflinching enthusiasm and unprecedented courage of our sea sentinels. Operation 'SOMNATH' shines as a beacon of valour, where a formidable Pakistan Navy Flotilla comprising seven major warships executed a daring surprise attack on the Indian Port of Dwarka. This audacious operation inflicted significant damage on critical shore installations and a key radar station, which signified unparalleled professionalism and dealt a serious blow to the enemy. During the 1965 war, PNS/M GHAZI emerged as a grisly deterrent, epitomizing our operational ascendancy and raising stakes for the enemy, harbouring malicious intent and harm to our homeland through violent force.

Drawing inspiration from our rich history, Pakistan Navy remains alive to the need of maintaining combat readiness at all times in today's rapidly evolving global landscape, where potential contingencies demand constant vigilance. The Navy is steadfast in its commitment to modernise and expand its fleet capabilities through the induction of cutting-edge warships, submarines, maritime aircraft and patrol vessels. Ongoing projects in these domains manifest the Navy's strategic direction to enhance its operational prowess and boost the existing infrastructure.

Pakistan Navy's regional influence is reinforced by its sustained presence in international waters and meaningful engagements with the regional navies. These efforts underscore the Navy's commitment to fostering cooperation, promoting maritime security, and advancing its role as a 'force for good' in the region. Pakistan Navy is striving in concert with the Government to stimulate the maritime sector, harness the vast potential of Blue Economy and drive growth to usher tangible economic benefits to Pakistan.

Russia launched 67 drones in overnight attack: Ukraine

KYIV (Reuters): Ukraine's air force said on Saturday Russia launched a total of 67 long-range Shahed drones in a mass overnight attack, 58 of which it was able to shoot down. The air force said in a statement on the Telegram messaging app that air defence units were scrambled into action in 11 regions across Ukraine.

Drone debris was found next to the parliament building in the capital Kyiv, the legislature said in a separate statement it posted on its official Telegram page along with several photographs. It is rare for a Russian missile or drone to get so far into central Kyiv, as the city is protected by a network of Soviet-era and Western-donated air defence systems.

The hilltop government quarter in the city centre is perhaps the best-defended site in Ukraine, as it also houses the offices of the president, cabinet and the central bank. The pictures on Telegram showed at least four pieces of debris scattered on the ground near the parliament building. One piece lay at the foot of the steps to the building's main entrance, while another hunk of metal looked riddled with shrapnel. Reuters correspondents in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, heard a series of explosions shortly after 3 a.m. (0000 GMT) on Saturday, some of which resounded loudly around the city centre, waking up its residents.

Since the start of its invasion in February 2022, Moscow has launched thousands of missiles and Shahed drones into Ukraine. The Iranian-designed drone has been used by Russia since September 2022 as a cheap, more expendable alterna-

tive to missiles, which are expensive and harder to manufacture. The propeller-powered Shahed flies at less than 200 km per hour (125 miles per hour) but can be tricky for conventional air defence systems to track because it flies low and emits far less heat than a missile.

Kyiv's air force said the drones were launched from two border regions in Russia as well as from the Russian-occupied peninsula of Crimea. Meanwhile, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin cautioned there was "no one capability" that would turn the war in Ukraine in Kyiv's favour after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged the West to let his forces use its long-range weapons to strike Russia. At a regular meeting of Ukraine's allies at Ramstein US Air Base in Germany, Zelenskyy repeated his plea for Western nations to supply more long-range missiles and lift restrictions on using them to hit targets such as airfields inside Russia.

Austin said Washington and its allies would continue to give strong support to Ukraine in fighting Russia's invasion, announcing another \$250 million in US security assistance. But, questioned by reporters, the Pentagon chief pushed back on the idea that allowing deep strikes inside Russia with Western weapons would be a game-changer. He said Russia had already moved aircraft that launch glide bombs into Ukraine beyond the range of US-supplied ATACM missiles.

"There's no one capability that will in and of itself be decisive in this campaign," Austin told reporters at the end of the meeting. He also said

Ukraine had capabilities of its own - such as drones - to hit targets inside Russia that were beyond the reach of ATACM and British-supplied Storm Shadow missiles. "There are a lot of targets in Russia - a big country, obviously," Austin said. "And there's a lot of capability that Ukraine has in terms of UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) and other things to address those targets."

Among other donations, Germany pledged to supply an additional 12 self-propelled howitzers to Kyiv, while Canada said it planned to send 80,840 surplus small unarmed air-to-surface rockets as well as 1,300 warheads in the coming months. Zelenskyy made his first appearance at a Ramstein meeting at an important moment in the 2-1/2-year-old war. Ukrainian forces have made a surprise offensive into Russia's Kursk region even as Russian forces focus on seizing the city of Pokrovsk in eastern Ukraine, a logistics hub for Kyiv's war effort. "We need to have this long-range capability not only on the occupied territory of Ukraine, but also on Russian territory, yes, so that Russia is motivated to seek peace," Zelenskyy said, in remarks that drew support from countries including Baltic nations Lithuania and Estonia.

Zelenskyy has long pushed back against allies who have supplied long-range weapons but told Kyiv they cannot use them deep inside Russia for fear of instigating a direct conflict between the West and Russia's President Vladimir Putin. In his remarks at Ramstein, Zelenskyy said: "Russia's attempts to draw red lines simply do not work."

US confirms first bird flu case without animal contact

WASHINGTON (AFP): A person in the state of Missouri has become the first in the United States to test positive for bird flu without a known exposure to infected animals, authorities said. The adult patient, who has underlying conditions, was admitted to hospital on August 22, received antiviral medications against influenza, then recovered and was discharged, according to statements from the Centers for Control and Disease Prevention (CDC) and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

As the patient's flu type appeared suspicious on an initial test, it was sent for additional testing in state and federal laboratories, which revealed it was H5, also known as avian flu or bird flu. The CDC said it had not identified any transmission to the patient's close contacts or any other person.

Scientists have voiced concern about the growing number of mammals becoming infected by bird flu, even if cases in humans remain rare. They fear a high rate of transmission could facilitate a mutation of the virus, which could enable it to be passed from one human to another.

Contacted by AFP, the World Health Organization said on Saturday it was "encouraging that the national disease surveillance system has identified this case, that the patient received antiviral treatment, and that no further cases have been detected among close contacts." "It is critical that investigations into the patient's exposure are continued, as indicated by national and state authorities, to inform further prevention and response activities," said Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's director of epidemic and pandemic preparedness and prevention.

"WHO strongly supports US efforts for surveillance of zoonotic influenza across human, environmental and animal sectors," Van Kerkhove continued. "It is important to understand the circulation of avian influenza in poultry, wild birds and other animals in the state," she said of Missouri. "Stronger disease surveillance in animals is essential to protect animal and human health."

5 killed as ethnic violence flares in India's Manipur

NEW DELHI: At least five people, including one civilian, have been killed as violence flared between two warring ethnic communities in the restive northeastern Indian state of Manipur, according to authorities.

Manipur has been rocked by periodic violence for more than a year between the predominantly Hindu-majority Meitei and the mainly Christian Kukis over economic benefits, and government jobs and education quotas. A court had ordered the state government to share the benefits enjoyed by the Kukis to the Meiteis, fuelling the tension.

A new round of clashes and exchange of gunfire took place on Saturday in the district of Jiribam, located on India's border with Myanmar. "Fighting has been going on between armed groups of both the

communities since the morning," said Krishna Kumar, deputy commissioner of Jiribam. One person, a civilian, was shot dead while sleeping and another four "armed persons" were killed in a "subsequent exchange of fire", the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

Officers responding to the attack "were fired upon by suspected Kuki militants but the police team retaliated robustly and repelled the attack", a police statement said. A state of 3.2 million people, Manipur has been divided into two enclaves since an ethnic conflict began in May 2023 - a valley controlled by the majority Meiteis and the Kuki-dominated hills.

The areas controlled by the Meitei and Kuki tribes are separated by a stretch of no-man's land monitored

by federal paramilitary forces. Amid the violence, the state government ordered all schools in the state to remain shut on Saturday "to protect the safety of the students and teachers". Attacks that began earlier this week have seen the use of drones to drop explosive devices in what authorities have called a significant escalation.

The Indian Express newspaper, citing an unnamed security source, said the rockets appeared to be "improvised projectiles" made using "galvanised iron pipes attached to explosives". Police say they suspect that the drones were used by Kuki armed groups, a claim the group denied. More than 225 people have been killed and some 60,000 have been displaced since the tensions erupted last year. — Aljazeera

Rally in France against Barnier's appointment as PM

PARIS: Thousands of people have taken to the streets across France to protest President Emmanuel Macron's decision to appoint centre-right Michel Barnier as PM, with left-wing parties accusing him of stealing legislative elections. Protests took place in Paris as well as other cities including Nantes in the west, Nice and Marseille in the south and Strasbourg in the east.

Macron named 73-year-old Barnier, a conservative and the European Union's former Brexit negotiator, as prime minister, capping a two-month-long search following Macron's ill-fated decision to call a legislative election that delivered a hung parliament divided into three blocs. The left, led by the far-left France Unbowed (LFI) party, has accused Macron of stealing the election after Macron refused to pick the candidate of the New Popular Front (NFP) alliance that came top in the July vote.

Many demonstrators directed their anger at Macron and some called on him to resign. "The Fifth Republic is collapsing," said protester Manon Bonijol. "Expressing one's vote will be useless as

long as Macron is in power." In his first interview as government chief, Barnier said that his government, which lacks a clear majority, will include conservatives, members of Macron's camp, and he hoped some from the left.

He faces the daunting task of trying to drive reforms and the 2025 budget, as France is under pressure from the European Commission and bond markets to reduce its deficit. Al Jazeera's Natacha Butler, reporting from Paris, said the protesters believe Macron is allowing for the far-right to be in the government by giving the job to Barnier.

"They say that Macron opened the door for the far right to be more powerful than ever in France's political landscape," she said. "There is a lot of anger here as well as a lot of sense of injustice, and the feeling that Macron made a mockery of democracy." Pollster Elabe published a survey showing that 74 percent of French people considered Macron had disregarded the results of the elections, with 55 percent believing he had stolen them.

Cole Stangler, an analyst covering politics in France, said the protesters feel that

Macron's decision does not reflect the result of the past elections. "Macron and the business establishment is increasingly concerned about the upcoming budget deadline," he said. "They have to get a budget approved by the end of the year and they have to present a budget to the parliament by October 1."

"Barnier is very much someone who has a trusted pair of hands. He is going to be able to keep France's public finances in check from Macron's standpoint." Stangler added that Barnier is also someone who is palatable to the far-right political movement in the country - that has not committed to supporting him yet.

Meanwhile, New French Prime Minister Michel Barnier says he will defend some of President Emmanuel Macron's policies and toughen the government's stance on immigration. In his first interview since his nomination, Barnier said that his government, which lacks a clear majority in a hung lower house of parliament, will include conservatives as well as members of Macron's camp. — Aljazeera