

President returns home
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday arrived here after concluding his two-day official visit to Turkmenistan. During his stay in Ashgabat, the president attended the international forum on "Interrelation of Times and Civilizations – Basis of Peace and Development".



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RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Army contingent in a group photo after winning gold medal Exercise Cambrian Patrol - 2024, which was held at Wales, UK.

Exercise Cambrian Patrol - 2024 Pak Army wins Gold medal

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Army's Team participated in Exercise Cambrian Patrol - 2024, which was held at Wales, UK from 04-13 October 2024. This year, Exercise Cambrian Patrol celebrated its 65th year.

The exercise has retained its demanding

professional standards; patrols all across from the globe had to move tactically across inhospitable terrain, covering a distance of 60 kms within 48 hours, completing specialist tasks in a contested environment.

This year, 128 teams from 42 Countries participated in the Exercise and out of all these teams,

Pakistan Army's Team showed Exceptional Performance in the exercise and has been awarded with the Gold Medal.

It is indeed a proud moment for the whole Nation and Pakistan Army, which is known for its professionalism and highest standards of training. Pakistan Army has always held Country's flag high.

Pakistan to warmly host CHG-SCO meeting: DPM Dar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Sunday said that Pakistan was ready to host Council of Heads of Government (CHG) of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting on October 15-16 in Islamabad in which different significant issues would be discussed under the SCO framework.

Talking to media after his visit to review arrangements for the upcoming CHG-SCO meeting, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister said that certain countries had requested for bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the CHG-SCO which were finalized.

Replying to a query, he said that India had not requested for such bilateral meeting and only the matters related to SCO framework would be discussed by the SCO member states at the multilateral forum.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar also accompanied the deputy prime minister and foreign minister during a walk with the media persons to provide them first-hand information about the preparations of SCO summit.

About invitation to Afghanistan, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister said that since 2021, the Observers Status of that country had been virtually suspended as Afghanistan had neither been invited to nor participated in SCO meetings.

'World Standards Day' PM reiterates commitment to achieve of highest global standards

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has reiterated the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to support their relevant organizations achieving adherence to highest global standards and in accelerating Pakistan's journey toward sustainable economic development.

In a message on the World Standards Day being observed on October 14, the prime minister said that Pakistan joined the international community to commemorate the World Standards Day.

The Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA), a National Standards Body, was actively engaging with the global community and making efforts to inspire their domestic manufacturers to adopt standardization and quality-focused practices, thereby fostering a culture of excellence throughout the country, he added.

The prime minister said the theme for this year as set by International Organization for Standardization (ISO), "Shared Vision for a Better

World," underscored the essential role of reliability and trust in driving the success of both the manufacturing and service sectors.

"Standards are indeed the foundation that makes everyday life functions seamless.

This theme invites us to reassess the competitiveness of our products in the international market," PM Office Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the prime minister as saying.

In line with the commitment to public safety, health and environment, the prime minister said that he was proud to highlight that the PSQCA had developed rigorous safety standards for automotive vehicles to protect the lives of our citizens.

"Noteworthy achievement is that it has set a limit of 2% on industrially produced Trans Fatty Acids (tTFA) in food products, a critical step towards reducing cardiovascular diseases in Pakistan. These efforts reflect our determination to prioritize the well-being of our people through comprehensive and effective standards," he observed.

The growth of Pakistan's exports was directly linked with the compliance of our

goods and services with the international standards, he said, adding this alignment helped to promote and build global consumer confidence in Pakistani products, broaden greater opportunities for their businesses worldwide and further stimulate economic growth in a sustainable manner. Conformity to such standards also bestowed a competitive advantage, enabling businesses to meet customer needs through optimized organizational and manufacturing processes, he opined.

"I am confident that this year's World Standards Day celebrations will contribute significantly to raising awareness of the importance of standardization.

In an era marked by competitive challenges, such awareness is vital for the government, industry and business communities to ensure the satisfaction of consumers worldwide," he further added.

PM condoles death of China's former Vice Premier Wu Bangguo

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed his deep grief over the death of Wu

Bangguo, former Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) and former Vice Premier of China.

Remembering him as an "outstanding" leader of the CPC and a "true friend of Pakistan", he said the late Wu Bangguo made a profound contribution to strengthening bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and China.

"His visit to Pakistan in 2006 remains a significant milestone. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and the people of China in this difficult moment," Prime Minister Shehbaz wrote on his X timeline.

Born in 1941, Wu had served as a member of the Political Bureau and a member of the Secretariat of the 14th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, a member of the Political Bureau of the 15th CPC Central Committee, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the 16th and 17th central committees of the CPC, vice premier of the State Council, and chairman of the Standing Committee of the 10th and 11th NPCs.

Tarar highlights economic progress, international ties ahead of SCO Summit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage, and Culture, Attaulah Tarar, stated on Sunday that Pakistan has made significant progress this year in both foreign policy and economic sectors, adopting an open approach towards trade and investment.

Speaking with foreign media correspondents about the upcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organization

(SCO) summit scheduled for October 15, Tarar emphasized that "Pakistan is emerging on the international stage, and the world is beginning to recognize its true potential." He highlighted the recent successful visit of Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to Pakistan, during which key discussions on bilateral relations, investment, and cooperation took place.

During this visit, the Malaysian PM announced an increase in imports from Pakistan, including rice and Halal meat. Tarar remarked, "Exports of rice, Halal meat, and other commodities to Malaysia will further strengthen the relationship between our two countries."

Additionally, Tarar noted a high-level delegation from Saudi Arabia, led by the Saudi Minister of Investment, recently visited Pakistan and signed several memoranda of understand-

ing (MoUs) valued at \$2.2 billion to enhance bilateral cooperation. He mentioned that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has shown interest in increasing trade with Pakistan.

Regarding the economy, Tarar reported that inflation has decreased to 6.9% from over 32% last year, and all economic indicators are showing positive trends. The trade deficit continues to shrink, while exports have increased by 14%.

UN says Israeli tanks burst through gates of peacekeeper base

JERUSALEM/NEW YORK (Reuters): The United Nations said on Sunday Israeli tanks had burst through the gates of a base of its peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon, the latest accusation of Israeli violations and attacks that have been denounced by Israel's own allies.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called

on the United Nations to evacuate the troops of the UNIFIL peacekeeping force from combat areas in Lebanon. Hours later, the force reported what it described as additional Israeli violations, including two Israeli Merkava tanks destroying the main gate of a base and forcibly entering before dawn that morning.

Soon after the tanks left,

shells exploded 100 metres away, releasing smoke which blew across the base and sickened U.N. personnel, causing 15 to require treatment despite wearing gas masks, it said. It did not say who fired the shells or what sort of toxic substance it suspected.

It also accused Israel's IDF military of halting a logistics convoy. The Israeli

military did not immediately respond to the statement.

"Any deliberate attack on peacekeepers is a grave violation of international humanitarian law and Resolution 1701," the U.N. force said. "UNIFIL's mandate provides for its freedom of movement in its area of operations, and any restriction on this is a violation of Resolution 1701."



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a significant development, Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi participated in and addressed the Pashtun Peace Jirga held in Khyber District, emphasizing the need for unity and reasoned dialogue to address the province's rights and issues.

"We must come together to discuss our rights and

issues with reason and unity," said Governor Kundi, highlighting the sacrifices made by the province and the Pashtun community in the fight against terrorism.

He acknowledged that the contributions of the Pakistan Army and police in this battle over the past 24 years have not gone unnoticed.

"For 24 years, our armed forces and police have

made sacrifices to eradicate the menace of terrorism," he noted. Governor Kundi praised the Pashtun community's peaceful approach to resolving issues, calling it both necessary and commendable. He also reiterated the commitment of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), stating, "The PPP is the only party that has made the greatest sacrifices for peace in the country."



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KARACHI: PML-N delegation, led by Secretary General Ahsan Iqbal meets with MQM-Pakistan leadership, including Chairman Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, at Pakistan House.

Geoeconomic shifts demand greater economic integration: Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, said on Sunday that the fast-paced geoeconomic and geostrategic shifts at regional and global levels underscore the growing importance of economic integration.

"It is high time to harness our collective strengths and forge a path towards sustainable growth and prosperity by promoting regional connectivity and cooperation," he said while addressing participants at the launching ceremony of reports by the China Chamber of Commerce in Pakistan (CCCPK).

The Chairman lauded the reports titled "The Glorious 11 Years – How Chinese Companies Reshaped the Power Sector in Pakistan" and "Business Climate Index of Chinese Companies in Pakistan" as success stories. "Pakistan seeks to strengthen regional cooperation by fostering economic ties with our partner nations, and China stands at the very top," Gilani said.

He highlighted Pakistan's strategic location, abundant natural resources, and a sizeable workforce as factors that make it an attractive destination for foreign investment. He stressed the importance of business-to-business linkages, noting that sustainable partnerships can attract foreign direct

investment, promote technology sharing, and facilitate knowledge exchange between the two nations.

Commending the China Chamber of Commerce in Pakistan for organizing the event, Gilani said that the reports offer valuable insights into the contributions, operational status, and investment confidence of Chinese companies in Pakistan.

"The reports effectively showcase CCCPK's commitment to promoting economic growth and business development in Pakistan through the efforts of 122 Chinese companies operating in the country, both state-owned and private enterprises," he added. Gilani said that Pakistan offers immense potential for trade, investment, and joint ventures in sectors such as energy, infrastructure, agriculture, and technology. He acknowledged the government's role in providing a conducive environment for businesses to thrive.

He further praised organizations like CCCPK for paving the way toward prosperity through economic cooperation and said that local entrepreneurs and companies in Pakistan can learn a great deal from their Chinese counterparts. Expressing satisfaction, Gilani noted the significant role played by the Belt & Road Initiative and the China-Pakistan

Economic Corridor (CPEC) in reshaping Pakistan's energy and infrastructure sectors.

He added that with CPEC entering its second phase, bilateral cooperation would further expand into areas such as agricultural modernization, industrial growth, mining and mineral exploration, science and information technology, and educational and cultural partnerships, thereby transforming Pakistan's socioeconomic landscape.

Gilani also highlighted the importance of the Global Development Initiative, launched by President Xi Jinping in the post-COVID world, describing it as a timely move that institutionalizes cooperation required for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). "It is a matter of satisfaction that China shares Pakistan's aspirations in achieving the SDGs," the Chairman said.

He emphasized the need to enhance people-to-people connectivity and cultural linkages to realize the shared goal of an integrated, peaceful, and cooperative region. He expressed his gratitude to Mr. Wang Huihua, Chairman of the China Chamber of Commerce in Pakistan, and his team for organizing the event.

Lahore Heritage Run held

LAHORE (APP): The Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) on Sunday organized Lahore Heritage Run, a running competition, inside the walled city of Lahore. It was organized in collaboration with Lahore Runners, largest running club in Lahore.

Race was started from food street and passing from historical landmarks of walled city for 7 Kilometers, it concluded at the same point. Around 450 participants, including women and children, from different parts of the country took part in the competition.

The objective of organizing this race was to spread awareness about community health along with tourism at heritage sites. Walled City of Lahore Authority, Tourism Deputy Director Asghar Hussain said, "Our efforts are strongly focused on promoting tourism in Lahore and we recognize the significant role that sports activities play in supporting this goal by encouraging public participation."

The Lahore Heritage Run had proven to be a highly successful initiative, as it attracted an unexpectedly large number of participants, he added. He further said that we are committed to organizing more sports events in the future to raise awareness not only about health and fitness but also about the rich heritage of Lahore.

Azma asks governor not to interfere in govt affairs

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has said that the Punjab Governor should refrain from interfering in administrative affairs and avoid playing the role of the opposition, like Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf.

Bokhari pointed out that in Sindh, schools are often found with animals tied up, and there is a rampant culture of cheating and selling entire examination centres. She noted that in the province where the PPP has been in the government for 16 years, a 19th-century education system still prevails. She highlighted that seven districts

in Punjab are at the top with the highest literacy rates, while many areas in Sindh lack schools altogether.

The minister expressed that the Governor should enjoy tea, coffee, and dried fruits at the Governor's House, as he has no role in administrative affairs. She responded to the Governor's statements by mentioning constant media reports about ghost employees and students in Sindh's education department. She emphasized that outside of two areas in Karachi and Hyderabad, literacy rates in the rest of Sindh are virtually zero.

Azma Bokhari asserted that due to improved education standards in Punjab, students from government schools are achieving prominent positions in board examinations. She contrasted this with the recent incidents related to the MD CAT exam in Sindh that have drawn nationwide attention. She reminded the Governor, with a note of irritation, that he is just a Governor and has no role in administrative matters. She concluded by saying that CM Maryam Nawaz knows very well how to manage the province's administrative affairs.

All pending cases from 2017 to 2023 resolved

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana presided over an important meeting at his office to review progress on ongoing investigations, road certificates and cases related to women and children.

Addressing the meeting, the CCPO announced that all pending cases from 2017 to 2023 have been resolved. He emphasized the need for special attention to ensure timely resolution of under investigation cases to provide relief to the masses.

Bilal Siddique Kamyana instructed officers to finalize challans for new cases

within the designated time-frame and added that investigation challans be submitted to the courts without delay. Divisional SPs (Investigation) assured that challans will be submitted promptly.

The CCPO highlighted the vital role of the Investigation Wing in ensuring justice. He urged officers to focus on quality investigations, maintain close coordination with the prosecution department and work together to clear challans swiftly. He stressed that cases must be concluded in accordance with legal requirements to ensure justice. He also encouraged police to contribute positively to creating a crime-free society.

The meeting also reviewed the progress in achieving departmental per-

formance targets. Improvement of performance of various wings of the police was also discussed.

The CCPO directed officers to implement the performance indicators issued by the Chief Minister and emphasized the prompt resolution of complaints from women and children. He advised police officers to keep their offices open to the public and called for all wings of the police department to collaborate in effectively controlling crime.

DIG (Organized Crime Unit) Imran Kishwar, CTO Lahore Amara Athar, SSP (Admin) Atif Nazir, SSP (Investigation) Muhammad Naveed, SSP (Operations) Tassawar Iqbal, Divisional SPs and DSPs (Investigation) attended the meeting.

LDA seals 24 commercial buildings

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) continued operations against illegal commercial buildings and commercialisation fee defaulters in Lahore.

LDA Town Planning Wing teams sealed over 24 buildings in Allama Iqbal Town and Mustafa Town areas. The sealed premises include Meezan Bank, The Educators, a private clinic, a restaurant, a marriage hall, a grocery store and other businesses. Per the press release issued by the LDA, Chief Town Planner I Assad-Uz-Zaman supervised the operations carried out by the enforcement teams with the help of the police. As per LDA official sources, several notices were served to these buildings' owners before carrying out the operations.

'No democratic person can go against constitutional package': Ahsan Iqbal

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives professor Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhry on Sunday said that no any democratic person could disagree with the Constitutional Amendment Package of Pakistan.

He said that the coalition government had been successful to turn around the economy of the country.

He expressed these views after a meeting with MQM-Pakistan leadership including its Chairman and Federal for Education and Professional Training Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui at MQM-Pakistan's Pakistan House.

Advisor to PM on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaulah and Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar were also present on the occasion.

Ahsan Iqbal said that they provided amount of time to some parties wished to review and consider constitutional amendment. 'We built a consensus, which was a democratic process', he added. He said that the leadership of MQM-Pakistan had continuously assisted with its suggestions on different issues including IPPs and along with them they successfully resolved IPPs issue. Minister said that they worked very hard to save Pakistan from economic default. It's coalition partners includ-

ing MQM-Pakistan also played role in the formation of government after general elections.

Recalling the events of past, he said that the democratic process of the country was derailed in the past through Article 58-2B and later a political consensus was developed and constitutional 58-2B was revoked but another way of 58-2B was paved way through courts and a series of disqualifying elected Prime Minister continued. Iqbal said that the former elected prime minister Nawaz Sharif suffered illegal sentence, which was not a sentence pronounced against us but it was also against the people and development of the country including CPEC.

He said that there was only darkness and damages during the four years from 2018 to 2022 and it was suffered by the nation and the country including Karachi because no development programme was initiated.

Hamza Shabaz's government was removed in Punjab by a few judges on political grounds. Iqbal was of the view that politically motivated decisions had been cause of damage to the country. He said that they wanted to keep the courts beyond any political issue and did not want anyone could point finger at them. Replying to a question, he said that MQM-Pakistan had always emphasized on article 140 A and they would collectively work

to give constitutional protection to local government bodies. He further said that they had assured them that soon after the approval of constitutional amendment they could work to build a consensus over the matter.

He said that the a broad-based meeting would be convened over the issue of missing persons raised by MQM-Pakistan. Answering a question, Iqbal said that the federal government would work with consultation of MQM-Pakistan over the budget for urban areas of Karachi and Hyderabad for development projects.

He said that the Prime Minister had directed WAPDA regarding K-VI project and issued education funds.

The federal government was working as per its limits. After 18th amendment, 60 percent resources had been devolved to the provincial governments.

Earlier, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) delegation led by its Secretary General and Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiative Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhry, Advisor to PM on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaulah and Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar met with MQM-Pakistan leadership including its Chairman and Federal Education Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui at MQM-Pakistan's Pakistan House.

905 dengue cases reported last week

LAHORE (APP): Punjab is witnessing a surge in dengue cases, with Rawalpindi emerging as the epicenter of the outbreak. According to the latest figures released by the Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department on Sunday, a total of 3,403 dengue cases have been recorded across the province in 2024, with 905 cases reported in the last week alone.

In the past 24 hours, 118 new cases were identified, 102 of them in Rawalpindi. Lahore reported three new cases, while Chakwal and Sialkot recorded two cases each. One case each was reported from Pakpatan, Chiniot, Mandi Bahauddin, Rahimyar Khan, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Attock, Kasur, and Gujranwala.

A spokesperson for the Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department assured the public that necessary arrangements to combat dengue have been made, and a sufficient stock of medicines is available in public hospitals across the province.

In light of the rising number of cases, the Health Department has issued an advisory urging the public to maintain clean and dry surroundings to prevent the spread of the Dengue virus. Citizens are also encouraged to cooperate with health teams actively working to curb the outbreak.

LESCO detects 561 power pilferers in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 561 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) during its anti-power theft campaign in last 24 hour.

The LESCO spokesman told media here Sunday that the company has also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves, out of which 198 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, while 34 accused have been arrested by the respective police.

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

During last 24 hours of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units. Among the seized connections 01 were industrial, 12 commercial, 03 agricultural, and 545 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 418,941 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 17,060 million.

During the 379 days of the grand anti-theft campaign, the spokesman mentioned, the LESCO detected pilferage on 138,901 power connections and 131,471 FIRs have been registered against electricity thieves in the relevant police stations, while 42,440 accused have so far been arrested by the police.

The LESCO has so far charged a total of 151,508,364 detection units worth Rs 5,426,764,266 to all the power pilferers.

LESCO collects over Rs 8.041m from 285 defaulters in 24 hours: Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has recovered more than Rs 8.041 million from 285 dead defaulters in all the five districts- Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara- during last 24 hours of its recovery campaign.

Smog control: 300 vehicles seized, Rs3.9m fine imposed

LAHORE (APP): In response to the increasing smog issue, a crackdown is underway as directed by the Chief Minister of Punjab.

From October 1 to 12, authorities have taken comprehensive measures against 300 vehicles lacking fitness certificates and those contributing to smog and environmental pollution.

During this period, 300 vehicles were impounded, and over 400 vehicles were issued fines. In total, Rs 3.9 million in penalties were imposed on vehicles emitting excessive smoke.

In addition, around 3,000 vehicles were inspected for fitness, with approximately 2,000 vehicles meeting technical standards and receiving fitness certificates. Citizens are encouraged to identify vehicles contributing to smog and to provide proof of environmentally-friendly practices. Complaints and suggestions regarding smog can be reported through the Green Punjab App or by calling 1373.

For additional support, suggestions and complaints can be sent via WhatsApp to 0321 0980980. The administration aims to engage the community in mitigating smog and promoting a cleaner environment.

Governor urges PTI to defer protest call in national interest

LAHORE (APP): Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan has said that Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) should stop pursuing selfish political goals and call off the October 15 protest at D-Chowk, Islamabad at the larger national interest.

In an interview with APP here on Sunday, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that prime ministers of nine countries would arrive in Pakistan to attend the SCO summit on October 15 and 16 which was a matter of pride for the country and all political forces should work to present a positive image of the country instead of taking to the streets.

"I understand that PTI is a political force but when it comes to the national prestige, we should give up politics, avoid personal agenda and put Pakistan first," he said, adding that heavens would not fall if PTI called off the protest for a week or so.

On destructive politics, the Governor Punjab said PTI leadership needed to understand that politics of obstinacy had brought them to the verge where one wrong step could be fatal for their firebrand politics, adding that there was no room for stubbornness in politics. He urged the PTI leadership to take the path of dialogue and play pro-

ductive role in taking the country ahead rather than leading it to anarchy.

Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said constructive politics also serves interests of the PTI leadership, expressing the hope that PTI had recently shown signs of change in their approach to politics.

'Good or bad, the general election is over. PTI should play the role of a good opposition in the parliament and I welcome their role as opposition. I will hail their good intentioned opposition,' Governor Punjab responded.

On the SCO summit in Pakistan, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said it was a matter of immense pleasure that the SCO was being held in the country under Pakistan's chairmanship and the country is coming out of the diplomatic isolation.

Referring to previous PTI government, he said Pakistan was pushed into by a naughty person some years back. He said it was a good omen that the friendly countries have started to pay attention to Pakistan after many years and the SCO summit is the best opportunity to win gaze of the world.

"It appears the PTI has fastened its 'revolution horse' to the hitchrack in the stable and it should let it

rest for the time being. The PTI may harness its 'revolution horse' again once the SCO summit was over in Islamabad," the governor said referring to some semblance of political restraint by the PTI leadership.

On the agrarian economy, the Governor Punjab said the subsequent governments failed miserably to look after the agriculture sector of the country, adding that it was painful that the country had to import food items despite being an agricultural country. He regretted lack of storage facilities in case of a bumper crop, adding that farmers need to be protected.

He stressed the need for paying attention to the problems faced by the farmers for the good of economy, adding that things had started to improve under the current government.

About disagreement on appointment of vice chancellors, the Governor Punjab said that he did not have any disagreement with the Maryam Nawaz-led Punjab government, adding that how could he destabilize his coalition government. "I want the Punjab government to succeed as PPP is a stakeholder in Punjab and the centre," he responded, adding he believed right persons were vital for achieving educational excellence at centers

of higher learning.

The governor said he did not want the PPP and PML-N coalition government to earn a bad name for some wrong decisions.

He pointed out that matters were still in a deadlock on the matter of appointments of right persons as vice chancellors but hoped the good sense would prevail between the government and governor's office. He said the government needs to pick the right persons so that the students do not pick petrol bombs or indulge in abusive behaviors as happened during the previous regime.

To a query, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan hailed President Asif Ali Zardari for the success of the coalition government despite differences, adding that President Zardari embodies vision and would make democracy work in the country.

He said fair and free election was vital to the strengthening of democracy and it was only possible through an independent, impartial and just election commission, so that no stakeholder raises a finger at election results be it local government, general or by-polls. He said President Zardari may make all political forces sit at one table including a 'lost' political party.

اطلاع عام

مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ عدنان شہزاد ولد یعقوب خان جو کہ ملٹری انسٹیٹیوٹ آف سائبر ایبٹ آباد ملٹری لیڈرز اینڈ کمنڈنٹ ڈیپارٹمنٹ راولپنڈی میں بطور مالی (BPS-01) تعینات ہے اور مورخہ 09-03-2024 سے بغیر اجازت ڈیوٹی سے غیر حاضر ہے۔ لہذا عدنان شہزاد ولد یعقوب خان کو تفتیش سے تاکید کی جاتی ہے کہ اس اشتہار کے 07 یوم کے اندر اپنی ڈیوٹی پر رپورٹ کریں بصورت دیگر فیڈرل گورنمنٹ سول سروسز ایکٹ (انفینٹری اینڈ ڈسپلین) روڈ 2020 کے مطابق سخت تادیبی کارروائی عمل میں لائی جائے گی۔

ملٹری انسٹیٹیوٹ آف سائبر

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PID(P)259/24

KP Police to hold emergency meeting over controversial power shift

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: In a dramatic turn of events, an emergency meeting has been convened at the Police Lines in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa following the recent approval of amendments to the KP Police Act. Sources reveal that Regional Police Officers (RPOs) and District Police Officers (DPOs) will participate in the meeting, where a roadmap for future action is expected to be decided. The amendments, which were introduced during a cabinet meeting without the consultation of the Inspector General (IG) of Police, have sparked deep unrest within the police

force. The IG strongly opposed the changes during the cabinet session, warning that they could severely damage the police department's operational independence. The new legislation strips the IG of key powers, including authority over the transfers and postings of senior police officers, which will now rest with the Chief Minister. According to inside sources, there is rising concern within the department that these changes will shift power to the bureaucracy, opening the door to increased political interference in police matters. Several senior police officers are reportedly considering taking extended leave

in protest of the bill's approval. In response, top police officials have scheduled meetings with the Speaker of the Assembly, the Chief Minister, and the IG to voice their concerns. They are expected to propose the formation of a committee that includes representatives from the government, opposition, and police to reassess the amendments. At the heart of the controversy is the removal of the IG's power over officer transfers, now transferred to the Chief Minister under the new law. The 2024 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Act Amendment Bill was passed by the provincial cabinet on October 9,

2024. Under the bill, the authority for the transfer and posting of senior police officers, including District Police Officers (DPOs), Deputy Inspectors General (DIGs), and Additional Inspectors General (Addl. IGs), has been shifted from the IG to the Chief Minister. The emergency meeting at Police Lines underscores the growing tension within the department as it grapples with what many see as a threat to the police's autonomy and professionalism. As the bill moves to the provincial assembly for approval, the stakes are high, and the future of policing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa hangs in the balance.

Promoting healthy diet to combat malnutrition

PESHAWAR (APP): With birds chirping in canopy trees signaling the dawn of a morning at village Dheri Mian Ishaq on River Kabul, the sunrays cast warm glow on mud house of Azhar Khan, a determined fruit and vegetable seller. Taking control of family business in 2020 in a difficult financial situation after tragic death of his father due to cardiac arrest, Azhar, 35 started selling organic products at Chamakan market in Peshawar. He daily brings fruits and vegetables to this market from hometown in Nowshera district on rickshaw, toiling hard like many others to defeat poverty. Braving all odds in his early days of business, Azhar was now all smiles after seeing people's overwhelming response to organic fresh fruits and vegetables, useful in combating malnutrition especially in children and lactating mothers.

Khan sells a variety of organic fruits and vegetables including guava, grapes, apples, peaches, ladyfinger and ridged gourd to cater to rising consumers' demand for quality nutritious food and balanced diet. "As winter approaches, the demand for organic produce surges," he said. "Sometimes I had to visit twice to Chamkani for more fresh fruits and vegetables." He is not alone in this business as thousands others cultivating fruits and vegetables play a key role in promoting organic food

at a time when millions of Pakistani are prey to malnutrition, especially the kids and youngsters. Thousands of the families in the province are now inclined to use pesticides and chemicals free organic food for better health. "Balanced diet has critical role for better health," remarked Dr. Riaz Khan, a child specialist at the Government Hospital Pabbi Nowshera. "Balanced diet helps in combating malnutrition, particularly among children, lactating mothers and elderly citizens." He said healthy dietary practices must start from infancy with breastfeeding infants and then in early childhood to raise a healthy generation. Declaring malnutrition as silent killer, Dr Riaz said it poses a significant threat to children health and cognitive development besides affecting their physical growth. "We rank second in the region with our 40% of children affected by this tendency due to socioeconomic imbalances, poverty and lack of excess to quality medical treatment," he claimed. Scores of children especially in less developed districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including merged tribal districts, Tank, Batagram, Kohistan and Chitral do not meet essential micronutrient needs due to high rate of poverty. "Studies indicated that majority of children face calcium, iron, zinc and vitamin A deficiency," Dr Riaz

stated also mentioning that about 50% children suffering from vitamin C and iron deficiency. "Iron deficiency affects nearly half of children under five and leads to developmental delays and increased chances of pneumonia and other fatal ailment due to weaker immunity," he informed. As per National Health Survey of Pakistan report, one in three children are malnourished, with nearly 40 percent facing stunting and low weight at birth and five years of age. The root causes of malnutrition are stated to be repeated use of unbalanced diets, vivacious poverty and limited access to healthcare and food insecurity. Darya Khan, Provincial Coordinator at Nutrition International, Peshawar said the Government was encouraging organic farming to address challenge of malnutrition especially in children and pregnant mothers. He noted that people who consume inorganic foods regularly are more susceptible to various health issues. "Promoting home-based agriculture can significantly improve nutrition level of Pakistani populace." The longevity of life and health of communities in remote areas, such as Hunza and Swat, illustrated the benefits of organic and balanced diets. The cultural shift toward organic food cultivation is gaining traction in urban centers like Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi as organic farming

has experienced an annual growth rate of 15% in Pakistan over the past decade. The phenomenon of malnutrition also has its economic effects with Dr. Naeem Khattak, former Chairman of the Economics Department, Peshawar University reveals that Pakistan suffered approximately three billion dollar annual losses due to micronutrient deficiencies. "Stunting in children and pregnant mothers increased in KP due to increasing poverty rate after 2022 floods that affected agriculture and livestock immensely." He called for urgent intervention like promoting sustainable agricultural practices, enhancing women's access to education and income, and strengthening healthcare systems besides financial support to poor families during pregnancies for better mother-child health. Meanwhile, Dr Ihtesham Ali, advisor to Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Health, highlighted the government initiatives to promote balanced diet and combat malnutrition. Under the Ehsas Nashonoma program, he said financial support is provided to poor families, with special focus on girls and lactating mothers. "Rs2500 per month for newborn girls and Rs2000 for newborn boy are provided to poor parents for two years and health record is maintained of beneficiaries to monitor growth and health of children under two years." The CM aide said promotion of healthy diets and sustainable agriculture farming practices was imperative to defeat stunting. "By prioritizing nutrition and investing in food, education and healthcare, we can achieve the common goal of healthy generation." Therefore, it is a shared responsibility of the whole nation to collectively fight out this menace affecting health of our younger generation and exerting extra burden on our kiddy.



PESHAWAR: A man selling traditional Chitrali cap the demand of which increases in City during winter season.

PML-N delegation visits Pashtun jirga

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) delegation, under the direction of Provincial President Engineer Ameer Maqam, participated in the

Pashtun National Jirga. The delegation was led by Leader of the Opposition Dr. Abadullah Khan and included Arbab Khizer Hayat, Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) Malik Tariq Awan,

Faqir Muhammad, Rashid Mahmood Dawarzi, Zar Khan Safi, and others. Addressing the Jirga, Dr. Abadullah Khan emphasized, "We will raise our voices for the rights of Pashtun people on every

platform." He also expressed support for the legitimate demands of the Pashtun National Jirga, affirming that PML-N stands by the community in its quest for rights and justice.

PCP & MiracleFeet join hands to set free Clubfoot Clinic

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a groundbreaking healthcare initiative, Paraplegic Center Peshawar (PCP) has partnered with MiracleFeet, a leading US-based NGO, to make life-changing clubfoot treatment possible for the children of Azad Kashmir as well. The partnership has launched a state-of-the-art Ponseti Clubfoot clinic at Helping Hand for Relief & Development's rehabilitation center in Muzaffarabad. This clinic is set to transform the lives of

children suffering from clubfoot by providing high-quality, 100% free treatment in AJK as well. Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, CEO of PCP, played a pioneer role in substantiating the idea wherein he made MiracleFeet's Regional Program Officer, Dr. Faissal Imtiaz, to collaborate with the senior management of Helping Hand in Islamabad. After a series of key meetings between PCP and Helping Hand leaders solidified this partnership. Whereas the Director Rehab and Provincial Clubfoot

Program Coordinator, Dr. Amir Zeb, and PCP's Director of Finance, Mr. Assad Iqbal, held final discussions with the clinical and managerial team of Helping Hand in Muzaffarabad to formally launch it in AJK. The clinic will offer the Ponseti method—a non-invasive and highly effective treatment for clubfoot—administered by skilled healthcare professionals. This initiative aims to restore mobility, dignity, and hope to children afflicted by the condition, significantly improving their quality

of life. Besides this clinic, PCP continues its mission of expanding clubfoot services throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and beyond. The vision is simple but powerful: no child with clubfoot should go untreated. This joint effort will improve mobility and quality of life for children suffering from clubfoot, reduce social stigma and isolation associated with the condition, empower families with hope and confidence and promote inclusivity and foster stronger, healthier communities.

Khyber Eye Foundation, Fred Hollows Foundation for collaboration

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Eye Foundation welcomed Ms. Rasheen Chaudhry, Global Advisor at the Fred Hollows Foundation, and Dr. Farooq Awan, Country Manager, to explore future collaboration in ophthalmic care. This visit highlighted the shared commitment of both organizations to combat preventable blindness and improve eye care services across Peshawar. The visitors were warmly greeted by Khyber Eye Foundation's leadership, including Chairman Mr. Muhammad Adnan Jaleel and senior members of the board. After a tour of the hospital's advanced facilities, the guests attended a meeting where Mr. Obaidullah Siddiqui officially welcomed them and



discussed the hospital's key projects. He emphasized the significance of this visit, underscoring shared goals of providing top-tier eye care to underserved populations. During the presentation, Khyber Eye Foundation showcased its achievements, including thousands of successful cataract surgeries and extensive community out-

reach efforts. Future plans were also shared, with the hospital aiming to establish satellite clinics to improve accessibility to eye care services. Ms. Chaudhry and Dr. Awan praised the foundation's efforts, recognizing their dedication to quality care. Dr. Awan announced that the Fred Hollows Foundation is ready to provide medical equipment and resources to sup-

port the expansion of the hospital's services, particularly in rural areas. This includes the development of satellite clinics and further collaboration on eye care initiatives. The visit concluded with a symbolic exchange of gifts, reinforcing the mutual commitment to reducing preventable blindness and improving community health through enhanced collaboration.

Pakistan's role on the global stage: A history of key conferences

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

SINCE gaining independence in 1947, Pakistan has hosted numerous international and regional conferences that have played a significant role in shaping its diplomatic relationships, advancing regional cooperation, and showcasing its strategic importance on the global stage. These conferences have facilitated political, economic, and cultural exchanges, allowing Pakistan to position itself as a crucial player in South Asia and beyond. One of the earliest and most significant events in Pakistan's diplomatic history was the Bandung Conference which took place April on 18-24, 1955, held in Indonesia, where Pakistan actively participated as part of the newly formed Non-Aligned Movement. This event established Pakistan as a key voice among the newly independent

nations of Asia and Africa, advocating for economic cooperation and peaceful coexistence. Pakistan's strategic location in South Asia and its role as a bridge between the Muslim world and the West became more pronounced during the Cold War era. The 1970s saw a period of considerable activity for Pakistan on the international stage. In 22-24 February 1974, the second Islamic Summit Conference was held in Lahore, attracting leaders from across the Muslim world. The summit was especially significant as it was held in the aftermath of Pakistan's dismemberment in 1971, and the successful hosting of such a prestigious event was seen as a symbol of Pakistan's resilience and its continued importance in regional politics. This gathering further cemented Pakistan's leadership within the Islamic community, which was seeking to build stronger economic and political

alliances during a period of global division. The Lahore Islamic Summit led to further institutionalizing the OIC, with Pakistan playing a pivotal role in shaping the organization's agenda, particularly in terms of economic cooperation and support for the Palestinian cause. In addition to Islamic conferences, Pakistan also hosted numerous South Asian regional summits. The formation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985 was a landmark event in South Asia's diplomatic history. Pakistan was one of the founding members of SAARC, and it hosted several SAARC summits, including the fourth summit was held in Islamabad, Pakistan on 29-31 December 1988. This summit marked an important milestone in promoting regional cooperation in areas such as trade, education, and environmental sustainability. Although SAARC has often been hindered by political tensions, particularly

between Pakistan and India, the organization still holds immense potential for regional integration. One of the major international events held in recent years was the 48th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the OIC, hosted by Pakistan in March 22-23, 2022 under the theme (Building Partnerships for Unity, Justice, and Development) in Islamabad. This conference was of immense importance, especially given Pakistan's ongoing advocacy for the rights of Muslims worldwide, including in Palestine and Kashmir. The OIC meeting allowed Pakistan to reiterate its stance on these critical issues, while also discussing the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of U.S. forces. The significance of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for Pakistan cannot be understated. The SCO conference, will hold in Islamabad from

October 15-16, 2024, brought together member states to discuss key regional security, economic, and political issues. Pakistan, as the host country, will emphasize the importance of cooperation in combating terrorism, enhancing trade routes, and addressing climate change challenges. High-level delegations from all member states will participate, focusing on fostering connectivity through initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and enhancing multilateral ties for sustainable regional development. The conference will also provide an opportunity for bilateral discussions aimed at strengthening diplomatic and economic relations within the SCO framework. The history of these conferences highlights the crucial role that Pakistan has played in international and regional diplomacy since its inception. These events have allowed Pakistan to project its influence on matters related to security, economic coopera-

tion, and religious solidarity, particularly within the Muslim world. The SCO conferences, in particular, have had a significant impact on Pakistan's foreign policy, enabling the country to enhance its security cooperation with China and Russia and strengthen its position in regional geopolitics. Apart from the political and economic significance, these conferences have also contributed to Pakistan's soft power by promoting cultural exchanges and fostering people-to-people contact. Conferences like the SAARC summits have encouraged regional cooperation on education, culture, and health, leading to greater understanding among South Asian nations despite underlying political tensions. While the outcomes of these conferences have varied, with some leading to concrete diplomatic or economic initiatives and others serving more as symbolic gestures, the cumulative impact on Pakistan's inter-

national standing has been profound. Pakistan has often used these platforms to advocate for peace, regional cooperation, and economic development, all while strengthening its alliances with key global powers. Despite the challenges of its geopolitical environment, Pakistan has demonstrated resilience and adaptability, using these forums to navigate its complex foreign relations and enhance its global footprint. In conclusion, the history of international and regional conferences in Pakistan reflects the country's strategic importance on the global stage. From Islamic solidarity conferences to regional summits under SAARC and the SCO, these events have allowed Pakistan to play a vital role in regional stability, economic development, and global diplomacy. The impact of these conferences continues to shape Pakistan's foreign policy, particularly its relationships with its neighbors and key international powers.



In brief

4 killed over property issue

PESHAWAR (APP): At least four people were killed and as many injured in crossfire between the two groups over a property dispute in Kolai Palas district, Lower Kohistan, police informed on Sunday. Police said the unfortunate incident occurred between the two groups of Shalkind tribe in Khalyar village of Kolai Palas. The issue started with the ownership of a piece of land turned into a bloody clash that resulted in deaths of three people from one side and one from the other. From both the sides four people including a woman were injured and shifted to hospital by the Rescue 1122 Lower Kohistan. The armed men left the scene, leaving behind the dead bodies as police arrived in the area. Police have shifted the bodies for medico legal procedure and started an investigation into the incident.

Woman killed for honor

SWAT (APP): In Manglawar area of Swat district, a woman was found dead with her throat slit, police informed on Sunday. Police said the incident which took place in the Banjot area of Manglawar, was likely to be a case of honor killing. Two brothers of the murdered woman, her husband and brother-in-law have been arrested for their alleged involvement in this gruesome murder, police said. The body of the lady was shifted to hospital for medico legal procedure, while police have started further investigation into the case.

Four dead, five injured

MANSEHRA (INP): A violent clash between two tribes in Kohistan, Manshera, has resulted in the deaths of four individuals, including a woman, and left five others injured. The incident occurred due to an ongoing property dispute between the two groups. The local police said the confrontation took place in the Kolai Palas area of Kohistan, where both tribes opened fire on each other. Police confirmed that the conflict stemmed from a long-standing land dispute. Following the incident, a large police force was dispatched to the scene, and the injured individuals were transported to a nearby hospital for treatment.

Rape suspect manages to flee

SHUJABAD (INP): A ninth-grade student was sexually assaulted in the Sikandarabad area of Shujabad. According to the First Information Report (FIR), a man named Tahir abducted the girl at gunpoint to a deserted area and assaulted her. Locals responded to her cries, causing the assailant to flee. The victim was taken to a civil hospital in critical condition; a preliminary medical report confirms sexual assault. A case has been registered against Tahir, and police are conducting further investigations and carrying out raids to apprehend him.

28 gamblers arrested

ATTOCK (INP): Police on Sunday claimed to have arrested 28 gamblers red-handedly who were busy in gambling during a marriage ceremony in village Babarki in the limits of Hassanabad Police station. Police spokesman said that, acting on a tip off, a police team raided at the marriage ceremony of Zain Ali in village Barbarki, and arrested as many as 28 people who were involved in gambling. Police recovered stake money worth of Rs 1.86 million, 23 mobiles worth Rs 0.12 million during the raid.



QUETTA: Citizens busy in buying daily commodities from Joint Road Sunday Bazaar. — INP photo

Bugti pays tribute to Bilawal

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Sunday paid tribute to the chairman of Pakistan People's Party PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for presenting the proposal of the Constitutional Court.

He said this that equal representation of all

provinces would be possible with the establishment of the Constitutional Court.

The Chief Minister said that federal Constitutional Court's proposal would prove to be a good omen for all provinces, especially Balochistan.

"The voice of all

provinces including Balochistan will be heard on equal basis", he said.

He said that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is proud of visionary approach.

Mr. Sarfraz Bugti hoped that the nationalist parties of Balochistan would also support this initiative.

Liaquat Baloch urges PTI to postpone protest

MULTAN (INP): Deputy Emir of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Liaquat Baloch, stated that the SCO conference is a matter of honor for the entire nation, not just the government or a political party.

In a recent statement, Baloch urged the PTI to postpone its protest calls and insisted that the government must address Imran Khan's demand for a meeting.

He noted that government has made no preparations for the constitutional amendments.

He emphasised that the visit of the Saudi economic delegation to Pakistan sent a strong message of friendship. Additionally, Baloch condemned the recent terrorist attack at Karachi Airport. He expressed that the people of Pakistan stood in solidarity with China. He also called on Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif to organise a national conference on the Kashmir issue.

Pakistan Army's workshop concludes

GILGIT (INP): A four-day National Security Workshop, organized in Gilgit with the support of the Pakistan Army and the Gilgit-Baltistan Government, successfully concluded.

The workshop aimed to raise awareness about various aspects of national security, including energy, food, environmental, human, and economic security, in addition to traditional border security.

Participants from diverse sectors attended the workshop, engaging in discussions that addressed the pressing issues faced by the nation, particularly those concerning Gilgit-Baltistan.

The event provided a platform for stakeholders to collaborate on strategies for tackling these challenges and ensuring long-term security and stability.

Ensuring national security Rubaba lauds role of Pakistan Navy

QUETTA (APP): Advisor to the Chief Minister of Balochistan for the Department of Women Development, Dr Rubaba Khan Buledi praised the role of the Pakistan Navy in ensuring national security and providing equal opportunities for the development and employment of youth, especially women.

She expressed these views during her meeting with Captain Abdullah Siddiqui, Station Commander of Pakistan Navy Quetta.

In the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding collaboration between the Pakistan Navy and the Department of Women Development on professional training for women.

Emphasizing the importance of establishing a Professional Development Institute for



women in Balochistan, Dr Rubaba Buledi said that such an institution would enhance the skills of women in the province and provide them with opportunities to showcase their talents on a national level.

She further stated that several projects related to women's education and

professional training are under consideration in collaboration with the Pakistan Navy.

These initiatives will not only offer better opportunities for the women of the province but will also contribute positively to the socio-economic development of Balochistan, she said.

Cop, two dacoits injured in encounter

Hafiz Muhammad Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: A police constable and two dacoits critically injured in police encounter allegedly and police have shifted injured to hospital.

According to details, Vaneki police received a phone call through helpline 15 that four unknown dacoits are engaged in dacoity near Hakeem Pura drain.

After receiving the call, Vaneki Tarar police rushed to the scene. Seeing the police, accused tried to sped away but police chased the accused. When, police party reached near the accused, the dacoits opened fire indiscriminatory.

As a result of which, a police constable Akif Gujjar injured critically. Police retaliated and arrested two injured accused. Police shifted injured accused and

police constable to hospital. While two accused sped away.

According to police spokesman, arrested accused were wanted by district police Gujrat and district police Chinot in different crimes.

DPO Hafizabad Faisal Gulzar applauded courage and bravery of police party. He asked about health of injured constable and announced to give cash reward to him.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq has paid Surprise visit to Government Boys Primary School No.6 Hafizabad, Family Park, Children Park and DHQ Hospital Hafizabad.

He reviewed academic activities in the school, availability of recreational facilities in the parks and provision of treatment facilities being provided to patients in the DHQ

Hospital.

During the visit of school, DC checked attendance of staff, cleanliness and directed the headmaster and other teachers to improve cleanliness of washrooms and other parts of the school.

While inspecting parks, he reviewed cleanliness and recreational facilities being provided in the parks and directed the concerned officers to take steps for ensuring maximum facilities to children and women in the parks.

He also visited DHQ Hospital and checked attendance of doctors and other staff, provision of medicines to patients and inspected ticket counter.

DC directed the Medical Superintendent DHQ hospital Dr. Maqsood Zafar to improve treatment facilities in the hospital and ensure provision of medicines to patients.

Ceremony held to sensitize people about dengue virus

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): A ceremony was organized here at Govt Degree College No. 3 in connection with 'Dengue Awareness' campaign to educate people about cleanliness and precautions for dengue virus.

The ceremony, organized in line with the directions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Higher Education Department, was attended by College Principal, staff and students.

Addressing the event, Assistant Prof. Amjad Jahangir said "we should

take care of the cleanliness of our environment, and we should make people aware of how dengue spreads and how this virus is harmful for them."

He also shed a light on importance of educating people about the precautions that are required to avoid dengue virus, saying, the disease could be prevented through adoption of precautionary measures.

Lecturer of Zoology Asghar Khan informed the participants in detail about the dengue virus. He said that only precautionary

measures against dengue fever could stop the spread of this deadly disease, therefore it is necessary to take such measures to prevent the spread of dengue mosquitoes in homes. He advised to ensure drainage of rainwater, wear full sleeves, prevent water from accumulating in pots, utensils and wooden jars kept in houses while mosquito repellent lotion should be used to avoid mosquito bites.

He also replied to various questions of participants regarding dengue virus.

Sehra singing: A dying tradition in Seraiki culture

MULTAN (APP): The tradition of singing folk "Sehras" at weddings in the Seraiki region is gradually fading away.

For centuries, folk songs and "Sehras" were an integral part of wedding celebrations, symbolizing the joy and emotions associated with such occasions. This tradition, especially strong in South Punjab and the broader Seraiki belt, was not just a form of entertainment but also a profound expression of love and unity among family members. Historically, long before the advent of printed text, these folk "Sehras" were passed down orally, evolving over time while maintaining their core essence and representing human emotions and relationships.

Over time, however,

with the advent of modern lifestyles and societal shifts, many family traditions, including the singing of "Sehras," began to vanish. In the 13th century, the famous poet Amir Khusrro popularized folk "Sehras" that beautifully reflected familial bonds. Songs like "Amma mere bawa ko bhejo ri" became timeless, remaining an essential part of the cultural fabric even today.

In the Seraiki language, the custom of singing "Sehras" for the bride and groom is centuries old. Professor Maqbool Hassan Gilani, an expert on Seraiki culture, stated in an interview with APP that the practice of "Sehra singing" has rapidly declined since the 1990s. "In the past, women would gather at the bride or

groom's house and sing 'Sehras' late into the night, accompanied by the beat of the dhol (drum). Now, due to modern time constraints, these traditions have been reduced to a short session inside wedding halls," he remarked. Songs like "Shazaan da banan ni main sehra teeda gawan" or "Mame di gali ghadi a we parnianda jiven" were once popular in districts like Dera Ghazi Khan, Layyah, Rajanpur, Fazilpur, and nearby villages, where they could still occasionally be heard. Interestingly, most of these folk "Sehras" were not penned by any established poets. Instead, they were spontaneously created on the spot, often improvised to suit the occasion, and later became part of local tradition, he concluded.

Schools Dropout – A persisting challenge

MULTAN (APP): Persisting political turmoil and uncertainty leaves future of millions of students in shambles with education remaining the least priority area of respective previous governments.

Economic hardships, an outdated education system and the widening gap between education and employment opportunities are the multiplying components further aggravating this situation.

According to an official report of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), country's students' dropout figures rises to millions as situation is particularly dire for children aged 8 to 15 where dropout rates continue to rise.

Therefore, without immediate intervention, this situation will not only deprive millions of children of a brighter future but also hinder the country's overall development.

Iqbal Watto, Principal of a local prominent educa-

tional institute in South Punjab sees poverty as a major issue behind this phenomenon. "Many parents simply cannot afford to bear educational expenses for their children. For scores of families struggling to feed their children, education becomes a distant priority,"

Mentioning to shortcomings of traditional education system, Wattoo said our system was not aligned with modern trends and fails to prepare students for local and contemporary international job markets. "Our education system doesn't provide economic returns. Even medical graduates, like MBBS doctors, are struggling to find jobs in public sector," he remarked. "Thousands remain unemployed even after getting higher education that discourages families from spending on education of their children."

Therefore, many families take out their children from schools at early age

and get them trained in traditional traits by attaching them with conventional mechanics, mesons, electricians' or the growing labor class. Many see more opportunities in business and shift their children to trade or entrepreneurial ventures even after matriculation.

"We often go by cosmetic and temporary initiatives in spite of long term planning that creates demand and supply gaps in different areas," Watto said as he mentioned to previous saturation in medical and engineering professions.

"Now as IT sector emerges as a lucrative sector, admissions in Computer Sciences increased manifolds. Therefore, we need a strategy for students who would complete their education in next five to ten years," he suggested.

Educationist Munir Akbar also pointed out economic hardship as a significant driver for drop-

ping out saying that in regions like South Punjab struck by abject poverty, parents hardly meet ends and are unable to bear education expenses. "Therefore, they send children to work instead of school, trapping them in a cycle of illiteracy and economic struggle."

Besides generating economic activity to enhance poor's earning, Munir also sees female education as of pivotal importance. "If mothers are uneducated, they would be unable to create a learning environment for their children."

He regretted commercialization of education and said, "we have made this missionary profession a business with many business tycoons jumping into it with majority of them purely for financial gains."

As a result, education becomes more expensive exerting extra burden on middle and lower-middle classes, he said. "Moreover, education in our society is more linked

to financial success, diminishing its broader intellectual and societal purpose."

Educationalists like Kamran Sial and Shoukat Hayat see cultural norms and communication gap between teachers and parents as reasons behind rising dropout ratio.

Amidst all their views and comments what matters much is a multi-pronged strategy and incentives to educate our children. Since, the government schools can provide cheaper education, competence of teaching staff and the curricula being taught there matters much.

Just a couple of decades back, there were only the government schools producing brilliant educationists, judges, doctors, engineers, bureaucrats, politicians and much more. But, the situation continued deteriorating and today there are a few known good public sector institutions as private sector has

overshadowed the public sector despite authorities' claims of taking measures to improve the situation.

"We have initiated programs to enhance enrollment under 'Zero Out of School Children' project," informed Fuad Hashim Rabbani, Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) at South Punjab Secretariat.

"We have launched it as a pilot project in Layyah district where 6,000 out-of-school children were successfully traced," he said. "Plans are now being implemented for their education by involving schools, local authorities and NGOs."

"We're focusing on education despite many challenges," Rabbani said. "Our goal is to ensure that every child has access to education and we are mobilizing resources to bring these children back into system."

Meanwhile, Deputy Secretary Schools South Punjab, Khawaja Mazhar ul Haq has emphasized to

raising societal awareness about benefits of education. "Although economic pressures are there. But, we can address this issue by introducing short technical courses to equip our youth for an early earning."

He said such skills taught to today's student would pave way for better education of their children. "If not today, let it be tomorrow. Let us lay foundation for a brighter future of coming generations."

Mazhar informed that the Punjab government is planning to introduce "Middle-Tech" and "Matric-Tech" programs, to enhance enrollment by integrating technical skills with traditional education.

In prevailing situation, besides other measures, connecting traditional education with practical skills can enhance enrollment, making education relevant and beneficial for students and equipping them with expertise for an early earning for their families.



SARGODHA: A Donkey cart holder on the way with over loaded weight may cause any mishap at Patha Mandi Road.



Fires taking Amazon closer to ‘point of no return’: Expert

BRASILIA (AFP): A year ago, Carlos Nobre, one of Brazil's top climate scientists, was a rare voice of optimism about the future of the planet. The 73-year-old, one of the top experts on the Amazon rainforest, was cheering the fact that "for the first time, all the leaders in the region are mobilized to find solutions for the forest" at a summit in northern Brazil.

Today, he warns that the world's biggest jungle, which is being ravaged by the worst drought-fuelled wildfires in decades, is in existential danger. The world risks "losing the Amazon," he told AFP in an interview. A record wave of wildfires, fueled by severe drought linked to climate change and deforestation, is causing havoc across South America. The worst drought in Brazil in recent memory has fanned the biggest fires in the country in more than a decade, leaving up to 80 percent of the country blanketed in smoke. While several countries, including Canada, regularly battle catastrophic wildfires, theirs are often

the product of naturally occurring lightning strikes that spread quickly through dry vegetation, Nobre said. In the Amazon, by contrast, most of the fires are illegally started by humans for agricultural purposes. "The criminals realized that satellites only detect fires when the fire spreads to 30 or 40 square meters (320 to 430 square feet)." "This gives them time to leave the area before being arrested," Nobre said.

In February, Europe's climate monitor Copernicus announced that for the first time on record, Earth had endured 12 consecutive months of temperatures 1.5 degrees Celsius hotter than the pre-industrial era -- four years earlier than predicted. Experts had warned that extreme weather events would accelerate sharply at the 1.5C-warming mark. "It is not a slow, linear increase," Nobre said. "In 2024 we are already seeing how the frequency of extreme phenomena is accelerating and breaking records," he added, citing increased "heatwaves, heavy rains,

droughts, forest fires" among the extreme weather events that have become frequent in some parts of the planet. Nobre warned that the fires consuming chunks of the Amazon risked accelerating its transition into dry savannah grasslands. "If global warming continues and we do not completely stop deforestation, degradation and fires, by 2050 we will have passed the point of no return," he warned. "In 30 to 50 years, we will have lost at least 50 percent of the forest," he said.

An increase in warming to 2.5C by 2050 would trigger new tipping points, he said, including "losing the Amazon" outright. Among the measures he advocated to reduce climate warming were accelerating the transition to renewable energy and the mass planting of trees in cities to act as sponges for carbon dioxide. Trees can help lower urban temperatures by up to 4.5C and also increase humidity. "Urban sponges are a very important solution all over the world."

French PM vows more taxes and spending cuts

PARIS (AFP): France's new Prime Minister Michel Barnier pledged new taxes and spending cuts to reduce a "colossal" debt, in a policy address that met with a raucous reception from lawmakers who could topple his government at any time.

Barnier, a right-wing former EU Brexit negotiator, was appointed by centrist President Emmanuel Macron to bring some stability after the political chaos created by a hung parliament that resulted from snap elections this summer. But furious heckling of his first major policy speech, especially from the left, recalled that his loose coalition ranks of conservatives and centrists are outnumbered by the NFP alliance and far-right National Rally (RN).

If both joined forces, they could remove Barnier in a confidence vote. Opportunities to topple the government will abound in the coming months as ministers struggle to get a 2025 budget through parliament before year's end. He said the government aims to reduce the deficit to five percent of GDP in 2025, "on the right path" to reach the European Union limit in 2029 -- two years later than previously planned.

He called France's "colossal" debts of over 3.2 trillion euros (\$3.5 trillion) - more than 110 percent of GDP -- "the true sword of Damocles... hanging over the head of France and of

every French person". He said that two-thirds of deficit reduction would come from slashing spending from its present 57 percent of GDP -- far above the 49-percent European average. But while France has "among the highest taxes in the world," there would be "a time-limited effort that must be shared, with an insistence on tax justice" or equitably sharing the burden, Barnier added. Highly-profitable big companies and wealthy individuals would both be called on to pay more, he said. Barnier sought to throw some bones to the left.

He called out "a second sword of Damocles that is just as terrible: the environmental debt we are leaving as a legacy to our children". France would bet on both its traditional strength in nuclear power and renewables to reduce carbon emissions, he said. Barnier opened the door to tweaking last year's hugely unpopular pension reform that raised the retirement age.

And in a list of red lines, he vowed "zero tolerance for racism and anti-Semitism" and protection for "freedoms achieved over the years" including on abortion, gay marriage and in-vitro fertilisation.

Some opponents and observers have feared for migrants' rights and sexual and reproductive freedoms under a largely conservative government tolerated by the RN. Barnier's pledges

directed at far-right voters included greater "security in daily life", where "the public will be reassured by the presence of law enforcement".

He added that "France will continue to re-establish checks on its own borders for as long as necessary, as is allowed under European rules and as Germany has just done".

In talks with major countries of origin for irregular migration, France would threaten reductions in the number of visas issued for legal travel, Barnier warned. His comments on immigration follow the rape and murder of a 19-year-old Paris student where a Moroccan man due to be deported was named as the suspected attacker. MPs observed a minute of silence for the victim, named as Philippine, as the parliamentary session opened. The NFP -- an alliance of hard-left France Unbowed, Communists, Socialists and Greens -- is expected to file a confidence motion against the Barnier government in the coming days.

But the RN is biding its time for now, betting on a strategy of looking responsible to voters rather than triggering more political chaos. Eyes in the political scene are already turning towards 2027, when a new presidential election must be held at which Macron cannot stand again due to term limits.

Kremlin says we know Rutte

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia said it did not expect any change of policy from new NATO chief Mark Rutte, the former Dutch prime minister who has replaced Norway's Jens Stoltenberg as secretary general of the alliance.

"Our expectations are that the North Atlantic alliance will continue to work in the same direction in which it has been working," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told

reporters, adding that President Vladimir Putin knew Rutte well from past meetings. "At one time, there were hopes for the possibility of building good pragmatic relations - at least, such a dialogue was conducted - but subsequently we know that the Netherlands took a rather irreconcilable position, a position on the complete exclusion of any contacts with our country," he said.

"Therefore, we do not

think that anything significantly new will happen in the alliance's policy." Rutte is taking on the NATO job at a critical juncture in the war in Ukraine, where Russian forces are advancing in the east of the country, and just over a month before the US presidential election. "We have to make sure that Ukraine prevails as a sovereign, independent, democratic nation," he told reporters at NATO headquarters in Brussels.

Russia ready for long confrontation with US

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia must prepare for a long confrontation with the United States and has sent repeated warnings to Washington over the crisis in relations, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov was quoted as saying. The 2-1/2-year-old Ukraine war has triggered the gravest confrontation between Russia and the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis - considered to be the closest the two Cold War superpowers came to intentional nuclear war.

The conflict is entering what Russian officials say is the most dangerous phase to date, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has been urging Kyiv's allies for months to let Ukraine fire longer-range Western missiles deep into Russia to limit Moscow's ability to launch attacks. Ryabkov, who oversees arms control and relations with Washington, said Moscow had no illusions about relations, given the "bipartisan anti-Russian consensus" in the United States. "We must prepare for a long-term confrontation with this country. We are ready for this in every sense," Ryabkov was quoted as saying by state news agency RIA.

"We are sending all the warning signals to our opponent so that it does not underestimate our determination," Ryabkov said. President Vladimir Putin warned the last week that Russia could use nuclear weapons if it was struck with conventional missiles, and that Moscow would consider any assault on it supported by a nuclear power to be a joint attack.

Cambodia to welcome US Navy at port

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Cambodia said the US Navy would be welcome to visit its Ream Naval Base, which the Pentagon is concerned will become a Chinese outpost. Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sun Chanthol told a think tank event in Washington that any country's military could call at the port once the naval base is completed.

"The Ream Naval Base is not for the Chinese. The Chinese provided us with the assistance to expand the Ream Naval Base for our own national defense, not to be used by the Chinese or any military against another country," Sun told the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "When this naval base is completed, any navy can call on that port, as long as it's for humanitarian and disaster recovery, or joint military exercise," he said.

However, he advised the US Navy to bring small ships on any visit, "because the water is shallow. You might get stuck there," he said, when referring to the potential for a US Navy port call. Ties between the US and Cambodia have been strained in recent years, with Washington vocal over the government's dismantling of the political opposition and concerned about China's growing influence. Chinese warships, likely corvettes or frigates, have been rotating through Ream since December to help train the Cambodian navy. Washington has pressed Cambodia to uphold its constitution and prevent any foreign country from having exclusive access to Ream or other territory.

Ukraine support a top priority

BRUSSELS (AP): The new head of NATO vowed to help shore up Western support for war-ravaged Ukraine and expressed confidence that he can work with whoever is elected president of the United States, the alliance's most powerful member, in November.

"There can be no lasting security in Europe without a strong, independent Ukraine," new NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said in his first speech on taking office, and he affirmed a commitment made by the organization's leaders in 2008 that "Ukraine's rightful place is in NATO." Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces are making advances in eastern Ukraine. Ukraine's army has a shaky hold on part of the Kursk region in Russia, which has provided a temporary morale boost, but as casualties mount it remains out-manned and outgunned.

"The cost of supporting Ukraine is far, far lower than the cost we would face if we allow Putin to get his way," Rutte told reporters, a few hours after his predecessor Jens Stoltenberg handed the reins to him, along with a Viking gavel with which to chair future meetings. But Ukraine's NATO membership remains a distant prospect. Several member countries, led by the US and Germany, believe that Ukraine should not join while it's fighting a war. Rutte declined to speculate about what must happen before it can stand among NATO's ranks.

Rutte did single out China, and particularly Beijing's support for Putin. "China has become a decisive enabler of Russia's war in Ukraine. China cannot continue to fuel the largest conflict in Europe since the Second World War without this impacting its interests and reputation," he said. NATO's new top civilian official also underlined the importance of keeping the trans-Atlantic bond between the United States, Canada and Europe strong, with US elections just a month away.

Surveys suggest the election will be a close race. It could see the return of Donald Trump, whose bluster during his last term of office about low defense spending among European

allies and Canada undermined the trust of NATO member countries. It became an existential challenge, as smaller members feared that the US under Trump would renege on NATO's security pledge that all countries must come to the rescue of any ally in trouble, the foundation stone the alliance is built on.

But Rutte said: "I know both candidates very well." He praised Trump for pushing NATO allies to spend more and for toughening their approach toward China. He also hailed the "fantastic record" of Vice President Kamala Harris and described her as "a highly respected leader." "I will be able to work with both. Whatever is the outcome of the election," Rutte said. When pressed about Trump's commitment to the other allies, he deflected, saying only that both candidates "understand that, in the end, the trans-Atlantic relationship is crucial, not just for Europe."

Asked whether the Netherlands, which has only just reached NATO's spending of 2% of gross domestic product on its defense budget, has set a good example to other allies, Rutte shook his head and said "No. We should have done this earlier." Incumbent US President Joe Biden said in a statement that the US remains "deeply devoted" to the alliance, and expressed confidence that Rutte would "continue to build on our work to create a NATO that is stronger, larger, and more resolute than ever in its mission to create a safer world for our peoples." Earlier, Stoltenberg had welcomed Rutte to NATO headquarters in Brussels for the change of leadership.

The two men, who first sat together at NATO's table 14 years ago as the leaders of Norway and the Netherlands, greeted each other warmly, before laying a wreath to fallen military personnel, surrounded by the flags of the 32 member countries. "Mark has the perfect background to become a great secretary general," a visibly emotional Stoltenberg said as he ended a decade in office. "He has served as prime minister for 14 years and led four different coalition governments, so therefore he knows how to make



compromises, create consensus, and these are skills which are very much valued here at NATO," Stoltenberg said.

Rutte said that he "cannot wait to get to work." Among his other priorities, he said, are to increase defense spending and strengthen partnerships that the alliance has established with other countries around the world, notably in Asia and the Middle East. After hundreds of NATO staffers applauded the two men as they moved inside to the great hall where North Atlantic Council meetings are held at the level of ambassadors, ministers or leaders, Stoltenberg helped his successor to get started by presenting him with a Viking gavel to use when chairing meetings. Stoltenberg, NATO's 13th secretary-general, took over in 2014, the year that "little green men" from Russia infiltrated Ukraine. Moscow annexed the Crimean Peninsula, sparking a defense spending buildup at the world's biggest security alliance that gathered pace over his term.

His tenure was surpassed only by Dutch diplomat Joseph Luns, who spent 12 years in charge of NATO. NATO secretaries-general run the HQ, drive the alliance's working agenda and speak on behalf of the 32-nation organization with one unifying voice. Continuity is usually the key word when they take up office.

Historic ship could soon become largest artificial reef

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP): A historic ocean liner that once ferried immigrants, Hollywood stars and heads of state may soon find its final resting place at the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico, after a Florida county inked a tentative deal to turn the ship into the world's largest artificial reef.

The contract approved by officials in Okaloosa County on Florida's coastal Panhandle is contingent upon the resolution of court-imposed mediation, after a judge ordered the storied but aging ship to vacate its berth at a pier in Philadelphia, following a yearslong dispute over rent and dockage fees. The largest passenger ship ever built in the US, the SS United States shattered a record for the fastest transatlantic crossing by a passenger liner on its maiden voyage in 1952. The Associated Press reported from aboard the vessel.

But the ship has been in a race against time to find a new home, with conservationists scrambling to find an alternative to scrapping the massive ocean liner, which is more than 100 feet (30 meters) longer than the Titanic. The solution: sink it on purpose and create what supporters hope will be a barnacle-encrusted star in Okaloosa County's constellation of more than 500 artificial reefs, making it a signature diving attraction that could generate millions of dollars a year in local tourism spending for scuba shops, charter fishing boats and hotels.

"To have an opportunity to have the SS United States right here by our shore is a heritage and a legacy that is generational," said Okaloosa County Commissioner Mel Ponder. "I'm very excited for not only what it does for the diving community, but also the fishing community, but the community at large."

The deal to buy the ship, which officials said could cost more than \$10 million, could close in a matter of weeks, pending court mediation. The lengthy process of cleaning, transporting and sinking the vessel is expected to take at least 1.5 years. "The SS United States has inspired millions the world over as a symbol of American pride and excellence," said Susan Gibbs, president of the SS United States Conservancy, the nonprofit working to preserve the vessel. "Should the ship be converted into an artificial reef, she will become a unique historic attraction above and below the waterline." Kate Payne is a corps member for The Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercover issues.

Chinese military conducts patrols in South China Sea

BEIJING (Reuters): The Chinese military conducted combat readiness patrols in parts of the South China Sea, Chinese state media reported, in an extension of rare military drills and exercises in the region over the weekend.

The Southern Theater Command of the Chinese PLA conducted combat readiness patrols in efforts to improve combat capabilities and maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea region, according to state media reports.

China claims almost the entire South China Sea

despite overlapping claims in the busy waterway by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. In 2016 the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague ruled that China's claims were not supported by international law, a decision that Beijing rejects. Chinese air and naval forces conducted manoeuvres near the disputed Scarborough shoal after Australia and the Philippines said their militaries would hold joint maritime activities with Japan, New Zealand and the United States in the EEZ of the Philippines.

The shoal, about 200 km (124 miles) west of the main Philippine island of Luzon and within the Philippine EEZ, has long been claimed by both Beijing and Manila. In recent talks with China's top diplomat Wang Yi in New York, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken raised China's "dangerous and destabilising actions" in the South China Sea. Blinken had previously accused Beijing of aggressive deployments in the South China Sea of its coast guard and fishing vessels suspected of being a maritime militia.

Rebel group in Congo generates \$300,000

DAKAR (AP): A rebel group in Congo generates around \$300,000 a month in revenue through its control of a mining area in the east of the country, a UN official said.

In April, the M23 - a rebel group with alleged links to Rwanda - seized the Rubaya mining area in eastern Congo, which holds deposits of a key mineral used in the production of smartphones and computers. Over 15% of the world's supply of tantalum, a rare metal extracted from coltan, comes from Rubaya. Bintou Keita, head of the UN mission in Congo, told the Security Council.

"Unless international sanctions are imposed on those benefiting from this criminal trade, peace will remain elusive and civilians will continue to suffer," Keita said. Tantalum is among the minerals that were identified earlier this year in a letter from Congo's government questioning Apple about the tech company's knowledge of "blood minerals" being smuggled in its supply chain.

The decadeslong conflict in eastern Congo has produced one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with more than 120 armed groups fighting for power, land and valuable mineral resources while others try to defend their communities. Some armed groups have been accused of mass killings, rapes and other human rights violations. The violence has displaced some 6 million people in the country's east.

Blunt and bold - Kenya’s ‘truth speaker’ faces the sack

NAIROBI (BBC): Kenya's embattled Deputy President, Rigathi Gachagua, calls himself the "truthful man", William Ruto, Kenyatta's then deputy, who was angling for the presidency that his boss did not want to bequeath to him. At political rallies and in media circles, Gachagua railed against Kenyatta, often in words that other politicians would find cringe-worthy.

Before he was elected MP in 2017, little was known about the man who would, in five short years, rise to become Kenya's second-in-command. Not many people outside Gachagua's central Kenya constituency had heard of him or his style of politics. Gachagua captured the lime-light in the run-up to the 2022 elections, when he vehemently opposed President Uhuru Kenyatta's choice of preferred successor. Kenyatta was campaigning heavily for former

Prime Minister Raila Odinga. But Gachagua allied himself with Gachagua Ruto, Kenyatta's then deputy, who was angling for the presidency that his boss did not want to bequeath to him. At political rallies and in media circles, Gachagua railed against Kenyatta, often in words that other politicians would find cringe-worthy.

"Don't kill me the way your father killed JM Kariuki," he said at a rally in July 2022, referring to an MP who was killed in 1975 during the administration of Jomo Kenyatta, the nation's first president and the father of Uhuru Kenyatta. To this day, no one has been found guilty of Kariuki's death. Before he became Kenya's deputy president, police raided Gachagua's home and arrested him

in relation to a corruption and money-laundering case. The charges were dropped after he and Ruto took power following the 2022 election. He had helped Ruto win by marshalling support in Mount Kenya - the biggest voting bloc in the country. Both Gachagua and Kenyatta come from there. Kenyatta had tried to rally Mount Kenya's voters to throw their weight behind Odinga, but he failed. Long before Kenyatta became president in 2013, Gachagua had worked closely with him, including as his personal assistant for five years. But after teaming up with Ruto, Gachagua went from being Kenyatta's "confidant" to one of his harshest critics. However, since falling out with his current boss, Gachagua has apologised to

Kenyatta, saying it was "foolish" of him to have "fought my own brother". This humility is in sharp contrast to his rhetoric as Ruto's running-mate - analyst Javas Bigamo had even described Gachagua as a "feared political bulldog that Ruto needed to be able to counter President Kenyatta in the central region". Gachagua was praised as an excellent mobiliser, who had the ear of ordinary people on the ground. Yet he was probably not the person many expected to take the deputy position, given that Gachagua had only been a politician for five years and was up against more seasoned candidates. Ruto explained he had chosen Gachagua because "he is one of those leaders who are passionate about ordinary people". Politics expert Bobby Mkangi previously told

the BBC that Gachagua's ability to negotiate his way to the top "considering other names that were fronted and were known nationally" was "quite something".

But just two years after ascending to power, that ability seems to have fizzled out - leaving Gachagua butting heads with the president and in a position where many legislators are pushing for his removal. He stands accused of corruption, money-laundering, gross misconduct, insubordination and bullying public officers and six other acts of wrongdoing.

As the motion was being tabled in parliament, the MP introducing the motion, Mwengi Mutuse, said that 291 out of 349 MPs had signed the document pushing for Gachagua's removal. The signatures of two-thirds

- or 233 - of all MPs are required to impeach him. Mkangi now says the deputy president has been "unable to consolidate the support of his base and the politicians around him".

Gachagua has always been accused of being brash and aggressive - it was one of the reasons some argued against his selection to the running mate position prior to the 2022 election. But in recent months, this criticism has increased. He denies this assessment of his character, along with assertions that he alienates his fellow politicians. He says all he does is "speak the truth", which he insists has made him unpopular within certain political factions. "I will not compromise my principles," he said over the weekend as calls for his impeachment came to a crescendo.

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Keir Starmer is an unforced error machine

DAY two of Keir Starmer's reset, and it's impossible not to get caught up in the thrill of revolution. Running as the change candidate against your own administration, fewer than 100 days into it, is a genuinely exciting place to be. Has it been done before? I've got a feeling it will be again - and soon. The weekend's big news was the vanquishing of Sue Gray, the breakout star of the Sue Gray report. Starmer's erstwhile chief of staff has been made an "envoy", which is an honour on a par with having "special projects" in your job title if you work in the media. As for her vanquisher, the chief of staff role has now been subsumed by Starmer's political chief, Morgan McSweeney. Visually speaking - the only way to judge a book - McSweeney has the look of a supporting actor in a regional detective show. I see him as the local number two to the guy who's sent to an unfamiliar place (in this case, government) and forced to do something that its denizens are increasingly hostile towards (in this case, be prime minister).

In the wake of Gray's neutralising, reports that proven campaign strategist McSweeney is dismayed by the "day-to-day machinery of government" and planning a more "data-led" approach feel familiar in a way you can't quite put your finger on ... certainly not unless you're wearing hazmat gloves. Ideally, I would like Morgan to expand on them in a 20,000 word blog - it might be that we're on the point of another Shamhattan Project.

For others, meanwhile, the fear is that it could be the machinery of the personnel that is more faultily wired. Strange, really, that it's always lowlier jobs that we are told are under existential but reasonable threat from AI, when it does seem as if a robot might have made a better fist of stage-managing Starmer's last few weeks. Contrary to extensive and vicious briefing over that period, it seems Gray was not actually in charge of the news grid, which probably explains why she didn't block out a day for her own demotion. Instead, her allies have hotly claimed the grid has been run by the communications team. To which one can only say: was it, though? Certainly not so as you'd notice. Now he has finally acted to deal with dysfunction, much has been made of Starmer's "ruthlessness", which I suppose is one take on letting the aggressive leakers and plotters win so decisively. But look, I always tell myself that rewarding bad behaviour is "ruthless" - it makes giving an iPad to a child who is having a tantrum so much more strategically impressive. They won't be doing that again in a hurry!

Since we're on the subject of strategic masterstrokes, though, it is worth challenging the prevailing wisdom that Starmer's hiring of Gray was a coup. Gray was undoubtedly a perfectly well-respected Whitehall fixture, but her chief public cachet as an appointment seemed to come as a result of being a sort of online folk hero. People who were "waiting for the Sue Gray report" were also waiting for another load of deus ex machinas that they were convinced would be the key to all mythologies. Sue Gray stans were the type who made biweekly demands for the last government to "release the Russia report", even after they already had. Just as various artists are dismissed as music for people who don't really like music, so "Sue Gray" as an abstract concept always felt like politics for people who don't really know a lot about politics. Was Starmer himself one of those people? Did he think it looked smart to hire a meme? Part of me suspects he might have.

Westminster's galaxy brains love a trendy narrative, of course, but the current prevalent take that Starmer is a guy who learns from his mistakes is about three more cock-ups from being seamlessly repurposed into a narrative that he is just a guy who makes too many mistakes. Errors in politics are inevitable, which is why there isn't a whole lot of capacity for making unforced ones. It's just possible that this many, this soon, isn't an asset.

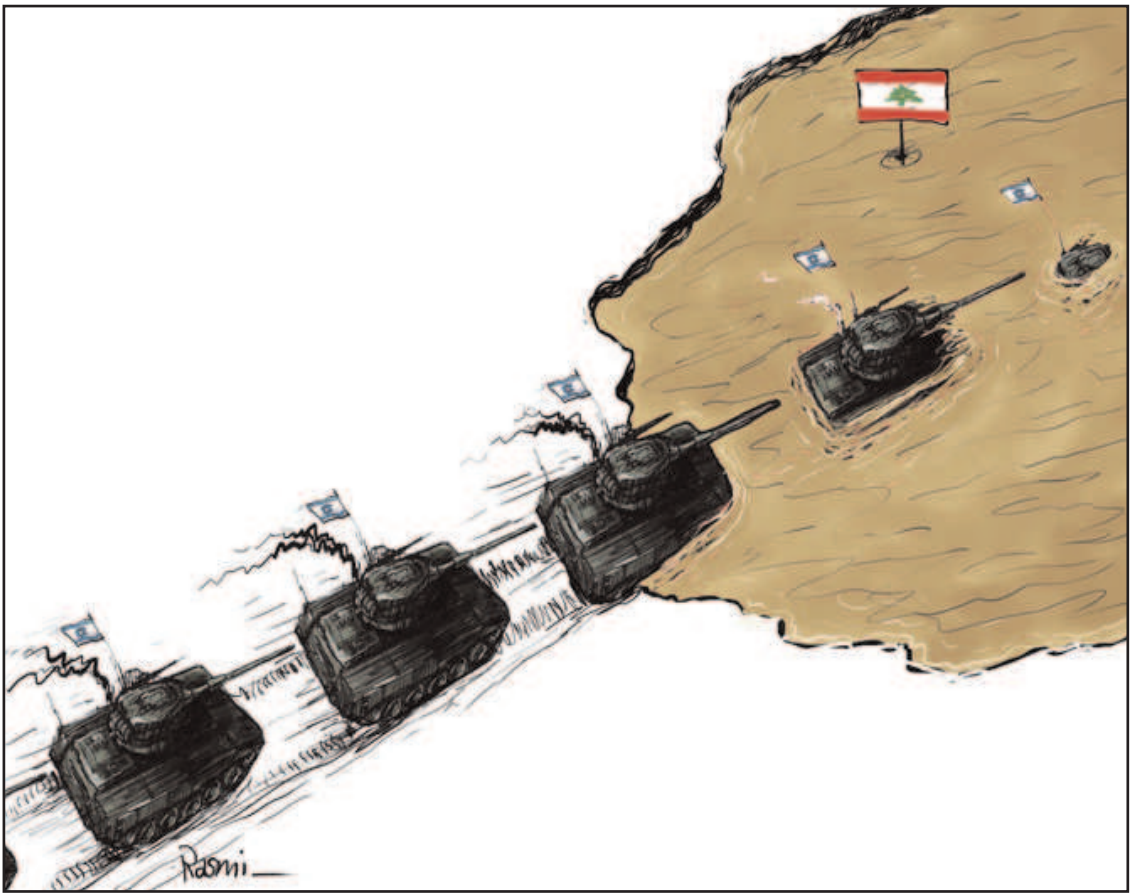
As for the way out of this, that old news grid isn't throwing up too many potential feelgood days any time soon. Agonising Halloween budget, anyone? This, of course, has been the other piece of odd politics, where Starmer and his chancellor have spent their first weeks and months dropping grim and painful hints that it's all going to be very grim and painful. According to a variety of reports, the potential targets of the budget have spent those weeks and months making arrangements to protect themselves accordingly. It's been a bit like the part in a thriller where the bad guy spends so long explaining his clever scheme that there is plenty of time to foil it.

But perhaps the most revealing thing about Starmer, as discussed here previously, is that for the last few years, he decided his persona would be telling people off. Over the other side of the dispatch box, he cycled through a series of Conservative prime ministers who ably assisted him in this task, all the time looking pained, disgusted and superior. It didn't really matter who it was - Starmer's comfort zone was sighing, tutting and wincing. This was the very clearly defined persona with which he chose to introduce himself to the British public. And yet, nobody in the world likes being told off. So the thing about someone who's always telling other people off is that they seem like a bit of a ballache who will eventually be telling you off.

And then there's that other thing - that almost cast-iron rule that any pedant publicly correcting someone's grammar or spelling in a public forum will so often make a howler themselves in the course of doing so. You have to be whiter than white yourself if you are going to make a career out of peering judgmentally through your glasses (Oliver Peoples, £294, prescription lenses not included). Starmer hasn't been. Which brings us to the other unfortunate conclusion in a week during which a poll places Labour's lead over the Conservatives at a mere one point - the sense that Labour has expended its political capital for such a tiny quantity of money and fancy things. Don't get me wrong - 30 or 40 grand is obviously a huge amount of money in terms of clothes and luxury "eyewear" - but it is an absolutely minuscule sum to spaff almost all your electoral goodwill on. At some level, it's the lack of ambition that bumps most. Not all types of shortsightedness can be fixed with designer glasses.

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EU doesn't have a diversity problem

Shada Islam

AS Ursula von der Leyen sweet-talked and bullied EU leaders to send more women to Brussels over recent weeks, I kept hoping she would also make her incoming team of European commissioners more racially diverse. Thanks to an unexpected twist of fate involving (very) complicated Belgian politics, Hadja Lahbib, Belgium's foreign minister, could soon make history as the first ever EU commissioner who is also a person of colour.

Lahbib is the daughter of Algerian immigrants who was born and grew up in the Borinage, a coal-mining and industrial region in southwestern Belgium. She must yet, like other commissioners-designate, convince the European parliament that despite some past political mishaps, she's got what it takes to become the EU commissioner for crisis management and equality, the two - rather unrelated - portfolios she has been assigned. So it is not a done deal yet.

If she gets the parliamentary thumbs up, Lahbib and the incoming EU Council president, Portugal's former prime minister António Costa, who is of Goan and Mozambican heritage, will give a much-needed reputational tweak to an EU that boasts about being "united in diversity" but whose institutions still keep no data on their staff's ethnicity and are visibly and notoriously "all-white".

But it is far from enough. Making EU institutions truly inclusive is not about changing the optics or accidental, albeit fortuitous, political appointments. It is not about tokenism and diversity washing. Having tracked the systemic underrepresentation of racial minorities and structural racism within EU institutions, I know that change requires revising staff recruitment policies and eliminating outdated anti-diversity mindsets. None of that can happen unless senior EU policymakers give racial inclusion the same attention that they are, quite correctly, paying to gender equality and, more recently, to welcoming LGBTQ+ people.

Blueprints like the commission's "diversity and inclusion in the workplace

action plan" and the five-year anti-racism action plan until 2025 need much stronger support from Von der Leyen and her team. But as with countering EU-wide racism, such top-tier backing is missing. It isn't going to get easier as both the commission and the European parliament swerve even further to the political right - and xenophobic views percolate through the system.

That is down from 3.8% last time around - and when you consider the fact that people of colour make up at least 10% of EU citizens, it makes a mockery of the EU parliament's claim to be the voice of European citizens. Mohammed Chahim, a Moroccan-Dutch MEP who is vice president of the assembly's socialists and democrats group, tells me that is not only because European political parties do not field black and brown candidates - but also because many people of colour are just not interested in becoming part of an EU ecosystem that is so clearly indifferent to their concerns. This is backed up by a recent study from the European personnel selection office that acknowledges one of the "blocking factors" stopping people of colour from applying for EU jobs. In the words of one participant, "I don't feel welcome if I don't see people like me working there".

The parliament, whose record on representing racial minorities has always been dismal, now counts only 20 MEPs of colour, equivalent to 2.8% of the overall total of 720 newly elected MEPs. That is down from 3.8% last time around - and when you consider the fact that people of colour make up at least 10% of EU citizens, it makes a mockery of the EU parliament's claim to be the voice of European citizens.

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ed in becoming part of an EU ecosystem that is so clearly indifferent to their concerns. This is backed up by a recent study from the European personnel selection office that acknowledges one of the "blocking factors" stopping people of colour from applying for EU jobs. In the words of one participant, "I don't feel welcome if I don't see people like me working there". Others accuse EU institu-

backing it needs to be extended for another five years.

I am hoping that Lahbib will use her own experience as a person of colour to re-energise the EU's flagging anti-racism agenda. Encouragingly, she has admitted that despite an initial reluctance to see herself as a role model or standard bearer for equality, she now understands that her success means a "lot for a community where people don't have the same opportunities and where people have a name like mine, which is difficult to pronounce."

Lahbib will need a very thick skin to deal with commission bureaucracy and the mainstreaming and normalisation of racist narratives in the European parliament. Von der Leyen has not exactly killed off the equality agenda, but anti-racism action has been downgraded and diluted by combining it with the monumental task of managing the EU's humanitarian operations, including responding to wars and natural disasters.

Worryingly, Lahbib's mandate does not specifically mention the need to counter anti-Muslim hatred or antisemitism, which will be dealt with by Austria's Magnus Brunner, who is commissioner-designate for internal affairs and migration. Not only is the Austrian People's party which Brunner belongs to hostile to migrants it feels do not share "Austrian values", it may end up in coalition government with the anti-Islam far-right Freedom party after its historic electoral victory last week.

Helena Dalli, the outgoing EU commissioner for equality, tells me she spends "many sleepless nights" thinking about the EU's racism problem and has tried to make sure that EU institutions become more inclusive employers. The job now falls to Lahbib, but unless Von der Leyen and the parliament play their roles, structural racism will persist. EU institutions won't lose their "Brussels so white" profile without action. The risk is they remain disconnected from and unrepresentative of a diverse and vibrant multiracial Europe at a time when dangerous far-right ideas are being normalised by the political mainstream.

On the streets of Vienna

Owen Jones

LAST Thursday, on a cool Vienna night, anti-fascist protesters thronged through the pretty boulevards of Austria's capital. The far right - in the shape of the Freedom party (FPÖ), led by bespectacled ideologue Herbert Kickl - had secured first place in September's elections, unprecedented in postwar Austria. The protesters waved placards with slogans like "FPÖ ist so 1938", referring to the year of Adolf Hitler's Anschluss annexation, and chanted "Nazis raus!" ("Nazis out!"). They were boisterous and determined, but without a clear strategy to drive back the rightwing authoritarian surge that threatens to rot western democracies from within.

What is happening in Austria should alarm you, because it reflects a wider trend. It's certainly true that the FPÖ is different from other far-right parties because it can directly trace its roots to Europe's fascist past: its first leader in the 1950s was a former Nazi functionary, and its leader in the 1990s - Jörg Haider - praised Nazi employment policies and lauded former Waffen-SS members as "decent men". When the conservative Austrian People's party (ÖVP) brought him into coalition in 2000, this breaching of the cordon sanitaire, which was supposed to separate the centre right and what lies beyond, led to EU sanctions and mass protests at home and abroad.

But the FPÖ, and the world, has changed since the days of Haider. The party has exploited the conspiratorial backlash against Covid public health measures and vaccines. Its manifesto title - Fortress Austria - reflects policy demands to deport "uninvited foreigners", suspend the right to asylum with an emergency law, and to strip migrants of rights and provisions. It embraces full-throated transphobia and demands a ban on "political Islam". It urges an end to sanctions against Russia, and is widely accused of having links to Vladimir Putin's regime. Indeed, in 2019, the party survived what some believed was an existential crisis in the form of "Ibizagate", when then vice-chancellor and FPÖ leader, Heinz-Christian Strache, was forced from office after a covertly filmed video from 2017 revealed him apparently offering state contracts to a person claiming to be a Russian investor.

The FPÖ's chief inspiration is now Viktor Orbán's authoritarian regime in neighbouring Hungary. What happened there was instructive. The ruling Fidesz party supposedly hailed from the centre right, then radicalised in power to forge what Orbán describes as an "illiberal democracy", waging war on civil society, manipulating the electoral system and rigging the media in its favour.

Last week, I walked through Vienna with Maria Mayrhofer, the founding executive director of the digital grassroots movement #aufstehn, which focused on mobilising non-voters against the far right. Austria's dark history loomed over us, literally, as we walked past the balcony of the Hofburg, where Hitler pronounced Anschluss to the assembled

crowds 86 years ago. "I think Kickl is more radicalised in his positions than Orbán," she told me ominously. If the FPÖ takes power, she feared, Austria is on "a classic authoritarian pathway. You look at Hungary - that's where we're going right now."

The political scientist Natascha Strobl fears the same: in some ways, she already lives in an authoritarian world. Subjected to relentless death threats for writing about the far right, she has to constantly guard her security. In an Austrian cafe, bustling with politicians and researchers from the nearby parliament, she recalls meeting opposition Hungarian politicians, "and they're just sitting there completely defeated, and saying 'there's nothing we can do'."

Even the leader of the ÖVP, the mainstream conservative party, Karl Nehammer, rules out forging a coalition with Kickl, describing him as a "security threat". But he has suggested a pact with the FPÖ that bypasses Kickl. The far right is in the ascendancy in Austria as it is beyond its borders: from Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany to National Rally in France, or indeed the Trumpified Republicans in the US.

There are obvious reasons why. Since the 2008 financial crash, social provision and living standards have come under attack across the west to varying degrees. Traditional social democratic parties were complicit, and far-right parties eagerly raided their traditional bases, presenting immigration as the catch-all explanation for growing social and economic insecurity. Other crises, such as the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have deepened social turmoil: absolute poverty in Austria, for example, jumped by 50% last year.

But, as elsewhere, mainstream parties decided to adopt anti-migrant rhetoric and policies, believing this would defuse the far-right threat. On the contrary, it ensured the political conversation was fixed on exactly the terrain that the far right desired, simply legitimising it further as a political force.

Talk of the "decline of the west" has long been a fixture of the far right, which variously blames immigration, Islam, multiculturalism, the assault on "traditional values", and the reckoning with historical injustices, which they believe defame the west. The truth, however, is the far-right surge is both a symptom and cause of western decline. The rolling back of social rights, economic stagnation, the convenient scapegoating of migrants by politicians keen to deflect responsibility, the mediocrity of the current crop of western leaders: here is a toxic brew.

Ever since the Hitlerites were toppled in Vienna, citizens of the west have taken democratic freedoms for granted. Well, I encountered growing pessimism about that in the Austrian capital, and it is widely shared in other western citadels. Even if Donald Trump is kept at bay across the Atlantic, a far right that increasingly rejects democratic norms is not going away. The warnings of the past, it appears, no longer shield us from a frightening future.

Georgia has a choice

Kapil Komireddi

SA L O M E Zourabichvili, soon to become Georgia's last popularly elected president, is nursing a cold when I meet her at the Orbeliani palace in Tbilisi on a scalding afternoon. Gombora, the president's handsome dog, is occupying one of the chairs in the sitting area of her elegantly furnished office. Zourabichvili's career is unique in the annals of international politics. She was born in Paris, in 1952, to a distinguished family of Georgian emigres.

Rising steadily through the French foreign service, she was appointed ambassador to Georgia in 2003. It was a historic and hopeful year in her ancestral homeland: Eduard Shevardnadze, the Soviet Union's last foreign minister and independent Georgia's second president, peacefully ceded power to his erstwhile minister

Mikheil Saakashvili in the Rose Revolution.

The new president offered Zourabichvili the foreign minister's job. Paris granted her a special dispensation, and she thrived in her new job. She even succeeded in persuading the Russians to vacate their troops from Georgian territory. Saakashvili and his allies could not abide her accomplishments. In 2005, Zourabichvili - arguably the most successful occupant of her office - was sacked. She went into opposition and Georgia quickly reverted to old ways.

Saakashvili, having overhauled the administration, purged the state of the remnants of its Soviet past, and intensified Georgia's modernisation, became a casualty of his own hubris. He misinterpreted the cordiality of Western leaders for as a cast-iron guarantee of all-weather support, walked into the Kremlin's

trap by initiating an unwinnable war against Russia, lost territory, and made up for the humiliation of defeat by tormenting his own people. Corruption returned at the highest levels, businesses were seized, the opposition was harried, and torture became prevalent.

Prosperous businesspersons and ordinary citizens still tremble at the memory of Saakashvili's last years in office. "At first Saakashvili was like a ray of hope," one Tbilisi businessman told me. "Then he became Lavrentiy Beria, real scum of a human being." Bidzina Ivanishvili, a reclusive plutocrat with a reputation for anonymous philanthropy, watched his country's degeneration from his glass palace atop Mount Mtatsminda. Georgians revered Ivanishvili for his charity. But his immense fortune -

roughly a third of Georgia's \$15 billion GDP - made him an endangered species as Saakashvili grew wild and wanton. Ivanishvili cast himself in the role of his country's saviour and stormed into politics. His Georgian Dream party, floated in 2012, annihilated the old order in the elections that followed.

In 2018, Georgian Dream backed Zourabichvili's independent candidacy for president. But anyone who believed that she would be malleable was courting disappointment. She invigorated the presidency, which had been reduced to a largely ceremonial function by then, and began dissenting from the new rulers. She reminded them by her actions that she was independent. Europe and Ukraine became the flashpoints in the intensifying strife with a government that evinced

little enthusiasm for either. Zourabichvili even defied the government to travel to foreign capitals to drum up support for what she calls Georgia's "European future".

Last year, the government tried to impeach her - and failed. Since then, she has become nothing if not more vocal in her denunciation of what she decries - without, it must be noted, a shred of hard evidence - as a "pro-Russian" regime. And as violent protests erupted in Georgia against the "foreign agents" legislation - which effectively enjoins NGOs and independent media in receipt of foreign funding to register as agents advancing the "interests of foreign powers" - Zourabichvili emerged as the highest champion of their cause. She vetoed the law, but parliament overturned her veto.

There is no proof that the law was dictated by the

Kremlin - even Ivanishvili's most trenchant critics concede privately that he is his own man, and Georgian Dream enjoys significant support among reflexively anti-Russian Georgians - but on the streets it is denounced as the "Russian law".

Zourabichvili has two months left in office. Her successor will be chosen by an electoral college, not elected by the public. She warns that this month's election in Georgia is of existential significance, but she is also upbeat. She rejects the wisdom that Georgian Dream will be re-elected at the polls on October 26 and is busy mobilising the diaspora to participate in the elections. In our conversation, Zourabichvili ranged widely, from Russia and the Caucasus to Europe and China, but her principal preoccupation remains clearing Georgia's path to Europe.

Russia’s convict soldiers put quantity over quality on battlefield

Jack Margolin

IN March of 2023, Russia's state-owned broadcaster RT aired a documentary titled **Zone of Redemption, following a group of Russian convicts deployed with the paramilitary Wagner Group paramilitary at Bakhmut. The film opens with a title card declaring that "The prisoners were given a choice: remain in prison or redeem their guilt with blood," language borrowed directly from Stalin's 1942 order instituting penal battalions for World War II.**

Russia's propaganda efforts chose not to deny the terrible reality that the state was using its prison population in the war, but to celebrate it - and even to draw a link between the present and Russia's sordid history of convict soldiers extending to the Tsarist era.

Why has Russia adopted this approach? The simplest answer is that it contributes to Russia's relative manpower advantage while allowing the state to circumvent the political costs of mobilization and deployment of conscripts. While this logic may carry grim implications, reliant as it is on the Russian population's acceptance of the death of prisoners, it fails to explain the phenomenon fully. The strategy of convict recruitment began with the Wagner Group but was then seized on by the Ministry of Defense and has now been further institutionalized. Recently passed laws allow defendants in criminal cases to have their prosecution suspended or terminated if they sign contracts with military units, creating new opportunities for Russia's Armed Forces to press suspected criminals into service in exchange for possible amnesty.

The more instructive question then becomes whether convict forces provide Russia a meaningful advantage in its war against Ukraine. Are these forces effective on the battlefield? Are they an important component of Russia's recent gains in the war? This question is particularly important when we consider the evolution of the strategy, the competition between the Wagner Group and the military over the right to use prisoners, and Ukraine's own more recent smaller-scale use of convict recruits.

The Wagner Group's chief curator, Russian businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin, made Russia's use of convict recruits public in September of 2022. His organization released videos of Prigozhin personally recruiting inmates from Russian prisons as part of an effort that they would dub "Project K."

He was upfront with the would-be recruits: In his signature style, Prigozhin declared that their survival was not guaranteed. But that after six months of service, they would be returned home with a pardon. Wagner ruled out convicts who had been convicted of sexual crimes and terrorism, but nonetheless succeeded in gathering and deploying tens of thousands from Russia's prison population. The exact number is prohibitively diffi-

cult to determine from statistics published by the Russian state. More shocking even than the scale or publicity of this recruitment was how these convicts were used on the battlefield. The Wagner Group adapted its assault detachment-centric strategy that leveraged small, agile units of dismounted infantry to exploit the new influx of relatively low-value recruits. Convicts had varying levels of training, and Wagner was less concerned with their survival. This made them a critical element of Wagner's approach to the battle of attrition against Ukrainian forces at Bakhmut.

Those who survived were often rewarded with amnesty and returned to civilian life. Those who attempted to desert or flee were summarily executed. A still more interesting class of convict recruits were rewarded for their battlefield successes with field promotion and official recognition of their achievements. Among these, a small number would even go on to take part in Wagner's operations in Africa, evidence that the organization saw that they were useful enough to be deployed beyond Ukraine.

Wagner used artillery to soften entrenched Ukrainian positions, creating opportunities for assault detachments to advance. Small teams, usually comprised of convict recruits, would approach entrenched Ukrainian positions on foot before the main assault. They would attempt to first suppress the Ukrainian position and then seize it through rapid advancement.

Being part of this initial wave was extremely risky. The soldiers making these forays were unprotected by vehicles, entering trenches or buildings where Ukrainians were often prepared to meet them with small arms fire. These teams were supported by nearby fire groups using automatic grenade launchers and mortars. But in the close-quarters urban combat of Bakhmut, this often posed as great a risk to Wagner as their Ukrainian adversaries.

The ability to combine drone-assisted artillery fire with mobile infantry teams allowed Wagner to push into Ukrainian positions that could then be consolidated by more valuable, experienced troops, who would then dig in and restart the process. This approach was vital to Wagner's eventual capture of Bakhmut, though a terrifically costly one - Prigozhin himself claimed that Wagner lost twenty thousand men, a figure corroborated by Mediazona and the BBC.

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By the first months of 2023, Wagner was losing its monopoly on convict recruitment. Prigozhin declared in February that Russian authorities had officially halted their intake from Russian prisons. This was a small aspect of the broader competition between

Wagner and the Ministry of Defense that would culminate in Wagner's attempted mutiny in June 2023, and his death two months later. It was more than an effort to stimmy Wagner however - Russia's armed forces were beginning to shoulder into the convict recruitment space themselves. Into the spring of 2023, international media identified units of convict recruits under Russia's Ministry of Defense referred to as "Storm Z." That June, Russia passed a law allowing convicts to join the armed forces and began incorporating convicts into units redubbed "Storm V." These units were themselves incorporated into existing Russian military and irregular units, from the 8th Guards Combined Arms Army to the forces of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic.

The effectiveness of Storm Z and Storm V units has been mixed, as they fulfill roles from relieving exhausted Russian units to acting as elite shock troops. These convict troops faced conditions that were widely reported as being poor, exploitative, and dangerous. According to Russian independent media outlet Agentstvo, non-convict soldiers were even sent into Storm Z units as a form of punishment. They might enter combat after training that can last as long as a month or as short as three days.

This pattern mirrors a broader tendency among the Russian Armed Forces to adopt practices that proved effective with the Wagner Group, from the assault

detachment structure to the popularization of PMCs that are in practice irregular units subordinate to the Defense Ministry. The effectiveness of convict recruits in the Russian military is largely dependent on context and incentives, like many aspects of the Wagnerization of the Russian Armed Forces.

In the case of Wagner, specific operational practices and the use of convict recruits were effective in specific contexts - such as the limited goals of the organization at Bakhmut. The Wagner Group also had specific incentives. They needed to win at Bakhmut, even if it was a pyrrhic victory, to prove their effectiveness in comparison to the Russian military and to consequently secure their future support and financing from the state. As a result, using these convict recruits effectively to achieve Wagner's battlefield aims was paramount, even if it meant losing them in vast numbers.

In the case of Storm Z and Storm V units, much like the other irregular units spawned by the Defense Ministry, the primary measure of their effectiveness is in their ability to mobilize fighters. These units' operational effectiveness is more difficult to guarantee, so their primary aim is increasing the number of men deployed.

In this regard, despite the shrinking number of Russian convicts who are viable candidates for service, they have succeeded. New laws allowing for the recruitment of suspected criminals broaden this aperture to allow the Russian armed forces to continue to draw from the most vulnerable elements of Russia's population. However, this does little to make these forces more effective in the field. Their impact is still more difficult to measure against the social costs of the program: convicts who are given amnesty and return to their home communities frequently commit violent crimes, making the approach increasingly unpopular.

Consequently, the battlefield impact of Russia's contemporary efforts is best considered in the context of the range of parallel projects aimed at deploying soldiers who are neither conscripts nor mobilized. When taken together with Russia's hybrid efforts to use "volunteer," "PMC," and reserve units to buttress their manpower advantage, convict recruitment deepens Russia's advantages and exacerbates Ukraine's dilemmas. However, the sustainability of these efforts is limited. Russia cannot rely indefinitely on recruiting convicts to avoid additional waves of unpopular mobilization. The long-term impacts of convicts on the outcome of the war will be dependent on Kyiv and its Western allies' ability to impose political costs on Russia, forcing Moscow to make still more painful decisions if they continue to wage war against Ukraine.

The Moscow Times

The Quangocracy now governs Britain

Philip Johnston

THE expectation that the first 100 days of an administration will determine the rest of its lifespan is something of a contrivance. Why have governments become fixated on the figure? I once thought it had something to do with Napoleon Bonaparte, whose return from exile on Elba to his defeat at Waterloo and the restoration of Louis XVIII to the French throne was known as the Hundred Days (it was actually 110).

But the real culprit was America's President Franklin D Roosevelt, who first used the 100-day gambit to persuade voters that he was the man with the required energy and decisiveness to tackle the Great Depression. Later, President John F Kennedy deployed it to great effect. Since then "the first 100 days" has become the yardstick by which to measure presidential effectiveness and, like many Americanisms, it has crept over here.

This weekend marks the first 100 days of the new Labour government and if a coherent agenda was supposed seamlessly to unfold during that time we have yet to see it. For a party that claimed to have a plan for running the country it has made a pretty poor fist of it so far, with in-fighting leading to the defenestration of the Downing Street chief of staff Sue Gray. Since she was meant to be the interface between the politicians and officialdom, this is a pretty serious loss. As a former senior civil servant, she was expected to know which levers to pull in Whitehall to get the right results.

But over the past 25 years or so, these levers have had nothing on the other end. The powers of the government and of parliament have been given away to outside bodies. Foremost among these, of course, was the European Union, and, since we have left, sovereignty should have been restored in full. However, in a number of crucial areas this has been proxied out. The first act of the new Labour Government in 1997 was to hand full control of monetary policy to the Bank of England and a committee of faceless economists.

Supporters say it ushered in a long period of interest rate stability,

though, as the cost of borrowing was close to zero for many years, that is a questionable claim. We also do not know the counterfactual - what would have happened had there been no change during what was a fairly benign era of low inflation until recently. The Bank made serious errors as inflationary pressures grew, but it is Government ministers who get it in the neck, not the governor. If you are going to be blamed, why not have control?

The same is true of the Office for Budget Responsibility, set up in 2010 ostensibly to offer an independent and authoritative analysis of the UK's public finances. The OBR has become less of an auditor than a straitjacket constraining the Chancellor's room for manoeuvre. A good thing, too, you might say - except that the Chancellor should be accountable to parliament and ultimately to the electorate for decisions. How many people know the name of the OBR chief? The most powerful of these anonymous bodies is arguably the Climate Change Committee, which has the statutory power to make sure the Government sticks to an increasingly improbable net zero timetable.

Then there is the Supreme Court, 15 years old this week and another innovation that constrains governance because it can overturn the law of the land. In 2009, Tony Blair's government decided to dismantle what had been a perfectly workable, if somewhat haphazard, constitutional settlement. In doing so, it shifted the balance of powers within the British system, establishing a European style constitutional court which sits uneasily within a common law jurisdiction without a written constitutional code.

We have uprooted centuries of ad hoc but effective arrangements in order to bow before the phoney gods of modernisation. Even the terminology has changed. Around the turn of the century, political discourse began to refer less to "government" and more to "the executive", counterpoised with the concept of "the judiciary". People no longer spoke of a "balance of powers", the long-standing British constitutional dispensation,

but to a "separation of powers", along US lines. To that end, Labour abolished the Law Lords and set up a Supreme Court physically removed from parliament, transforming its outlook and priorities. The growing use of judicial review and the rise of so-called judicial activism has upended the relationship between the three interlocking pillars of our constitution: the legislature, the government and the courts.

Few politicians appear fully to understand the scale of this change. Kemi Badenoch is one who does, having identified the restraints imposed by arm's-length bodies as factors in the failure to carry out a properly conservative programme in government. But the Tories were complicit in giving away these powers, and wresting them back now is virtually impossible. Nor can the bodies that wield them be ignored. When Liz Truss brought forward an emergency Budget and froze the OBR out of the process the results were calamitous.

These constraints apply not just to the Tories. Labour, too, will find decisions dictated to them by committees beyond their control, setting impossible targets, hemmed in by rules reinforced by the courts. Just look at the Rwanda policy for an example of a government unable to get its own way despite the support of parliament. Today, Rachel Reeves is to deliver the "major measures" for her October 30 Budget to the OBR for its perusal. A shake of the head and the Chancellor's entire strategy goes down the pan.

Since the OBR was a Tory construct, a new Labour government had the opportunity to dispense with it; and yet Ms Reeves is planning to give it even more power by introducing a statutory "fiscal lock" so the body cannot be sidelined, as it was in 2022. If ever a politician has created a rod for her own back, here it is.

What is the point of being in government if your decisions are always being second-guessed by unaccountable organisations? Sir Keir Starmer may have a majority of 165, but as he approaches his 100 days he has about as much chance of deciding his own fate as Napoleon did on the road to Waterloo.

Why Britain is the illegal migration capital of Europe

Annabel Denham

WHEN do we say enough is enough? At what point do we finally accept that the status quo is intolerable, and will only deteriorate if we refuse to change course? Perhaps we'll be pushed beyond our limits by the news Britain might now be the illegal migration capital of Europe. Or on hearing that some 973 people crossed the Channel in a single 24-hour period over the weekend. Nearly 1,000 people, to be housed, processed, or alternatively slip between our fingers, melting into the population. Arriving in one day.

For me, it's the human tragedy piled upon human tragedy. The moment we say the boats must be stopped, whatever it takes, is when a two-year old is trampled to death after being crammed onto a boat with 90 migrants on board. When a toddler is crushed and suffocated in some filthy, cold dinghy packed - if the images of these vessels are any indication - full of fit, young men.

According to reports, those injured in this harrowing incident were cared for in Northern France. But others, presumably witnesses to this crime, were allowed to continue their journey to Britain. It is inconceivable that the police would display such nonchalance in any other scenario. Had a child and three others died on Lake Windermere, would local cops have waved their fellow voyagers on?

Immigration laws, the American economist Thomas Sowell once said, are the only laws that are discussed in terms of how to help people who break them. This recent Channel tragedy, which was far from a lone incident,

exemplifies how we treat these illegal migrants as victims without agency - in much the same way the Left do drug addicts. It's true that narcotics dealers will use devicous means to get vulnerable "customers" hooked. But many of those users are still entering into a voluntary exchange.

The Home Office estimates around a fifth of illegal migrants are aged 17 and under. Some will have been trafficked against their will. But what of the others, including Ardit Binaj - the Albanian who came to Britain illegally in 2014 in a lorry before being arrested the following year for burglary? He spent six months of a two-and-a-half-year jail sentence in prison here, but just five months after being deported, re-entered Britain, had a baby and married his Lithuanian girlfriend, who had leave to remain. He has now won a right to stay in Britain under the ECHR.

Most would consider the injured party in this exasperating tale to be the people who were burgled and robbed. Or perhaps British taxpayers, who paid to house him in our jails. Yet we cling to the narrative that none of these illegal migrants - which include Binaj when he first entered the UK - is making a conscious choice to leave a safe country to come to Britain. We do so, I suspect, because it allows us to duck difficult decisions about how we deter people from crossing the Channel.

As an island nation, our pull factors ought to be weaker than elsewhere in Europe. Yet researchers at Oxford University have this week suggested some

745,000 illegal migrants are living here - more than double the number resident in France. Other analysis suggests this may be an underestimate, with the true figure closer to 1.2 million. Why? We have a large number of migrant communities which can host illegals, relatively lax rules which allow them to work and a Home Office which refuses to crack down on numbers. Nearly 68,000 asylum claims were granted in the year to June - more than triple the 21,436 in the previous year.

Labour believe they can stop the boats by "smashing the gangs". They can't. In the 10 months to November 2023, Immigration Enforcement made 230 arrests for people smuggling, 110 of whom were convicted. Yet still tens of thousands are making the journey.

The criminals involved in this heinous trade procure cheap, unsafe vehicles, before charging extortionate prices for each place on a boat. Given the extraordinarily high profits, breaking one or two gangs will have little impact. In fact, removing some of the bad guys will mean migrants have difficulty finding boats, driving prices up. As returns for the smugglers increase, more bad guys will enter the market. And we're back to Square One. How do we know this? Because it's analogous to the "War on Drugs". The only way to stop the boats is to crush demand. We could do that by detaining migrants, denying access to benefits, and threats of deportation. Of course, we could do it by nodding all applicants through. But it's doubtful even Yvette Cooper believes the current "strategy" will stem the tide.

The Telegraph

Where both presidential candidates’ tax promises go wrong

Veronique de Rugy

VOTERS are understandably perplexed by Kamala Harris' economic agenda, on which her campaign has offered little substance and little more than a string of vague promises. But when you follow the policy breadcrumbs, the vice president's intentions become clear: She plans a continuation of the same economic policies we've seen over the last four years. The weirdest thing is how similar many of her proposals are to those of Donald Trump.

The Harris-Walz campaign policy booklet is light on substance but rich in tax credits for small businesses, first-time homeowners, and other selected industries. Harris wants to dramatically expand the child tax credit, especially for the first baby. She also wants more credits for housing developers and Obamacare customers.

Her campaign is copying the Biden-Harris administration's playbook of granting large tax credits and deductions to many special interests. Legislation under the current administration unleashed what could cost \$1.8 trillion over 10 years in energy subsidies alone. Meanwhile, the CHIPS Act extended additional tax credits to huge semiconductor companies, including Intel. Tax subsidies in 2021 amounted to \$1.2 trillion, which shows how much previous administrations also liked handing out tax subsidies. But the Biden-Harris administration certainly expanded them dramatically; they now stand at \$2 trillion.

Former President Trump also wants to hand out new tax credits and deductions left and right. He wants to cut income tax on tips (Harris embraces this too), tax credits for family caregivers and an extended child tax credit, and homeownership incentives, according to his campaign platform. He also wants to add tax credits for domestic manufacturing in ways that closely resembles the CHIPS Act, which some Republicans supported. Trump has also promised to exempt Social Security benefits from taxes and overtime pay.

While tax credits might sound good to voters who could benefit from them, they are a bad deal for taxpayers and the economy. They

usually don't grow the economy, because they often don't encourage work, savings or investment. When they do encourage those things, tax credits can subtract from growth by directing capital and effort toward activities picked by the government for political reasons, rather than those picked by investors and consumers for sound economic reasons.

Tax credits are also quite wasteful, as many reward activities that already happened or were going to happen with or without the incentive. Most projects that received the Inflation Reduction Act tax credits were announced well before the credits were created.

In the worst-case scenario, tax credits create disincentives to work. Take both candidates' extended child tax credit. Harris would like \$6,000 for the first baby and \$3,600 for subsequent kids. Trump's running mate, JD Vance, has floated the idea of a \$5,000 per kid credit. (Neither has a plan to pay for it.) The credit would sit atop some 80 existing welfare programs - many already targeting families - and would disperse with work requirements. Parents who don't make enough money to pay federal income taxes would receive some cash from the government.

Research by economist Kevin Corinth shows that "families with little or no earnings are already eligible for tens of thousands of dollars in government benefits." Adding more cash may be seen as helpful, but disincentivizing work leads to negative outcomes for families with children at the highest risk of being - and remaining - in poverty. Economists have shown that parental work, not government welfare, is the best way out of poverty.

Harris' \$25,000 tax credit for first-time homeowners would also increase prices. There is widespread agreement that high housing prices largely result from restrictions on housing supply caused by too many rules and regulations. Without dramatic changes to city, state and county regulations, this federal subsidy would further jack up the price of housing by boosting demand while doing

nothing to increase ordinary Americans' access to housing. The same would be true with Trump's proposal. (According to the Republican platform, if reelected, Trump wants to "promote homeownership through Tax Incentives and support for first-time buyers.")

As for tax credits directed toward corporations, you've perhaps heard a different name: corporate welfare. Study after study finds that a vast majority of these credits go to a relative few large and well-connected companies. For a recent example, the Philanthropy Roundtable's Jack Salmon looked at the tax credits extended and the expanded spending under the Inflation Reduction Act and found that three-quarters of benefits went to 15 large corporations.

Basically, Harris wants more of the same unfair, unproductive tax handouts. And Trump seems to agree with that plan. Worse yet, neither of them have a plan to pay for these handouts. This is incredibly irresponsible when we already have a \$2-trillion deficit that would rise to \$4 trillion within 10 years under current policies.

The other troubling approach is Harris' support for policing pricing practices at grocery stores. America's economy is resilient when prices are determined by a push and pull between producers and consumers.

Food prices have increased dramatically in the last four years, but not because of price gouging or corporate greed. Instead, this high-level inflation in four decades was brought on by the federal government's decision to flood the economy with spending and stimulus and the Biden administration's refusal to scale back as the COVID-19 pandemic waned. Artificially low prices will lead to empty shelves and quality deterioration.

Harris also wants to cap banking and credit card late fees as part of a larger effort to eliminate misleadingly labeled "junk fees." This might sound good, but once the government forces companies to lower fees, delayed payments will increase, making lending money riskier. When that happens, the only tools left for credit card com-

The Los Angeles Times



PESHAWAR: Labourers busy in their work during construction of a building in outskirts of City.

If we want to build a better future, we all need to eat more fish

NEW YORK: As the international community continues to grapple with the future of humanity, most recently UN Summit of the Future, the question of how to feed and nourish a growing population without destroying the planet have become increasingly pressing.

An additional 150 million people went hungry last year compared with 2019, with more than 730 million people undernourished worldwide, and the outlook remains precarious. At the same time, food systems are under growing pressure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, with evidence that they are responsible for approximately a third of all human-caused emissions, two-thirds of which are generated by land-based systems.

Sustainably meeting future global nutritional needs will therefore increasingly rely on fish and other aquatic foods, which have a lower environmental impact than terrestrial animal-sourced foods, yet provide the same – if not greater – nutritional returns. Aquatic foods already make a significant contribution to global nutrition. The fish currently landed by small-scale fisheries globally represent half of the recommended nutrient intake of omega-3 fatty acids of 987 million women. And farmed bivalves like oysters and mussels, for example, require limited freshwater and land, while providing 76 times more vitamin B-12 and five times more iron than chicken.

But protecting and maintaining fish stocks and aquatic ecosystems to sustain the necessary production and supply also requires more investment and innovation. As of 2017, about a third of global fish stocks were overfished, while the impacts of climate

change have undermined production through changing ocean temperatures, salinity levels and excessive algal growth, or eutrophication.

Despite the enormous potential of aquatic food systems to feed the world more sustainably, a significant financing gap persists in research and development. The investment gap in African aquaculture alone amounts to \$12bn annually. Addressing this gap is essential for recovering global progress towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The food systems of the future will need more fish, and the future starts now.

In many of the countries where my organisation, WorldFish, works, we have seen the benefits of investing in increased access to fish and aquatic foods. For example, introducing fresh tilapia into school meals in East Timor, where fish consumption remains significantly below the global average, increases the intake of protein, omega-3, vitamins and minerals among children to support healthy growth and development. And adding fish powder to school meals three times a week in Assam, India, has reduced stunting and increased the average body mass index of children.

WorldFish and our partners have also developed a range of innovations to sustainably increase aquatic food production to ensure these nutritional benefits can reach more people, especially vulnerable groups, such as children and women.

For example, scientists have used selective breeding to improve strains of commonly caught fish, such as tilapia and rohu carp, so they mature up to 37 percent faster with the same resources. This means a greater return for fish farmers, and more nutritious

food reaching supply chains faster at no additional cost to the farmer or the environment. Cutting-edge techniques to sequence common fish diseases have also helped to improve fish health, simultaneously increasing production and driving down emissions caused by losses to disease.

And improvements in sustainable fish and aquatic food production have opened up the potential for new trade corridors, such as the Programme for Improving Fisheries Governance and Blue Economy Trade Corridors (PROFISHBLUE) in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

By scaling up these innovations around the world, we can unlock enormous gains in food and nutrition security, and, in turn, improved health and development, livelihoods and equality. Research shows the fishing and aquaculture sector could be producing six times more than it is today under sustainable management, and greater affordability from increased supply would help avoid an estimated 166 million micronutrient deficiencies by 2030. In addition, with more fish available, fisherfolk need to spend less time and fuel at sea, bringing down emissions by up to 50 percent.

The future nutritional needs of the global population are inescapable and must be met through the most sustainable diets and production systems. Fish and aquatic foods are nutrient-rich and, when produced using the latest best practices, are sustainable and climate-resilient. A new Pact for the Future must therefore include a commitment to leverage fish and aquatic foods as the cornerstone of the food systems of the future, starting from today. — Agencies

Leading the global effort to combat desertification

RIYADH: Desertification is a major environmental issue that affects Saudi Arabia and many other countries worldwide, leaving billions of people at risk of food insecurity and the loss of livelihoods as a result of soil degradation.

In response to these major challenges, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification aims to unite countries and organizations to develop effective measures to combat the problem, with Saudi Arabia taking the lead. The 16th session of the Parties — COP16 — of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification will take place in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, from Dec. 2 to 13, coinciding with the convention's 30th anniversary.

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 bears the Kingdom's environmental goals. Part of this is the Saudi Green Initiative — a blueprint for addressing desertification through afforestation, reforestation, and sustainable agriculture. The UNCCD has adopted a resolution calling on the international community to enhance efforts to halt and reverse land degradation by sharing information, finances, experience, and technology to help restore affected areas and stop further damage.

Saudi Arabia provided valuable recommendations to the conference and unveiled several steps it intends to take to enhance land reclamation. It also promised to contribute a large amount of money to fight desertification globally. The Kingdom has enlisted the support of several countries, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies to share expertise. For instance, Saudi Arabia is working with African and Asian nations to transfer its knowledge of afforestation processes.

In doing so, it effectively addresses factors that contribute to desertification, such as poor farming practices. It has also developed sustainable solutions for various regions and climatic conditions. Saudi Arabia's leadership at the UNCCD has set a strong example for other countries in the Middle East and around the world. Its aggressive policymaking and concern for the environment have inspired others to enact solutions. — Agencies

Angola nearly lost its national animal to poaching

ANGOLIA: With its long, ridged horns and muscular build, the giant sable antelope is a majestic sight - and a rare one at that. This particular antelope, endemic only to Angola, in southwest Africa, is critically endangered, with a population of just a few hundred. While its situation is still precarious, the giant sable is a story of conservation success - bringing an almost extinct animal back from the brink.

The giant sable antelope was first discovered in the early 20th century and went on to become Angola's national animal. However, due to their striking horns, the antelopes soon became a target for poachers, says renowned Angolan conservationist Pedro Vaz Pinto.

In 1975, their prospects took a turn for the worse when a civil war broke out in Angola following its independence from Portugal. Over the next 27 years, the conflict devastated the country's wildlife and the giant sable was no exception. The war led to intensive poaching for the animal's meat and horns. Habitat loss, and a lack of conservation measures, exacerbated the problem.

"Initially, no one really knew if the giant sable had survived the civil war," says Vaz Pinto. A biologist with a passion for wildlife and a background in field research throughout Africa, Vaz Pinto first became interested in the plight of the giant sable simply because no one else was looking into the matter, he tells CNN.

"It took years until I finally was completely drawn into it, and then there was no turning back," he says. In 2003, after the war had ended, Vaz Pinto organized a small team to investigate whether any giant sables remained.

They took a van and drove through Cangandala National Park, in the north of the country, where locals had reported sightings. There, the team set up cameras throughout the 630-square-kilometer (240-square-mile) area. A year later, their photos would prove that a small population did exist. However, as Vaz Pinto would later come to find out, they were all female.

"It took a while to actually sink in and accept the reality of what was happening: this was extinction, an extinction vortex, taking place in front of our eyes," he says. "We needed a bull." Soon after, Vaz Pinto established the Giant Sable Conservation Project to begin protecting the species and boosting its population. With no evidence, only a hunch, Vaz Pinto and his team traveled to Luando Integral Nature Reserve, a remote, biodiverse habitat where giant sable antelopes were previously known to live. In 2009, through DNA collected via dung samples, they identified that at least one bull lived in the reserve. Vaz Pinto and his team loaded into a helicopter to begin

their search, deciding to zero in on where the sample was collected.

"As we are moving towards the spot, there's a giant sable bull standing there at the very same spot," he recalls. "So that was just like magic, and then in the subsequent days, we found, like, six more bulls." One of the bulls was transported back to Cangandala via helicopter and placed in a fenced sanctuary with the females to help revive the population. Today, the sanctuary in Cangandala has a population of about 100 animals, Vaz Pinto says, which is still growing. His team also monitors the wild roaming population left in Luando through GPS collars and drones.

"The area is still under a tremendous poaching pressure," Vaz Pinto says. "We have five sable herds left, so we try to keep them with an active GPS collar all the time so we can provide some protection to that area." Before Angola's independence, the giant sable population was estimated to be around 2,000 to 2,500 animals. Restoring it to that level will take time. "I think we could set up a short to medium term objective of getting the animals back to 500, and maybe in the medium term to long term to 1,000, 1,500," says Vaz Pinto.

He is proud to say they have brought the animal back from the brink of extinction, but he remains cautiously optimistic about its status. "It's undeniable that we have made a lot of progress, but if we stop, if we do nothing, it can all go down." Vaz Pinto is also the director at the Kissama Foundation, an NGO that focuses on wildlife conservation and environmental education across the country. His colleague Vladimir Russo says teaching local people and younger generations about the importance of wildlife is a key part to helping conserve not just the giant sable, but all species. "We really try to raise awareness (through) workshops, work with the communities, different institutions, (and we) produce a number of materials from posters, flyers, books and games," Russo says.

Vaz Pinto would love to give every Angolan an opportunity to see a giant sable up close. "It's a very powerful experience and I can see people change after that. They become enormously more in tune with the need to protect the antelope and (understand) the environmental efforts that we are doing," he says. Going forward, he believes management, funding, and training are necessary to continue restoring the giant sable population. "It's a bit of a rollercoaster, lots of setbacks, but lots and lots of achievements as well," he says. "I really hope that what we're doing with the giant sable is replicated at the larger scale for the whole country."

CNN

Bright lights detected by NASA telescopes

LONDON: Two telescopes have spotted the closest pair of supermassive black holes to date. The duo, only about 300 light-years apart, were observed in different wavelengths of light using NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory and the Hubble Space Telescope.

While black holes are invisible against the dark void of space, these two blaze brightly as the gas and dust they feed on is accelerated and heated to high temperatures. Both celestial objects, which circle around one another, are known as active galactic nuclei. Active galactic nuclei are supermassive black holes that release bright jets of material and high winds that can shape the very galaxies where they are found.

The black hole duo is the closest pair found through visible and X-ray light. While other black hole pairs have been observed before, they are usually much farther apart. Astronomers discovered these black holes dancing around one another at the center of a pair of colliding galaxies called MCG-03-34-64, which is 800 million light-years away.

Astronomers serendipitously found the black holes when Hubble's observations revealed three spikes of bright light within the glowing gas of a galaxy. They published their discovery Monday in The Astrophysical Journal.

"We were not expecting to see something like this," said lead study author Anna Trindade Falcão, a postdoc-

toral researcher at the Center for Astrophysics | Harvard & Smithsonian in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in a statement. "This view is not a common occurrence in the nearby universe, and told us there's something else going on inside the galaxy." The team was intrigued when Hubble picked up on three optical diffraction spikes in a concentrated region of the MCG-03-34-64 galaxy. Diffraction spikes appear when light from a small cosmic region bends around the mirror inside telescopes.

Hubble's observations were made in optical light, which is visible to the human eye, but the astronomers weren't sure what they were seeing. Falcão's team took another look at the galactic region with Chandra in X-ray light. When the scientists observed the galaxy using Chandra, they were able to pinpoint two powerful sources of X-ray light that matched the optical light sources spotted by Hubble, Falcão said. "We put these pieces together and concluded that we were likely looking at two closely spaced supermassive black holes."

The team also consulted archival observation radio wave data collected by the Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array of radio telescopes near Socorro, New Mexico. The black hole duo was also found to release energetic radio waves. "When you see bright light in optical, X-rays, and radio wavelengths, a lot of things

can be ruled out, leaving the conclusion these can only be explained as close black holes. When you put all the pieces together it gives you the picture of the (active galactic nuclei) duo," Falcão said.

Meanwhile, the third diffraction spike observed by Hubble has an unknown origin, and the team requires more data to understand what it could be. The source of light might be from gas that was shocked by an energetic release of material from one of the black holes. "We wouldn't be able to see all of these intricacies without Hubble's amazing resolution," Falcão said.

Astronomers have observed pairs of black holes that are closer together than these two through radio telescopes, but those duos haven't been observed in other wavelengths of light. Both supermassive black holes once served as the centers of their respective galaxies, but a galactic merger brought the two objects much closer together. Eventually, their close spiral will result in a merger in about 100 million years, according to NASA, causing an energetic release of gravitational waves, or ripples in the fabric of space and time. Such gravitational waves created by the collisions of supermassive black holes could be detected in the future by LISA, the European Space Agency-led Laser Interferometer Space Antenna mission that's expected to launch in the mid-2030s. — Agencies

It's another British multimillionaire's solemn farewell tour

Marina Hyde

ALWAYS intriguing to watch the emergence of a new publicity circuit, so the warmest of welcomes to the loose collective of multimillionaires currently using their well-earned platforms to announce their imminent departure from the UK. If their number has an indisputable star at the moment, it is the Pimlico Plumbers founder Charlie Mullins, who resembles the world's oldest boyband member, and sports so much dermal filler that I can only assume that even he lacks the drain rods to address it. Goes without saying I have always had a HUGE amount of time for him. Charlie claims to "often" be mistaken for Rod Stewart, presumably by moles or pavement satirists.

But you may recognise him from various legal challenges to Brexit, and – last year – the suggestion that "someone should kill" London's "Muslim mayor", Sadiq Khan. Back during the Brexit years, Mullins declared: "Nobody can tell me to shut the window on 500 million customers in the EU, and £225bn worth of trade." Then, this year, he opted to throw his lot in with Nigel Farage's Reform party. Please, please don't try to rationalise it! Just let it flood your home like an uninsured act of God.

Over the past week or so, Charlie has graced media outlets including the Times, the Telegraph, the Mail and GB News, breaking 67 million hearts by informing the nation that, because of what he suspects will be Labour's incipient tax raid, he is selling up and moving to Marbella and Dubai. Truly the biathlon of

relocation for the international arseoisie.

Clearly, leaving a country should be like leaving Twitter (I decline to call it X): just stop posting. There really is absolutely no need to explain "with a heavy heart", and despite "this place being amazing in the good years", that you are now not going to bless it with your presence any longer. Honestly: just log off.

Alas, Charlie Mullins finds himself simply unable to log off the UK without fanfare, granting a series of landmark interviews on the matter, in which our crystal-tipped boy pensioner, 71, touches on both his fears for inheritance tax and his future with his fiancée, Ra Ra, 33. It was only last year that they were disclosing their plans to marry in St Paul's cathedral. "We're allowed to do that because I've got an OBE," explained Charlie, who will now presumably have to plight his latest troth in one of Dubai's architectural triumphs – a mall in the shape of a gold bar, perhaps, or a phallic golf hotel.

It must be said that the farewell interviews also seem to serve in part as lengthy estate agent's adverts for what is variously described as his £10m and £12m London riverside penthouse, which various publications assure us is packed with "art and artefacts" Charlie has chosen himself. Squinting at the photos, I would say most pieces fit into the latter category rather than the former. I am looking at a wall-mounted illuminated question mark – certainly makes you think – and an antique bronze skeleton holding two bottles of Moët that even the leading cultural institutions of Dubai may

think twice about accepting on loan.

As for things that should be hung in a gallery, I cherish the photograph from the day of one Brexit legal challenge, where Mullins's personalised Bentley is parked half on the pavement directly in front of the door of the Royal Courts of Justice. Restrictions, of course, are for other people – all those boring little bods whose taxes are extracted by PAYE and don't regard percentage contributions to wider society as an act of personal heroism. Not for them the epithet "wealth creator" – but then, Charlie does epitomise that particular self-importance of those who feel that wealth is not merely its own reward, but should buy them a whole row of seats at the table as well. One of Mullins's justifications for joining Reform was an affronted "Tories not speaking to me!"

The sense that other, lesser people are now being spoken to for five minutes by the governing party is evidently too much to bear for Charlie, and supposedly for record numbers of other millionaires fleeing for more tax-efficient climes. Those figures are all somewhat "citation needed". But even taken on their own terms, they indicate a view that calcified remarkably over the past 14 years – of the UK as a place for capital investment at the right return, but not for social investment. We shall have to see if Labour is skilled and visionary enough to reset that; early signs are not wholly encouraging. But in the meantime, have we really "lost" Charlie Mullins? Or have we, happily, finally found the stopcock for him?



In brief

Pakistan set to host T20 WC

LAHORE (Web Desk): The T20 Blind Cricket World Cup is set to take place in Pakistan next month in November. The Indian Blind Cricket Association is currently awaiting a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Ministry of Sports and the government to send their team. This will be the first time Pakistan would host the T20 World Cup, while India had previously hosted all three editions, winning twice and Bangladesh once. Additionally, the Indian Blind Cricket Association has announced a 26-member squad for the tournament, with a training camp scheduled to begin on October 27.

Stokes in line for 2nd Test

MULTAN (AFP): England captain Ben Stokes looks on course to return for the second Test against Pakistan, starting in Multan on Tuesday. The 33-year-old had missed the first Test which England won under stand-in skipper Ollie Pope by an innings and 47 runs on Friday. An England team spokesman said Stokes practised with the team on Sunday. If Stokes is declared fit, he is likely to replace Chris Woakes. "Ben bowled about four overs at full pace today. He has done some high intensity running and had about a 45-minute batting session in the nets," said the spokesman. "He will be assessed after today and a decision will be made on his availability over the course of the next 24 hours." England normally name their team two days before the start of a Test, but will wait until a final verdict on Stokes's fitness on Monday before announcing their side. Stokes tore his left hamstring while batting during the Hundred domestic competition in August which forced him to sit out of England's 2-1 home series win over Sri Lanka last month, also led by Pope. The third and final Test will be played in Rawalpindi from October 24.

Sabalenka outlasts Zheng

WUHAN (AFP): Aryna Sabalenka on Sunday became the first player to win the Wuhan Open three times by defeating local hero Zheng Qinwen 6-3, 5-7, 6-3 in the final. The top seed, who also triumphed at the event in 2018 and 2019, kept her undefeated record in Wuhan intact, improving to a perfect 17-0. In a rematch of the 2024 Australian Open final, Sabalenka was put to the test by a gritty Zheng before she captured an Open Era record fifth title on Chinese soil. With two Grand Slam titles and a WTA 1000 success in Cincinnati under her belt already in 2024, Sabalenka picked up her fourth trophy of the season, from seven finals reached. The 26-year-old strengthened her chances of ending the year as the world number one ahead of Iga Swiatek, a battle likely to come down to the wire at the WTA Finals in Riyadh next month. Zheng had never taken a set off of Sabalenka in any of their previous three meetings, which have all come on the Grand Slam stage and in the last 13 months. But Sunday's final was a different story, with Zheng, the reigning Olympic gold medalist, competing in front of her home fans, in the city where she grew up. In front of a capacity crowd of 13,000 at the Optic Valley International Tennis Centre, Sabalenka broke for a 4-2 advantage on a Zheng double-fault.



SHANGHAI: Champion Jannik Sinner (R) of Italy and runner-up Novak Djokovic of Serbia react with their trophies during the awarding ceremony after the Men's Singles Final match.

Babar Azam dropped for second England Test

MULTAN (AFP): Out-of-form batsman Babar Azam was dropped on Sunday as Pakistan shook up their squad for the second Test against England, following their innings and 47-run defeat in the first. "We've made the decision to rest Babar Azam and a few other players," said selector Aaqib Javed in a Pakistan Cricket Board release, after a 16-player squad with three uncapped players was named for the match which begins in Multan on Tuesday. Azam has not scored a fifty in his last 18 Test innings and managed just 30 and five in the first Test which England won by an innings and 47 runs on Friday after piling up 823-7 declared. Also dropped are pace duo Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah, while spinner Abrar Ahmed has been left out after being taken ill. Abrar was hospitalised after a high fever which forced him to miss the fourth and fifth day of the first Test. Javed hoped Azam would come back

refreshed after a break.

"We are confident that this break from international cricket will help these players, especially Azam, regain their confidence," said Javed. "They remain some of our finest talents with much more to contribute to Pakistan cricket."

The uncapped Kamran Ghulam, 29, should get the nod to replace Azam at number four in the batting line-up. Two other potential debutants were called up in the shape of wicketkeeper-batsman Haseebullah and left-arm spinner Mehran Mumtaz. Fast bowler Mohammad Ali and off-spinner Sajid Khan were also included.

Since making his Test debut against the West Indies in Dubai in 2016, Azam has missed only five Tests, two in his first series, one against England at Leeds in 2018 and two in New Zealand in 2020.

The axe fell on Azam, Shaheen and Naseem two days after the PCB reconstituted their selection panel bringing in former pace bowler Javed and

Azhar Ali along with the incumbent Asad Shafiq.

In a rare move the PCB also included former elite panel umpire Aleem Dar.

After Pakistan's defeat, skipper Shan Masood and head coach Jason Gillespie backed Azam, saying he just needed time to regain his form. Azam was once the International Cricket Council's top-ranked batsman in all three formats, and is still number one in the one-day international rankings.

Since the start of 2023 his form has nose dived. He averages under 21 in his last nine Tests, scoring just 126 in six innings in Australia and 64 in the two home Tests against Bangladesh last month.

Pakistan (from): Shan Masood (captain), Saud Shakeel, Aamer Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Haseebullah, Kamran Ghulam, Mehran Mumtaz, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Hurraira, Mohammad Rizwan, Noman Ali, Saim Ayub, Sajid Khan, Salman Agha, Zahid Mehmood.

Cristiano Ronaldo extends int'l goal tally

LONDON (Agencies): Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo shined once again on the field after scoring yet another goal for his national team as they beat Poland 3-1 for their third straight Nations League win on Saturday.

Bernardo Silva volleyed Portugal ahead in the 26th minute in Warsaw as Bruno Fernandes cleverly nodded a cross from Ruben Neves back towards the Manchester City midfielder.

Ronaldo then found himself in the right place at the right time to turn in the rebound for Portugal's second after Rafael Leao's shot came back off the post following a brilliant surging run by the AC Milan winger.

With his latest goal, the 39-year-old Al Nassr striker has now struck in all three games of this Nations League campaign for Portugal, taking his record men's international goals tally to 133.

Jan Bednarek's own goal sealed victory for Portugal, the lone remaining team in League A with a 100% record, and they could secure a place in the quarter-finals next week, AFP reported.

"We worked very hard the last few days, preparing various solutions for this game, and we were able to show it on the pitch. I am really satisfied because we controlled this game," said Portugal coach Roberto Martinez.

"We played great as a team."

Meanwhile, the five-time Ballon d'Or award winner celebrated his national team's victory with a social media post, featuring a series of snaps from the match.

In the Instagram post, the former Manchester United, Real Madrid and Juventus star wrote: "Important win in the Nations League. Thanks for everyone's support, let's go all out!"

Additionally, in an Instagram Story update, Ronaldo shared a screenshot of his message on his broadcast channel on the Meta-owned photo and video-sharing app, which read: "We felt your support on the pitch. Thank you for helping us win today!"

Sinner wins Shanghai Masters to deny Djokovic 100th career title

SHANGHAI (AFP): World number one Jannik Sinner defeated 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 on Sunday to win the Shanghai Masters. Sinner took a crucial break in the fourth game of the second set to defeat the Serb in 1hr 37min and deny him a 100th career singles title.

"He was just too good today, too strong, too fast," Djokovic said after the match. Sinner said it was a "very special day", saluting his opponent as a "legend" who kept playing "incredible tennis... year after year". In a nod to former Djokovic rival Roger Federer, who was watching from the stands, the 23-year-old joked: "There are legends everywhere, I just try to keep up a little bit."

Facing off before an impassioned crowd, neither player blinked in the first set, unable to break the other's serve. Sinner quickly took control in the tiebreak, breaking Djokovic's serve on the first point and going 5-1 up.

The Serb steadied himself but then netted a volley to bring up set point at 6-3. Sinner failed to convert initially but didn't miss the second time behind serve.

The next key moment came in the fourth game of

the second set when Sinner was up 40-15 on Djokovic's serve. Djokovic saved one break point with a fiery ace but couldn't stop a superb forehand down the line from Sinner that saw him pull ahead. All that remained was for the Italian to hold his nerve, hitting an ace to finish the match and claim the title.

"Tough year"

Sinner's victory is the latest triumph in a formidable season, in which he has won two Grand Slams and retained the top spot in the rankings since June. But it is also a year that has seen him embroiled in controversy after he twice tested positive for a banned steroid in March.

In August, the International Tennis Integrity Agency accepted Sinner's explanation that the drug entered his system unintentionally when his physiotherapist used a spray containing it to treat a cut, then provided massage and sports therapy to the player.

However, the World Anti-Doping Agency said last month it would appeal against the decision to clear him of wrongdoing and was seeking a ban of up to two years. That news came as Sinner was contesting the China Open, where he lost in the final to Spain's Carlos Alcaraz, who was

also watching from the stands on Sunday.

"This year has been very, very tough for me... At points I lost a little bit of smile," Sinner said on Sunday. "It's never easy to play in these kind of circumstances," he added. "I feel like I'm strong when I go on the court trying to not think about it... When I wake up I try to focus on every single (match or practice) I do, but then of course I have moments when I think about it which is not comfortable."

'Deserved' win
Djokovic said Sinner played "the big points better" and "deserved to win". The 37-year-old said that getting a 100th title was "not a live-or-die type of goal", but he would keep trying.

Djokovic became the last man standing from tennis' golden era after Rafael Nadal announced his retirement this week and said that, despite the loss, he was pleased with his performance in Shanghai.

"I played pretty good, which gives me, I guess, a reason to believe that I can still play with these guys that are the best in the world at this level," he said.

"As long as that's the case, I guess I'll still feel the need to keep on competing and the motivation to be out there."



MULTAN: Ben Stokes of England laughs with James Anderson (L) and Brendon McCullum (R) during a training session at Multan Cricket Stadium.

Dominant England crush Scotland

SHARJAH (AFP): Opener Maia Bouchier and Danni Wyatt-Hodge put on an unbeaten century partnership as England hammered debutants Scotland by 10 wickets at the Women's T20 World Cup on Sunday.

England restricted Scotland to 109-6 in 20 overs after left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone returned figures of 2-13 in a disciplined bowling attack in Sharjah.

England romped home with 10 overs to spare as Bouchier hit 62 off 34 deliveries, earning herself player of the match honours as her team closed in on a semi-final spot.

A third successive win sent England top of Group B ahead of South Africa, who have three wins out of four, and the West Indies.

England face the West Indies on Tuesday in Dubai to decide the two semi-finalists from the

group.

"Just try and win, exactly the same way we have approached (the tournament so far)," skipper Heather Knight said of their last group game against the West Indies.

"You want to keep winning, keep that momentum and we want to go again, get some momentum and make it to the semis."

Scotland, who ended winless after qualifying for the tournament for the first time, and Bangladesh had already bowed out of the 10-team competition.

"Pretty tough tournament in general but a massive honour to be here and to be leading the team out in a tournament like this," skipper Kathryn Bryce said. "Only learnings to be taken from here."

Bouchier came out firing and started the chase with three successive fours, reaching her fifty in 30 balls with another

boundary off Katherine Fraser.

Wyatt-Hodge smashed 51 off 26 balls in a commanding display by the 2009 champions.

Scotland made a strong start to their innings with Sarah Bryce steering the team to 38-0 in the eighth over before medium-pace bowler Nat Sciver-Brunt broke through.

Sciver-Brunt dismissed opener Saskia Horley for 13 and Ecclestone soon had Bryce stumped for 27 to slow Scotland.

Kathryn Bryce, Sarah's elder sister, then attempted to take on the attack with her 28-ball 33, but her departure saw Scotland slip further as wickets fell regularly.

Lorna Jack-Brown was bowled for a duck by Lauren Bell in the batter's last international match and after the loss walked off the field with tears in her eyes.

Americans get their belief back

AUSTIN (AFP): For all the fascination with Mauricio Pochettino's team selection and tactics for his opening game in charge of the USA, perhaps the most significant evidence of the Argentine's impact came in the opening 15 minutes of Saturday's 2-0 win over Panama.

A team that had won just once in their last seven games, all on home soil, and had suffered a dismal early exit from July's Copa America, showed no signs at all of those disappointments as they zipped the ball around the field, looking hungry for possession. Their opponents, one of the tougher sides to face in the CONCACAF region at the moment, had dealt former coach Gregg Berhalter the deadly blow of a defeat in the Copa group stage, but there was no sign of fear in the way that the

Americans took to the task at Q2 Stadium.

"(His message has been) have guys play the way they are comfortable playing and being confident going forward with the ball," said 37-year-old captain Tim Ream. "And I think everybody saw that, especially in the first 15 minutes. Guys were moving, guys were intricate passing and getting the ball moving quick and getting in and around their box. And when he tells guys to go and be themselves, you know, it's a sign that he has confidence in you and you can see that come out with all the guys," he said.

Nothing builds belief like a win and so the victory in Texas will go a long way to casting aside the mostly miserable year the team has suffered, although Ream said the change had been



evident during the buildup.

"He's been speaking about confidence all week. And I think the feeling in the locker room (was there) even before the game. Guys felt confident walking off yesterday after the walk-through at training. Guys were confident in what we were doing

and what we were going to do," he said. Pochettino, who had been greeted with a portrait of his face displayed on a banner behind the goal where the team's supporters groups had gathered, was impressed with the response after less than a week of being with his new squad.

"Yeah, after a few days training with the team, I think it's amazing the way that we were focused and concentrated and tried to follow the plan," he said.

"It was a very professional performance from there, I think it's the basis for the first step to start to grow and get better," he added. It was by no means a perfect display -- nor a particularly revolutionary approach -- and Panama had enough chances to have claimed at least a draw from the game.

All phases

But the former Tottenham boss was delighted to have seen his team cope with spells when their possession game wasn't so effective and Panama gained the upper hand. "I think we have shown that we have been able to compete in all phases of the game. When at some point in the

second half we had to defend low and compete, we competed very well, I'm very happy in that regard," Pochettino said.

"There are things, of course, many things to improve, to correct, but this is the beginning of a process that has to arrive in 2026 (at the World Cup) in the best condition. I am also happy because we have won, and whenever you win, things are easier to correct and improve," he added. He had praise for several players but was particularly pleased with the performance in the deep playmaker role of 22-year-old Aidan Morris, the Middlesbrough midfielder looking accomplished in just his eighth appearance. "I think he was amazing, I think we have a very young, talented midfielder that can absorb and take the responsibility and play. I'm so happy for him," he said.



In brief

119,600 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 119,600 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 85,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1536.05 feet and was 138.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 44,200 cusecs and 52,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1204.20 feet, which was 154.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 8,600 cusecs and 35,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 67,800, 66,000, 56,100 and 16,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 18,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 4,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

4 drug dealers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested four drug dealers and recovered more than 3 kilogram drugs from their possession during crackdown here on Sunday. According to police spokesman, Dharmyal Police held Kashif and recovered 1.3 kg drug from his possession. Similarly, Waris Khan apprehended Nauman and seized 650 grams Charas from his custody and 540 grams Charas was also recovered from Rashid. While, Rawat Police also confiscated 550 grams of Charas from Rashid. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. Divisional SPs commended police teams efforts and have assured that the accused will be presented in court with valid evidence. They emphasized that strict action will be taken against such anti social elements those responsible for endangering the lives of youth with drugs.

Seven gamblers held

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested seven gamblers and recovered stake amount Rs 36,000, 08 mobile phones from their possession during crackdown here on Sunday. According to police spokesman, Gujjar Khan police conducted crackdown and apprehended those gamblers who were identified Khudadad, Khurshid, Hamid, Waheed, Abdul Qadoos, Sajid and Juma Khan. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation has been started. SP Saddam Muhammad Nabil Khokhar commended police team and said that gambling is the root of other social evils, action against gamblers will be continued.

Gang involved in theft held

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two members of a gang involved in vehicle and motorcycle theft. Police have also recovered weapons used in the crimes. According to police spokesman, Civil Lines police conducted crackdown following arrests of two members gang and recovered a stolen vehicle, valued several lakhs, along with nine stolen motorcycles and Rs 10,000 in cash from their possession. The gang members were identified as Imran alias Mani and Sami Ullah. During the initial investigation, it was revealed that gang was wanted for multiple theft cases. Police have registered separate cases against both of them and further investigation was in progress.



ISLAMABAD: Colorful lights illuminate the plants along the green belt, adding to the elegance of the Federal Capital as it prepares for the 23rd Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit.

ICT police finalize security measures for SCO Summit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police, under the supervision of Inspector General (IG) Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, is preparing for the upcoming SCO Summit 2024, with a comprehensive security plan now in place.

Inspector General (IG) Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi stated on Sunday that the ICT Police have developed an integrated security strategy to ensure safety during the event.

IG Rizvi said that security duties have been finalized at various venues, airports, routes, funnel areas, hotels, and residences of delegations, including the Noor Khan Air Base.

IG Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi stated that the Islamabad Police have developed an integrated traffic plan to minimize difficulties for citizens during the event. "Search and information-based operations are ongoing to ensure full security for all foreign heads of state, delegations, and guests," Rizvi said.

IG Rizvi, said the security efforts involve collaboration across multiple agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, District Administration, Pakistan Army, Rangers, Frontier Corps, other provincial police, intelligence agencies, traffic police, and the special branch.

"Islamabad Police has deployed 93% of its force for the security arrangements, amounting to over 9,500 officers and personnel," IG Added. "The presence of these security forces aims to convey to our guests that Islamabad is a safe and protected city," IG Rizvi added.

Ali Nasir Rizvi called for public cooperation to ensure the success of the summit, asserting that it represents the respect of Pakistan and its capital.

"We are working diligently to present a successful summit, and with the help of all stakeholders, we will achieve this goal," Rizvi expressed determination.

ICT admin clarifies business, traffic adjustments during SCO conference: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has clarified plans to manage business activities and traffic during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) conference.

According to the spokesman of ICT administration, Key routes would be impacted, but the authorities assure the public that disruptions would be limited to essential areas.

In a recent statement, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon addressed concerns about possible disruptions during the

upcoming SCO conference.

He clarified that no blanket ban on business activities would be imposed across the Federal Capital. Only specific business centers along the designated routes would be affected.

DC Memon emphasized that the district administration was in regular communication with these establishments to ensure a smooth process.

"Only those business centers located directly on the route will be required to close during the conference," he said. Other businesses outside the affected areas would remain open and operate as usual.

The Deputy Commissioner also mentioned that hiking trails in Islamabad would be closed for the duration of the SCO conference, citing security concerns.

Traffic flow would be limited on the routes designated for SCO delegations to ensure safe passage for officials attending the event.

In light of these adjustments, the district administration has requested cooperation from both citizens and business owners. "All measures are being taken to ensure security during the conference," Memon explained, urging patience and understanding from the public.

No compromise on Pakistan's honor: Talal Chaudhry

ISLAMABAD (APP): PML-N Senator Talal Chaudhry Sunday issued a strong warning regarding PTI's protest call and said that the government will not tolerate any actions that compromise Pakistan's respect and dignity.

He declared the call as an attempt to blackmail the state and secure an NRO. In an exclusive Interview with a private news channel, Talal said that the government will not tolerate any attempts to create chaos and called Imran Khan as 'history's VIP prisoner' who enjoys all facilities while still making excuses and attempting to disrupt the SCO conference.

According to Talal Chaudhry, PTI's actions are a threat to Pakistan's economic stability and national security. He reiterated the government's commitment

to protecting Pakistan's respect and dignity, making it clear that no compromises will be made.

He said Imran Khan leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has been receiving special treatment while in jail, including separate kitchen facilities and opportunities to hold political meetings, adding, despite this, he continues to criticize the government and allegedly wants to disrupt the SCO summit and CPEC phase 2.

The SCO summit and CPEC phase 2 are crucial for Pakistan's economic development and any disruptions could have significant consequences, he added. The government is focusing on addressing the country's economic woes and fulfilling its governing responsibilities

instead of targeting the opposition, he added.

Responding a query, he made it clear that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) can call for protests but they will not allow to dare to disrupt the state's proceedings, especially when Pakistan is hosting a significant international conference. Talal Chaudhry has strongly criticized PTI chairman Imran Khan for allegedly collaborating with external powers to create instability in Pakistan during the SCO summit.

Chaudhry emphasized that Pakistan's progress and stability should not be sacrificed for personal or party interests. He urged PTI supporters to reflect on their party's lack of concrete achievements during its tenure in government and asked them to prefer country's respect over politics.

Education secy committed to revolutionize govt schools

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani Sunday made a strong commitment to revolutionize Islamabad's public schools, transforming them into beacons of excellence within just one year where half of the work already being completed.

In an exclusive Interview with PTV news channel, he said the government's commitment to providing quality education in public schools, equal to or even surpassing that of private institutions.

He highlighted the focus on teacher training programs and state-of-the-art

art labs to bridge the gap between public and private education. This initiative aims to empower students with the latest skills, increasing their employment opportunities and equipping them for success in the digital age, he added.

Secretary hailed a major milestone in the education sector, revealing that the transformative overhaul of public schools has led to a significant shift. "Mostly, students from private schools are now transferring to public schools," he noted.

This remarkable reversal underscores the success of the government's initiatives, which prioritize quality education, teacher training and state-of-the-art

facilities, he added. The transformation of public schools is a significant step towards providing quality education for all, regardless of socioeconomic background, he mentioned.

Responding a query, Wani emphasized the importance of character building, hard work and patriotism, adding, students should focus on developing strong moral values and a robust work ethic.

"Character building is essential for individual success and national progress," he stressed. Wani also encouraged students to become ambassadors of Pakistan, striving to promote a positive image of their country globally.

Shazia leads dengue awareness walk

RAWALPINDI (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Information Punjab, Shazia Rizwan on Sunday visited Pir Wadhai Station various bus terminals to examine implementation of dengue SOPs.

Talking on the occasion Shazia intimated stern actions against violations of SOPs devised by the health authority to prevent

the dengue fever. She visited the workshops and washrooms of the bus terminals and expressed her satisfaction regarding cleanliness.

She interacted with the passengers during which she urged them to play their due role in the fight against dengue fever.

Later, Shazia led an awareness walk regarding

the dengue issues. She distributed dengue awareness pamphlets among the people.

The Parliamentary Secretary directed the owners of bus stands to display awareness pamphlets at their terminals to educate the people about their responsibilities regarding dengue preventive measures.

Shops, food points sealed for dengue SOPs violations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Focal Person for Dengue, Tahira Aurangzeb along with Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hassan Waqar Cheema visited different areas of the city to inspect dengue surveillance activities. According to details, they visited a number of shops and restaurants and examined samples for dengue larvae. McDonald's, Alfatah Crockery and Furniture Store and Monin Restaurant were sealed after the larvae were recovered from the samples.

Tahira Aurangzeb on the occasion said that CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif was very serious about the dengue issue in Rawalpindi. "On the instructions of the Chief Minister Punjab, we have put all our attention on dengue", she said. The focal person urged citizens to support the government on dengue issues through rendering their efforts and following the dengue preventive measures. The Deputy Commissioner said that the district administration was fully active to control dengue and actions were being taken against dengue violations.

Pakistan's pavilion at COP29 to host vibrant activities convening int'l experts: Bilal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO), National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF), Bilal Anwar on Sunday said Pakistan's pavilion at COP29 to host vibrant activities convening international experts for a healthy discourse on multifaceted topics around climate resilience.

The Fund is assisting the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination in formulation of the National Climate Finance Strategy that would be launched at the COP29.

The NDRMF is supporting the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination by extending financial and technical assistance in establishing the COP pavilion, pre-COP events and writing position papers on different agenda items like Article 13, Article 6 and others under the Paris Accord, the CEO NDRMF said in an exclusive interview with APP while showcasing the efforts and accomplishments of the Fund.

The Fund is also assisting in formulation of the National Climate Finance Strategy that

would be launched at the COP29, he said.

Denouncing the criticism on COP Pavilions, Bilal Anwar said the criticism on the COP pavilions established by the country at previous conferences was unfair. "Pakistan's pavilion has enhanced its utility in the previous two to three COPs as during the COP27 due to 2022 floods it has garnered much attention whereas during the COP28, some 29 events were organised throughout the moot at the pavilion. Pakistan this time has a wonderful story to tell at COP29," Bilal said.

The Fund, he said have launched its first Business Policy 2024 that helped in repurposing and redefining it over a course of 18-month to change the donors' mindset for well-informed disaster resilience interventions. The document is a 10-year long-term policy intervention being implemented after extensive consultations with all stakeholders, he added.

"Resilience building is a long-term process and its challenging amid growing climate

calamities as every intervention has its impacts but a long-term strategy is necessary and the NDRMF Business Policy is addressing it. There have been repeated discussions with relevant bodies, provinces, fund implementing partners (FIPs), researchers, practitioners and experts related to the subject which resulted into culmination of our efforts in the form of the strategy," Bilal Anwar said.

The Business Policy, he said has bagged huge acclaim from the donors who have demanded a framework under the Policy to continue their operations in line with the national document. The Policy has been aligned with the National Climate Change Policy, National Adaptation Plan, National Disaster Management Plan, National Flood Protection Plan IV, Disaster Risk Financing Strategy and National Climate Finance strategy which is in the offing, he added.

"Previously, the disaster risk management has been a supply-driven realm curated by the donor agencies whereas the NDRMF approach at present is

demand driven that has been worked out after extreme strides in the field and keeping in view our extensive knowledge of national challenges and needs or priorities of the community," he said.

Bilal Anwar pointed out that the Fund was educating the donors fraternity to look countries from their communities' lens based on their indigenous priorities to align their fundings accordingly.

He added that there was a huge knowledge gap across the country as the funding in disaster risk management was implemented without risk financing. "The National Catastrophe model (NATCAT) Data Center has been established with the support of the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) whereas a special application to be built on its data is underway," he said.

"The NATCAT unlike the conventional databases is a progressive tech-based solution using most-modern approach and solutions," he said, adding that it could help drawing risk

profiling of intended regions and use that risk modelling to assess future disaster before time."

The NDRMF CEO underlined that there have been nine perils identified by this system and it could undertake 400 years modelling in case of flood and gauge its impacts.

He informed that the Disaster Risk Financing (DRF) Strategy has been recently approved by the government which was enacted in the aftermath of devastating 2022 floods' impacts and losses borne by the government.

The government, he said used to divert the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) fundings which was not sustainable. The DRF Strategy would assist in creation of alternative fundings like the insurance sector, he said, adding, "The National Insurance Company Limited (NICL) and NDRMF are devising an insurance product for all government schools across the provinces to help provide funding to rebuild schools after any disaster."

The NDRMF in a major stride, he said is engaging the private sector recognizing the

significant potential in tapping into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives. Though they do contribute in climate resilience there remains a strong need to further enhance collaboration and investment in climate resilience projects to maximize impact.

The Fund has further accredited entities to its existing number of FIPs and has expanded its accreditation system that received some 46 fresh applications and 39 out of these have been fully accredited, he added.

A dedicated capacity building programme has been developed for the remaining seven entities, he said. Bilal informed that in Balochistan the Fund has focused on small entities and some 36-38 entities have been accredited whereas a special award ceremony would be held in that regard.

"The NDRMF is making efforts to get its accreditation recognition from the World Bank, European Union and other global development entities," he added.

Ali secures second place

KABUL (Amu TV): Afghan bodybuilder Ali Bilal has achieved a significant milestone, securing second place in the Men's Physique division at the 2024 Mr. Olympia competition, held in Las Vegas, Nevada. Bilal's performance placed him among the world's top athletes in the category, earning him recognition on one of bodybuilding's most prestigious stages. Competing against leading contenders from around the globe, Bilal's success marks a major achievement for Afghanistan in int'l sports.

Taliban publicly flog 8 people

KUNAR (Amu TV): Taliban publicly flogged eight individuals, including a woman, in the eastern province of Kunar on Sunday. Taliban said the individuals were accused of "sodomy, theft, and fleeing home." The individuals received various sentences alongside the corporal punishment, according to a statement by Taliban-run supreme court. Two people were lashed 39 times and sentenced to two years in prison each. Another two were lashed 20 times and sentenced to seven months in prison.

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

Stopping mass migration from Afghanistan discussed

KABUL (Ariana News): Hassan Kazemi Qomi, Iran's special representative for Afghanistan, said this weekend that one of the key points of discussion at the 6th Moscow Format meeting held Friday was on how to prevent the flood of migration from Afghanistan.

He said neighboring countries also discussed ways to help Afghanistan deal with terrorism and how to create necessary conditions for the reconstruction of the country, in the form of a regional initiative.

In an interview with IRNA news agency, Qomi



said in a conversation with IRNA news agency that ten countries participated at the meeting along with Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. Qomi said: "Despite the current developments in the

international arena, especially in Palestine and Lebanon, the issue of Afghanistan is still considered one of the important regional priorities."

He also emphasized that using the capacities of neighboring countries and regional cooperation can help the Islamic Emirate and the people of Afghanistan to overcome their problems.

Special representatives and high-ranking officials from China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan took part.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir criticizes tax increases

KABUL (BNA): During the closing ceremony of the national and international exhibition honoring Imam Abu Hanifa (RA), Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, voiced strong opposition to the recent increase in taxes on Afghanistan's export products, labeling it as unjust.

The event, which took place yesterday, attracted a diverse audience, including officials from the Islamic Emirate, investors, industrialists, foreign diplomats, and members of the public. In his remarks, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir expressed gratitude to the organizers and high-



lighted the significance of such gatherings for fostering exchange between Afghan and international traders and showcasing investment opportunities.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir noted that Afghanistan's trade relations with Central Asia are thriving and evolving positively. He criticized the tax hike on exports, asserting that the Islamic Emirate has

developed alternative trade routes to support Afghanistan's commerce.

He emphasized the Islamic Emirate's commitment to enhancing economic cooperation, stating, "We have provided good opportunities for both Afghan and foreign traders and investors."

Furthermore, he mentioned ongoing efforts to reduce tax rates and reiterated the government's dedication to fulfilling its commitments to the business community.

In addition to addressing economic matters, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir condemned the recent attacks by Israel on Lebanon and Palestine, calling for solidarity with those affected.

Distribution of over 8.2 million National ID cards

KABUL (TOLONews): Officials from the National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) report that over the past three years, the authority has successfully distributed more than 8.2 million electronic national ID cards (e-Tazkira) to applicants.

Mohammad Haleem Rafe, the spokesperson for the NSIA, stated that since the inception of this process, over 14.2 million electronic national ID cards have been distributed across the country.

The spokesperson for the NSIA said: "Since the return of the Islamic Emirate, more than 8.2 million electronic national ID cards have been distributed in total.

The authority is working to provide more facili-



ties for the citizens. This current process began during the previous government, and since then, over 14.2 million electronic national ID cards have been issued to the citizens of the country."

At the same time, several applicants for electronic national ID cards are calling for the estab-

lishment of more distribution centers and easier access in their provinces.

Jalal Baitullah, a resident of Herat, said: "I ask the Islamic Emirate to establish a national ID card distribution center in Herat province. Poor people come here with their children and face a lot of hardships. The roads are

Women's movement calls for action against Taliban 'crimes'

KABUL (Amu TV): The Purple Saturdays Movement, led by women's rights activist Maryam Marouf Arvin, has urged the United Nations and international human rights organizations to take immediate and decisive action against what it describes as Taliban "crimes" in Afghanistan.

The movement warned that a swift response is crucial for justice and human rights.

In a statement on Sunday, the movement emphasized that women have been the primary victims of Taliban-led "structural violence" over the past three years.

It called on global bodies to act before the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan further deteriorates, particularly with respect to the Taliban's actions against Afghan women.

The statement detailed various abuses, alleging that women have suffered from forced marriages to Taliban fighters, abductions under the pretext of enforcing Islamic law, and horrific assaults in detention centers. According to the movement, these acts are part of the Taliban's systematic use of sexual violence as a tool for suppressing female dissent and concealing broader human rights abuses.

The Purple Saturdays Movement criticized the global response to the Taliban's rule, asserting that the continued mistreatment of women undercuts the international commitment to human rights and justice.

It called for increased pressure on the Taliban, including the imposition of sanctions, independent monitoring, and immediate humanitarian intervention.

In conclusion, the movement framed the struggle against the Taliban's actions as a test of the global community's moral compass and commitment to upholding human rights standards.

bad, and there are numerous challenges when traveling from Herat to here."

Quadratullah, a resident of Kabul, said: "I came from Ghazni province to get my ID card. The process went well and was completed in one day. However, I request the Islamic Emirate establish a service center in Ghazni as well."

According to officials from the NSIA, the authority plans to establish national ID card distribution sites in the provinces of Herat, Balkh, Nangarhar, and Helmand in the near future to provide greater convenience to citizens.

Afghanistan requires 5,000 megawatts of electricity

KABUL (TOLONews): Abdul Bari Omar, the CEO of Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (Afghanistan's electricity company), stated in an exclusive interview with TOLONews that Afghanistan needs at least 5,000 megawatts of electricity.

He said that currently, 960 megawatts of electricity are available in the country, of which 350 to 400 megawatts are generated domestically.

This official from the Islamic Emirate emphasized that achieving self-sufficiency in energy production requires time and investment, but authorities in the Islamic Emirate are working to increase energy production through wind, solar, thermal, and hydro-electric resources.

The CEO of DABS clarified: "According to the survey conducted, Afghanistan needs at least 5,000 megawatts of electricity, but if we calculate this in a standard way and aim to provide clean, stan-



dard electricity to all areas and villages of Afghanistan, the need is between 8,000 to 9,000 megawatts."

According to Omar, several countries, including Turkey, China, Iran, and others, are interested in investing in energy production in Afghanistan.

Omar also mentioned that large-scale projects are currently underway, including the Kajaki, Surobi, and Naghlu dams, as well as two 500-kilovolt transmission line projects. Upon

completion of these projects, 1,000 megawatts of electricity will be transferred from Herat to Kabul, and 2,000 megawatts will be exported to Pakistan.

Regarding this, Abdul Bari Omar said: "Two or three major projects are in progress. The 500-kilovolt transmission line, which runs from Andkhoy, Sheberghan, Dasht-e-Alwan to Arghandi in Kabul, and from there to Kandahar, Nangarhar, and other provinces, is currently being worked on, and the

project is 60 to 70 percent complete."

The CEO of DABS also highlighted that influential individuals, politicians from the previous government, and various government agencies owe the company billions of afghani. However, he stressed that the company currently has no outstanding debts to any country for imported electricity.

He stated: "We have divided this issue into two parts. One pertains to the debts of politicians from the previous government, and the other concerns powerful figures who wouldn't even allow meter readers to check their meters."

The CEO of DABS also pointed out that there are plans in place for electricity distribution during the upcoming winter to ensure that citizens, especially those in the capital, do not face frequent power outages. He also urged the public to conserve electricity.

Afghanistan's hunger crisis worsens, ranks 116th in 2024

KABUL (Khaama Press): The 2024 Global Hunger Index report ranked Afghanistan 116th out of 127 countries, scoring 30.8. Last year, Afghanistan ranked 114th with a score of 30.6, indicating a two-position decline this year.

According to the report, 30.4% of Afghanistan's population suffers from malnutrition, and 5.8% of children in the country die before the age of five. The report highlights that 44.6% of children under five in Afghanistan are shorter than expected for their age, which is indicative

of chronic malnutrition.

Additionally, 3.6% of Afghan children are underweight for their height, a condition associated with acute malnutrition. The Global Hunger Index also notes that 5.8% of children in Afghanistan die before the age of five due to inadequate nutrition and unhealthy living conditions.

The hunger situation in Afghanistan under Taliban control, along with 35 other countries, is categorized as "serious" by the Global Hunger Index. Last year, Afghanistan ranked 114th with a

score of 30.6, but this year's rank of 116 shows that hunger has worsened in the country.

Over the past three years under, Afghanistan has faced an escalating humanitarian crisis, with the United Nations estimating that over 24 million people currently require humanitarian assistance. Despite global efforts, the report warns that achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal of eradicating hunger by 2030 is becoming increasingly difficult, with limited progress since 2016.

WFP: improved food security in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): The World Food Programme (WFP) in its latest report highlighted an improvement in food security in Afghanistan compared to last year.

According to the report, various factors such as the average production of wheat, rice, maize, and fruits, the import of food items, and the stability of the Afghan currency against foreign currencies have contributed to the improvement of food security in Afghanistan this year.

The WFP further said that in September of this solar year, it distributed \$5.5 million to address the challenges faced by Afghan citizens. The number of people in need of urgent humanitarian aid has decreased from 15.3 million to 12.4 million.

The report from this UN agency also said: "In September, WFP GFA sup-

ported approximately 1.3 million vulnerable people, of which around 42 percent received cash-based transfers and commodity vouchers, enabling them to meet their food needs. Since 2023, WFP has had to significantly reduce life-saving assistance, leaving behind 11 million acutely food-insecure people whose needs are unmet."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economy considers short-term aid from relief organizations beneficial for food security in Afghanistan.

Abdul Rahman Habib, spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy, said: "We ask the World Food Programme and other relief organizations to not only provide humanitarian aid to our citizens but also take part in development projects so that people can become economically self-sufficient."



Some residents of the capital facing economic challenges have called on relief organizations and the Islamic Emirate to assist them.

"There is no work, no livelihood, and we live a life where we neither die nor truly live. This is the state of our days," said a Kabul resident.

"So far, no aid has arrived. To this day, neither the United Nations, human rights organizations, nor

the WFP have come to help these people," said Malik, a resident of Kabul.

The WFP report also mentioned that despite progress in food security in Afghanistan, challenges such as lack of employment opportunities, reduced income, droughts, floods, and the return of thousands of Afghan refugees from other countries have left many people in the country still in need of humanitarian assistance.

Young man establishes free classes for displaced children in Khost

KHOST (TOLONews): A young man has established a free elementary education class for displaced children in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in the center of Khost province.

Abdul Malik Jawhar, a 25-year-old man who is also displaced from Paktia province, has set up this elementary class in the IDP camp in central Khost, where he provides free education to dozens of boys and girls.

Jawhar, a third-year student at the Faculty of Economics at a private university in Khost, says that children from displaced families from the provinces of Logar, Paktia, Paktika, and Khost—who spend their days engaged in hard labor—attend free classes in the mornings and evenings.

In an interview with TOLONews, Abdul Malik Jawhar said: "We have established a class in the refugee camp in central Khost. People here are from Paktia, Paktika, Logar, and various districts of Khost. Most of them are impoverished, orphaned, and children



who spend their days doing hard work. For them, we have organized two classes—one in the morning and one in the evening. About fifty children, including seventeen young girls, attend. We teach them everything from the alphabet to Islamic studies, prayer, and anything else essential for them."

The students in this class, due to economic challenges, cannot afford to attend private schools, but they have learned a lot in this class. Shkula, a student, said: "I want to become a doctor. I've been studying here for two months."

Another student,

Zahidullah, said: "I can now write my own name, my father's, my brother's, and anyone's. I learned all of this here. Before, I didn't know anything. I come here to study and want to build my future." The displaced families in this camp are calling on the authorities to build a school for their children.

Mohammad Sharif, an internally displaced person, said: "We have no access to the city or public schools. There are private schools here, but people are too poor to afford them. A school should be built here, and the number of classes should be increased."

Naqibullah, another dis-

placed person, said: "We ask the government and organizations to support this class because there are children here who cannot attend school, and most of them are impoverished."

The Department of Education in Khost said they will provide materials and other educational resources for local classes in remote areas.

Qasim Jan Qasemi, the spokesperson for the Khost Department of Education, said: "The leadership of the Department of Education fully supports local classes established by patriotic people in deprived areas. We assure you that we have shared this matter with the leadership in the past, and we urge young people who establish such classes to register them with the literacy department of the Ministry of Education and receive benefits."

Previously, with the cooperation of education authorities, educational opportunities were provided for hundreds of children in remote areas of the Baghlan and Kunduz provinces.

Balkh women, child-labourers complain low wages

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): Some women and child labourers in northern Balkh province have complained about low wages and lack of work opportunities and asked the government to provide them with permanent work.

The Yalmarb area of Mazar-i-Sharif, the provincial capital, is a spot where daily tens of women and child labourers gathered to catch work.

Most of these women held responsibilities for their families and had to provide them with food and accommodate other necessary needs.

Humaira, one of these women, told Pajhwok Afghan News that she came here to find employment for herself because she had been unemployed for some days.

Humaira said: "As a widow and a woman to support my seven children, I have a tough life; most of the time I cannot find any work for myself."

The daily wage of such

working-woman is only 150 Afs, which merely fits the bread of a family, she said.

Shah Gull is another labour woman in the same area waiting for work, she complained about the low amount of work wages adding that she stayed in this place from dawn to dusk but can't find any job.

She said: "My husband is unemployed, I work for 150 afs a day, our life is very hard, and living with such income is an agony to live in a rented house."

She asked the government for assistance.

Marjan another working woman complained about the same unemployment issue. She called on the government to provide them with permanent employment opportunities or give them aid packages.

Besides the presence of women labourers, a number of child labourers were also present to look for work. Basheer, 13, said his father is in Iran and he had no option but to work for his family.



He said it is cotton collection season, he could sometimes find employment in cotton collection for 50 Afs a day.

Balkh's local Labor and Social Affairs department assured these women about their employment.

Labor and Social Affairs director Abdul Raheem Qanit told Pajhwok, the government of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) tried to find employment opportunities for those women who work on

roads and perform heavy labor duties.

The government has established a department called Hirfa (Profession) to provide the women labour, widows and poor women or provide such women financial and substantial aid packages.

Earlier the government officials said that the unemployment would be reduced in the country, short and long term plans and policies had been put in place in this regard, they said.

Imran-Israel nexus bent to sabotage SCO conference: Sharjeel



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that the Imran-Israel nexus is bent on sabotaging the SCO conference. The founder of PTI is not working for Pakistan's politics but for the protection of Zionist interests. Imran Khan's links with Tel Aviv are part of a coordinated effort by anti-national forces to undermine the SCO.

In a statement, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for

Information, Transport, Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control, Sharjeel Inam Memon, said that the PTI-Israel nexus is a compromise on Pakistan's national interests. He added that, in the past, Imran Khan was also part of a conspiracy to sabotage the Chinese President's visit, aiming to harm Pakistan-China friendship.

He stated that the PTI leadership is following foreign, anti-national agendas, prioritizing these interests over Pakistan's security and sovereignty. He added that the PTI think

tank is currently based in Tel Aviv and actively engaged in conspiracies against Pakistan.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that PTI's key policy advisers are based in Israel and are actively working to weaken Pakistan. He added that PTI receives policies, directives, and support from Tel Aviv, with its handlers there consistently engaged in international lobbying.

He said that aid to PTI from external forces aims to create political instability in the country and undermine Pakistan's economic and diplomatic development. He added that Zac Goldsmith's endorsement of Pakistan-origin Sadiq Khan is evidence of the Imran-Israel nexus. Furthermore, PTI's absence from the APC against Israeli aggression in Palestine has exposed its ties with Israel.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that individuals like Zac Goldsmith are promoting an anti-Pakistan narrative favorable to PTI. He added that conspiracies and attacks against the country's stable institutions are being carried out with Israel's backing. Imran Khan aims to advance Zionist interests by weakening Pakistan's institutions.



KARACHI: Protesters belonging to TLP set a tyre on fire during clash with police. Around 35 people were arrested for violating Section 144.

Electricity tariffs to drop 8-10% per unit: Leghari

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Power Sardar Awaits Leghari on Sunday issued warning to electricity thieves and corrupt officials for termination from their assignments who involved in corrupt practices.

He said that all those who involved will face the music from next month.

The minister vowed that the consumers can expect significant relief as power tariffs drop by 8-10% per unit in the near future.

In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, minister expressed hope that power sector reforms are expected to bring good news for the public in the coming

months, with anti-theft measures being implemented to increase transparency in the power system.

The goal is to provide reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity to citizens, he added.

Minister for Power warned to take stringent action against officers involved in power theft, stating that those found guilty of corrupt practices will be terminated from service starting next month.

Leghari directed for stern action against the corrupt officers within the power sector and decided to take a zero-tolerance policy in this regard.

The minister emphasized that the government will adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards officers engaged in power theft, whether involvement proved today or during past.

Minister has outlined key steps to address pressing power sector issues, ensuring reliable electricity supply and resolving long-standing problems, adding, we are upgrading, repairing feeders to reduce power losses and faults.

We are also strengthening transmission infrastructure to improve power evacuation, he mentioned, adding, minimizing line losses through efficient transmission systems

is also in our priority areas.

Sardar Awaits Leghari has also revealed that the government is diligently addressing the financing issues plaguing the power sector, focusing on revenue generation, growth enhancement and taxation system overhaul.

"The government is committed to resolving the power sector's financial woes and ensuring its growth," Leghari emphasized.

By addressing financing issues and implementing reforms, the government aims to create a robust power sector that benefits both the economy and the public, he reassured.

KP to establish Energy Regulatory Commission

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has announced plans to establish Provincial Energy Regulatory Commission (PERC) to oversee electricity generation, transmission and tariffs in the province, and awarding license to private companies, said a statement on Sunday.

A summary regarding the creation of PERC was submitted by the KP Energy Department to the provincial government.

However, the KP Finance Department raised concerns, stating that PERC has not been approved in the Annual Development Program, which allocates a budget of Rs 20 million. The total estimated cost for establishing the commission is Rs 50 million.

The Finance Department has suggested that the summary should be re-evaluated by Department of Planning and Development. In a summary

moved by KP Energy Department stated, "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a production capacity of 4,500 MW, necessitating a more robust regulatory framework to enhance the efficient use of its natural resources."

"Once established, PERC will be tasked with regulating electricity tariffs and licensing energy companies, aiming to eliminate barriers to economic development in the province," it added.

Tarar lauds China for helping Pakistan overcome energy crisis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Sunday extended deep gratitude to China for helping Pakistan to overcome worst energy crisis faced by the country in the early years of previous decade.

Delivering his speech at the China Chamber of Commerce in Pakistan ceremony here, he said the friendship between Pakistan and China spanned over decades and many generations.

"The friendship between Pakistan and China is being passed down from generation to generation," the minister said adding that the people of Pakistan and China had emotional attachment to each other.

Tarar remarked that Beijing had supported Islamabad in all circumstances and this friendship had gone through storms and difficult times successfully and proved unbreakable.

He said that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was the manifestation of closeness and ideal friendship between the two countries.

"CPEC is not only a project for the prosperity of Pakistan and China, but also for the entire region," the minister opined.

Energy projects including Sahiwal Coal power project, Thar Coal Project, Karachi Port Energy project were launched by China under CPEC.

He said in 2013, when Pakistan was facing worst energy crisis and 8 to 19 hours load shedding was a matter of routine, several energy projects were launched under CPEC and these projects helped Pakistan overcome energy shortage.

He maintained that journey of success from 2013 to 2018 was mainly because China helped Pakistan restructure its energy sector while bringing in good energy projects including nuclear, coal, hydro, solar energy projects as China believed that Pakistan's energy crisis could be over by technological innovations, through diversification and restructuring of energy sector.

He said in 2018 GDP growth rate stood at 5.8 per cent and inflation was only 4 per cent.

The country's economy now was on the way to improvement and China had played an important role in this regard.

The minister remarked that the strategic partnership between Pakistan and China was commendable as both the countries were going to start the next phase of CPEC.

He said in the second phase of CPEC, useful discussions were held during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China.

US to send anti-missile system to Israel: Pentagon

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The United States said on Sunday it will send to Israel an advanced anti-missile system - and U.S. troops to operate it - in a bid to bolster the country's air defenses following missile attacks by Iran.

U.S. President Joe Biden said he was sending the system "to defend Israel."

Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said the deployment of a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery would augment Israel's integrated

air defense system. "It is part of the broader adjustments the U.S. military has made in recent months, to support the defense of Israel and protect Americans from attacks by Iran and Iranian-aligned militias," Ryder said in a statement.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi warned earlier on Sunday that the United States was putting the lives of its troops "at risk by deploying them to operate U.S. missile systems in Israel."

"While we have made

tremendous efforts in recent days to contain an all-out war in our region, I say it clearly that we have no red lines in defending our people and interests," Araqchi posted on X.

Iran launched missiles and drones at Israel in April. Then on Oct. 1, Iran fired more than 180 ballistic missiles at Israel amid an escalation in fighting between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon. Many were intercepted in flight but some penetrated missile defenses.

Israeli attacks destroy Ottoman-era market

BEIRUT (Aljazeera): Israeli air raids have destroyed an Ottoman-era market in the southern city of Nabatieh overnight, killing at least one person and wounding four.

Lebanon's Civil Defense officials on Sunday said they battled fires in 12 residential buildings and 40 shops in the market, which dates back to 1910. "Our livelihoods have all been levelled to the ground," said Ahmad Fakihi, whose corner shop was destroyed.

Rescuers were searching for survivors and remains in the pancaked buildings early on Sunday as Israeli drones buzzed overhead.

Nabatieh was one of dozens of communities

across southern Lebanon that Israel has warned people to evacuate, even as the city hosts people who have already been displaced.

The conflict in Lebanon dramatically escalated in September with a wave of Israeli attacks that killed Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and most of his senior commanders. Israel launched a ground operation into southern Lebanon earlier this month.

In a separate incident, the Lebanese Red Cross said paramedics were searching for bodies in the wreckage of a house destroyed by an Israeli air raid on southern Lebanon on Sunday when a second attack left four paramedics with concussions and damaged two ambulances.

Israeli forces have repeatedly fired upon first responders and United Nations peacekeepers since the start of the ground operation. Israel, without providing evidence, accuses Hezbollah of using ambulances to ferry fighters and weapons, saying Hezbollah operates in the vicinity of the peacekeepers.

At least 2,255 people have been killed in Lebanon since the start of the conflict, including more than 1,400 people since September, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry. At least 54 people have been killed in the rocket attacks on Israel, nearly half of them soldiers, according to Israeli officials.



Harris releases medical report, drawing contrast with Trump

WASHINGTON, Oct 12 (Reuters) - Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential nominee, released a letter from her doctor on Saturday that pronounced her in good health and fit for high office, in an effort to draw a contrast with her counterpart, Donald Trump.

In a memo distributed by the White House, the vice president's physician, Joshua Simmons, said Harris's most recent physical exam in April was "unremarkable," that she maintains an active lifestyle and "very healthy diet" despite a busy schedule, suffers from seasonal allergies and sporadic hives, does not use tobacco and drinks alcohol only in moderation.

"She possesses the physical and mental resiliency required to successfully execute the duties of the Presidency, to include those as Chief Executive, Head of State and Commander in Chief," the doctor wrote.

Harris, 59, is running against Republican Trump, 78, for the White House. She made her medical information public on Saturday in an effort to draw attention to his refusal to do so, according to a Harris aide.

Harris said Trump's reluctance to provide a detailed medical reports is the latest example of his lack of transparency.

"I think that it's obvious that his team, at least, does not want the American people to see everything about who he is," Harris told reporters before boarding a plane to North Carolina.

Trump has voluntarily released updates from his personal physician, as well as detailed reports from medical doctor Ronny Jackson who treated him after the first assassination attempt, Steven Cheung, Trump Campaign Communications Director, said in a statement.

"All have concluded he is in perfect and excellent health to be Commander in Chief," Cheung said.

The Harris campaign is eager to highlight the former president's age since he became the oldest candidate in the race. President

Joe Biden, 81, stepped aside as the Democratic standard bearer following a poor debate performance against Trump.

Locked in a tight race, Harris' campaign hopes that contrasting her comparative youth and mental acuity with Trump's more advanced age and tendency to meander, along with the differences in transparency between the two, will help convince undecided voters that she is more fit for office.

A White House doctor said in 2018 when Trump was in office that he was in overall excellent health then but needed to shed weight and start a daily exercise routine.

Simmons said Harris's allergies had been well-managed with over-the-

counter and prescription medications.

Her urticaria or hives were "sporadic and transient and do not seem to be triggered by any particular exposure nor are they associated with other symptoms" and respond well to antihistamine treatment.

Harris has been on allergen immunotherapy for the last three years, dramatically improving her allergy and urticaria symptoms and negating her need for medication other than occasional nasal spray, he said.

Harris wears contact lenses. Her family history includes her mother's colon cancer. Harris was up to date on preventative health procedures including colonoscopy and annual mammograms, he said.

