

NEPRA concludes hearing

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Wednesday concluded public hearing into public petition filed by Central Power Purchasing Agency on behalf of XWDISCOs in power tariff increase under monthly fuel cost adjustment (FCA) for September. The CPPA has sought 71 paise per unit reduction in the power tariff for the said period.



@thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI No. 277 Regd. No. 241 RABI-US-SANNI 27 1446 -- THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31 2024 PESHAWAR EDITION 12 PAGES PRICE. 30

Investment in Pakistan to reach \$2.8bn: Saudi minister

RIYADH (APP): The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Wednesday announced to add another \$600 million to its recently announced \$2.2 billion investment in Pakistan what the Saudi investment minister called "only the beginning of something very special."

The announcement was made in a joint press stake-out by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Investment Minister Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al Falih following their "very productive" meeting encompassing the bilateral cooperation in multiple sectors including trade, finance, agriculture, technology and skilled manpower.

At the invitation of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the prime minister is currently on a two-day official visit to Saudi Arabia where he addressed the 8th edition of the Future Investment Initiative (FI) on "Infinite Horizons: Investing Today, Shaping Tomorrow."

Accompanied by Advisor at the Royal Court Mohammad Mazid Al-Tuwajri, Saudi Minister Al Falih told the media that during his recent visit to Pakistan, both sides had signed 27 MoUs for investment worth \$2.2 in Pakistan.

He announced that fol-

PM arrives in Doha on two-day official visit

DOHA (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday arrived in Doha on two-day official visit at the invitation of Amir of State of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

At the airport, the prime minister was received by Qatari Minister of State Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi, Pakistan's ambassador and other diplomatic staff, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Federal ministers Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Mohammad Aurangzeb, Jam Kamal Khan and Attullah Tarar also accompanied the prime minister.

On his X handle, the prime minister said that he had just arrived in Doha at the invitation of Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

"During this special visit, I look forward to a productive exchange of views with the Qatari leadership to further enhance our brotherly relations. I will also inaugurate a special exhibition at Qatar Museum highlighting the cultural heritage of Pakistan," he further posted.

During his visit, the prime minister will hold bilateral meetings with Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar and Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, Prime Minister / Minister for Foreign Affairs.

In these meetings, the two sides will review the entire gamut of bilateral relations and explore new avenues of cooperation especially in trade and investment.

Following Prime Minister Sehbaz's meeting with Crown Prince and their discussion, the number of MoUs has been increased from 27 to 34 to add \$600 million in investment taking the investment volume to \$2.8 billion.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said the meetings with the Crown Prince and Al Falih were reassuring and told the media that some of the projects agreed upon during the recent Saudi delegation's visit were under implementation.

He said both sides would work on the timelines of the project and expressed the hope that under the leadership of Saudi crown prince, both sides would strengthen bilateral relations not only for the benefit of the people of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia but the entire Muslim Ummah.

"When I come back, I will have good news for the people of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. With your valuable support, we will be able to carve our way forward and soon be able to

make big announcements," the prime minister remarked.

Minister Al-Falih said that as a follow-up of their Pakistan visit, both sides had "extensive" working-level meeting to elevate the bilateral relations to yet higher horizons in the fields of economy, finance, trade and people-to-people contacts.

He said that some of the MoUs had resulted in imports from Pakistan in agriculture and other fields. He also expressed the Saudi government's willingness to import Pakistan's skilled workforce as he said the world was looking towards Saudi Arabia becoming a key driver in digital technology and artificial intelligence.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also expressed gratitude to the Saudi leadership for support to Pakistan which was critical to achieving the IMF program.

He said with the commitment and collective efforts by the government and the support from the brotherly countries, Pakistan would march towards economic progress.

He also thanked 2.5 million Pakistani expatriates for contributing to Saudi development and assured that Pakistan would make efforts to prepare a skilled workforce to meet Saudi requirements to contribute in a big way to the Kingdom's development programme.

9th May vandalism case ATC acquits 27 PTI workers including minister

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Peshawar has acquitted 27 accused, including Provincial Minister Mena Khan Afridi and three assembly members, in 9th May, 2023 vandalism case against Imran Khan arrest, on Wednesday.

According to the prosecution, on May 9, 2023, violent protesters demonstrated against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founding chairman's arrest in the premises of Khan Raziq Shaheed police station.

During the protest, the VIP gate of Bala Hissar, Frontier Women's College gate, and private banks' ATMs were damaged. One citizen was killed, and several others were injured.

Following the incident, Khan Raziq Shaheed police nominated 27 accused, including Provincial Minister Mena Khan Afridi, Assembly members Arbab Sher Ali, Fazal Elahi, and Muhammad Asif, Former provincial ministers Kamran Bangash and Timur Salim Jhagra, Former Peshawar Nazim Arbab Asim and PTI Local

leader Irfan Salim

The police completed the investigation and submitted the challan to the court. The court initiated the trial, recording statements from all witnesses and accused. However, during the trial, the prosecution failed to prove the charges against the accused.

Consequently, the court acquitted all 27 accused due to lack of evidence. It is worth noting that over 100 other accused, who were not directly nominated in the case, had already been acquitted by the court.

One terrorist killed in Zhob: ISPR

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Security Forces on Wednesday killed a Khwarij terrorist while injured the other during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted in general area Sambaza, Zhob District.

During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between the Army troops and Khwarij, an Inter Services Public Relations news release said.

The weapons and ammunition were also recovered from them.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to neutralize any other Kharji present in the area.

"Security forces of Pakistan, in step with the nation, remain determined to thwart attempts at sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Balochistan," the ISPR said.

Maryam intends smog diplomacy with India

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz intending smog diplomacy with India to overcome the menace of dangerous levels of the air quality. "Smog is not a political but a humanitarian issue, I am considering writing a letter to Indian Punjab's chief minister," addressing a Diwali gathering in Lahore Maryam Nawaz said.

"The air doesn't know the border between two countries, it is impossible to fight smog until both Punjabs take joint steps," Punjab's Chief Minister said.

Senior Punjab minister Marriyoun Aurangzeb has said that the chief minister has directed for writing a letter on smog to the chief minister of Delhi. "Pollution could be controlled with joint efforts," minister said.

The government has decided to impose "Green Lockdown" in specific areas of Lahore.

The Frontier Post

PM flays Israel

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned Israel's actions aimed at obstructing the operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees. The prime minister, wrote on his X timeline that by preventing critical relief assistance from reaching millions of helpless Palestinians, Israel was committing yet another blatant violation of international humanitarian law.



DOHA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif arrives at Doha International Airport for his official visit of Qatar. He is being received by Qatar's Minister of State, Muhammad bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi.

Israel wages deadly Gaza strikes as northern areas issue plea for help

CAIRO/GAZA (Reuters): Israel pummeled the Gaza Strip with new bombardments that killed at least 30 people on Wednesday, Palestinian medics said, a day after one of the deadliest single strikes of the year-old war killed scores in the north of the enclave.

Eight of Wednesday's victims were killed in a strike on the Salateen area of Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza. The area is near where medics said at least 93 people were killed or missing on Tuesday in an Israeli strike Washington called "horrifying".

The Israeli military assault that has laid waste to the Gaza Strip and killed tens of thousands of people shows no signs of slowing as Israel wages a new war against Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon and its backer the United States tries after a year of failed attempts to broker cease-fires for both.

Northern Gaza, where Israel said in January it had

dismantled militant group Hamas' command structure, is currently the focus of the military's assault. It sent tanks into Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanoun and Jabalia earlier this month to flush out Hamas fighters who it said had regrouped in the area.

The new operation has killed hundreds of Palestinians. On Wednesday, the Gaza health ministry said at least 30 people were killed in Israeli strikes across the enclave, at least 23 of them in northern areas. Tuesday's strike on a house in Beit Lahiya killed 93, including 20 children, medical workers say.

An Israeli military official said that airstrike, which demolished a building, was not intended to destroy the structure and was aimed at a person on the roof whom troops had identified as a "spotter" amid heavy fighting.

The official, who could not be identified by name, said there were "discrepancies" between the numbers

reported dead and what the military had observed but did not elaborate.

Israel says its northern assault has killed hundreds of militants. Hamas has not said how many fighters have died.

CRISIS FOR HELP

The assault in the north, in addition to new rules introduced by Israel and a halt to most private food deliveries, has also choked aid and food supplies to their lowest level since the beginning of the war.

Israel says it has continued food deliveries into Gaza and blames the United Nations for failing to feed Gazans.

Israeli statistics reviewed by Reuters on Wednesday show that aid shipments allowed into Gaza in October remained at their lowest levels since October 2023.

Officials in Beit Lahiya issued a statement urging world powers and aid agencies to halt Israel's attacks and bring in basic medical

supplies, fuel and food, saying the latest military actions had left the area "without food, without water, without hospitals, without doctors."

Dr. Eid Sabbah of Beit Lahiya's Kamal Adwan hospital told Reuters that bodies and injured people remained trapped under rubble.

"Whoever is injured, just lies there on the ground and whoever is killed can't be transported, except by mule-drawn cart," he said.

Israel's decision this week to ban the U.N. relief agency UNRWA from operating on its territory could have a disastrous impact on humanitarian efforts in Gaza, U.N. officials said.

The Gaza war began after Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that for years ruled the territory, attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages back to Gaza, according to Israeli authorities.

Final bidding process for PIA privatization today

ISLAMABAD (INP): The final bidding process for the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is scheduled to take place today (Thursday) in Islamabad.

Preparations for the bidding process have been finalized at a private hotel in the capital.

Of the six potential bidders, only the Blue World City consortium has submitted an advance payment, confirmed by sources from the Privatization Commission.

Both the bid submission and opening of Pakistan International Airline's purchase are set to occur on the same day, as per aviation sources.

The privatization process will adhere strictly to the regulatory framework and guidelines, ensuring full compliance with legal requirements, the sources added.

As the government proceeds with the PIA privatisation, new conditions from potential buyers have emerged related to airline's employees.

During a Senate Privatisation Committee meeting chaired by Senator Talal Chaudhry, it was revealed that companies interested in acquiring PIA are requesting significant changes. Key among the new demands is the immediate dismissal of all the employees, alongside the acquisition of 76 percent of PIA's shares, with the government responsible for clearing tax payments.

Both the bid submission and opening of Pakistan International Airline's purchase are set to occur on the same day, as per aviation sources.

The privatization process will adhere strictly to the regulatory framework and guidelines, ensuring full compliance with legal requirements, the sources added.

As the government proceeds with the PIA privatisation, new conditions from potential buyers

have emerged related to airline's employees.

During a Senate Privatisation Committee meeting chaired by Senator Talal Chaudhry, it was revealed that companies interested in acquiring PIA are requesting significant changes.

Key among the new demands is the immediate dismissal of all the employees, alongside the acquisition of 76 percent of PIA's shares, with the government responsible for clearing tax payments.

The Privatization Commission sought to negotiate terms that would protect employees from layoffs for at least two to three years.

However, the bidders have reportedly refused to commit to this, expressing reluctance to retain employees or cover pension obligations.

The privatization process, now set for October 31, has drawn criticism for the lack of a clear plan to safeguard employees.

Only certified charitable organizations qualify for tax exemptions: Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has stated that a committee meeting was held regarding the power supply through KE, HESCO, and SEPCO. The committee's mandate was to resolve issues related to HESCO, SEPCO, and KE.

He stated that the Speaker should issue a ruling to ensure the implementation of the committee's decisions, and the heads of the three companies should be summoned to enforce the recommendations made by the committee.

Speaking during the question period in the Sindh Assembly, Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control, Sharjeel Inam Memon, stated that only certified charitable organizations qualify for tax exemptions.

He added that aid brought from abroad during natural disasters, such as floods or earthquakes, is not subject to taxation.

He stated that the question regarding the personal use of vehicles belonging to charitable organizations is based on assumptions. Using such vehicles for per-

sonal purposes could result in their confiscation, along with the imposition of a fine. He added that charitable organizations are well aware of the privileges they are entitled to.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that numerous reforms have been introduced in the Excise Department, setting revolutionary examples. A queuing system has been implemented at the Civic Center, with provisions for air conditioning and water for the citizens visiting. He added that efforts were made to transition the entire system online to minimize the need for people to visit the office.

He stated that the Excise Department is set to introduce a cashless system. Those unfamiliar with online processes will only be able to obtain challans from the Excise Department office and deposit them at a bank. The Excise Department app has been made very user-friendly, allowing people to register vehicles from the comfort of their homes, with only a small fee required. For the first time in the country, this initiative has been implemented in Sindh, ensuring that no unregistered vehicle will be allowed on the roads.

Additionally, if a vehicle arrives at the port, it will only be allowed to travel to another province via a carrier on the port.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that a premium number plate auctioned for 10 crores, and the proceeds are being used to build houses for flood victims. He added that the funds are being collected voluntarily, and efforts will be made to model the institution accordingly.

He stated that Chingchi rickshaws are banned but continue to operate under court-issued stay orders. He added that bus stands have been removed from Karachi, and the government has initiated a shuttle service to transport passengers outside the city.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) is actively working against narcotics at airports and border areas. A mobile service and checking system have also been introduced in cities. He added that 10 check posts have been officially notified, leading to successful operations.

He stated that the People's Party has declared a war against drugs and called for everyone's help

and support, emphasizing the need for collective action to eliminate drug use. He affirmed that strict action will be taken against anyone involved in drug-related activities. He also acknowledged the full cooperation of the ANF on behalf of the federal government.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the rehabilitation centers operating in Sindh are funded by the Sindh government. He mentioned that an anti-narcotics motion was tabled in the Sindh Assembly, receiving support from all parties, including MQM and Jamaat-e-Islami. He also noted that anti-narcotics operations have been initiated in universities, resulting in the arrest of some employees.

He stated that the Government of Sindh has collected 125 billion in taxes, but some individuals have sought court orders to block its use. The Sindh government won the case, yet these individuals appealed to the Supreme Court, resulting in 120 billion rupees still being held there. He emphasized that it is everyone's responsibility to raise their voice on this issue, as the roads are being used and the infrastructure is deteriorating.



GAZA STRIP: Palestinian transport casualties following an Israeli strike, amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip.



Anti-polio campaign continues in Lahore

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Deputy Commissioner Musa Raza assessed the performance of polio field staff at Bedian Road on the third consecutive day of the anti-polio campaign.

During his visit, the DC emphasised the importance of ensuring that no child is left without receiving polio drops. He stated, "Consider this campaign a national duty and work together to make it successful."

The DC urged polio teams to play a proactive role in the fight against polio, ensuring they visit every home to vaccinate children. He also called on parents to cooperate with the vaccination teams, stressing the necessity of administering the two drops to their children.

In addition to the polio campaign, DC Musa Raza conducted an inspection of cleanliness efforts in the area. He expressed dissatisfaction with the poor sanitation arrangements at a vacant plot and ordered the Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) to clear the site immediately. He instructed that no garbage should be visible anywhere in the city, emphasizing the need for cleanliness.

Furthermore, the DC directed the removal of encroachments, particularly the relocation of shanties, and called for identifying points for their transfer. He stressed that the removal of animals from residential areas is crucial for maintaining a clean environment.

NED, Engineers are learning to conquer the universe: Tessori

F.P. Report

KARACHI: NED is teaching the student to conquer the world, has seen closely the team's services for Jamia, it is a dream of students and parents to participate in the annual graduation ceremony, Jamia NED and its Ka Thar Campus is the best educational center, affordable higher education is a proof of education friendly Sindh government, it is desirable to have 21 PhD scholars. Chancellor Universities/Governor Sindh Muhammad Kamran Khan Tesuri, Chief Minister of Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, Chief Guest Hussain Dawood, Chief Guest Amirul Islam and Sheikh Al Jamia NED Professor Dr. Sarosh Hashmat Lodhi expressed these views.

Under NED, the 33rd Annual Credential Distribution Meeting was held in 2024. According to the details, Governor Sindh/Chancellor of Universities Muhammad Kamran Khan Tesori said that all you young people and scholars are the axis of our hope. Educational institutions are taught to compete

with the world through quality education and research.

Today's youth is the player of the age of information technology, cyber security and artificial intelligence. He has to work hard and win in these fields to progress. I am happy as Chancellor to see that your institution NED has taught you to step into the world of research through which NED students can conquer the world. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah as the guest of honor said that it is the dream of every student to join this annual meeting of Jamia.

I am the guest of honor here at NED today, but actually this is my academic mother. I am proud to have graduated from this institution. Even today I feel like a student when I come here and this feeling is fleeting for me. Then there are the friends who are serving here. Sheikh Jamia's excellence for this institution, the tireless work of his team, I have seen it all very closely.

He said that I am a witness that whenever I asked for any work for the betterment of this institution, Dr. Lodhi achieved the best results day and night. will It

was further said that I congratulate Shaikh-ul-Jamia Prof. Dr. Sarosh Lodhi and his team under whose leadership the Jamia is progressing.

Speaking on this occasion, Dawood Hercules Corporation Chairman Hussain Dawood said that the world of possibilities is waiting for you, in the coming time you will not only open the doors of possibilities for yourself but also make the name of the country bright while the Ameer Salam of the organization.

He thanked the former and associated people who kept NED University on the path of development for more than a hundred years. Addressing the reception, Shaikh Al Jamia Dr. Sarosh Hashmat Lodhi said that the federal government, the provincial government, the administration of the Jamia, your teachers, their research environment have all provided the best educational environment to the students.

Knowledge is standing here with its head held high. I think that I have created an excellent generation which is now ready to play its exemplary role in the development and prosperity of the nation.



According to the Vice-Chancellor Dr. Muhammad Tufail and Registrar Syed Ghazanfar Hussain Naqvi, 21 scholars were awarded doctorate certificates in this certificate distribution meeting 2024.

Among them Sadia Memon from Civil Engineering Department, Saqib Sharif from Mechanical Engineering Department, Mona Kanwal from Computer Science and Information Technology Department, Khalid Mehboob, Muzamal Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Hasan Nisar, Muhammad Najamul Islam, Syed Muhammad Shiraz from Computer and Information System Engineering Department, Tajur Sultana, Muhammad Muneeb Sheikh from Electronic Engineering, Syed Minhaj-ul-Nabi Jafari, Agha Muhammad Ali Mirza, Tehneet Aslam, Irshadullah from Department of Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering, Muhammad Kashif, Mehreen Kausar, Tahir Mumtaz Malik, Asif Hasan from Department of Chemical Engineering Raza Mohammad Khan, Abdul Raouf from Materials and

Metallurgy and Humira Altaf Khan from Mathematics Department were awarded doctorate certificates.

This year the number of

passed out graduates is seventeen hundred while two hundred and seventy students have succeeded in Masters. According to the

spokesman of Jamia, nearly seven thousand people participated in this convocation with exemplary management.

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA TEHSIL MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION BARIKOT (SWAT) TENDER NOTICE (E-BIDDING)

E-Bids for the following developmental schemes are hereby invited on Above/ Below/ At Par System from approved & registered government contractors/ firms who are enlisted with Local Government Elections & Rural Development Department Local Council Board, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and have renewed their licenses for the year 2024-25.

Date & Time of Tenders Form Submission	19-11-2024	12:00 PM
Date & Time of Tenders Form Opening	19-11-2024	02:00 PM

DETAILS OF DEVELOPMENTAL SCHEMES > E-BIDDING DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES (SWAT) FOR THE YEAR 2024-25 ADP #930/240309

S.No.	Name of Scheme	E/Cost (In Million)	Earnest Money @2%	Completion Period
1.	Pavement of Streets at VC Chungai	3.00	60000	As per Work Order
2.	Pavement of Streets at VC Kota (Gharbi)	6.00	120000	-do-
3.	Pavement of Streets at VC Kota (Sharqi)	5.00	100000	-do-
4.	Pavement of Streets at VC Aboha	8.00	160000	-do-
5.	Pavement of Streets at VC Dadahara	3.00	60000	-do-
6.	Pavement of Streets at NC Barikot (Gharbi)	4.00	80000	-do-
7.	Pavement of Streets at NC Barikot (Sharqi)	4.00	80000	-do-
8.	Pavement of Streets at VC Ghaligey	5.00	100000	-do-
9.	Pavement of Streets at VC Manyar	3.00	60000	-do-
10.	Pavement of Streets at VC Qambar-I	10.00	200000	-do-
11.	Pavement of Streets at VC Qambar-II	5.00	100000	-do-
12.	Pavement of Streets at VC Terang Dedawar	5.00	100000	-do-
13.	Pavement of Streets at VC Gogdara	5.00	100000	-do-
14.	Pavement of Streets at VC Karakar Amlook Dara	5.00	100000	-do-
15.	Pavement of Streets at VC Shingardar	4.00	80000	-do-
16.	Construction of Janazgah at VC Zarakhela	5.00	100000	-do-
17.	Construction of Janazgah at VC Garhal	5.00	100000	-do-
18.	Construction of Janazgah at VC Qambar	7.00	140000	-do-
19.	Construction of Janazgah at VC Tindodag	7.00	140000	-do-
20.	Construction of Janazgah at VC Terang (Kohai)	6.00	120000	-do-
21.	Rehabilitation of Roads (PCC) at VC Kota Gharbi	10.00	200000	-do-
22.	Rehabilitation of Roads (PCC) at VC Jawanr	10.00	200000	-do-
23.	Rehabilitation of Roads (PCC) at VC Qambar-II	10.00	200000	-do-
24.	Rehabilitation of Roads (PCC) at VC Tindodag	5.00	100000	-do-
25.	Rehabilitation of Roads (PCC) at VC Najigram	5.00	100000	-do-
26.	Rehabilitation of Roads (PCC) at VC Shingardar	5.00	100000	-do-

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- The award of contract shall be on the basis of above/ below engineer estimate on MRS-2024 (1st Bi Annual) instead of item rate.
- The contractors quoting their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer estimate shall submit bid security @ 2% only of Engineer Estimate.
- The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 20% below on Engineers Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineers Estimated cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security, then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer's estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineer Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and/or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof.
- The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh.
- The Additional Security shall be released to the contractor in four installments i.e. 1st installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 25% of the project, 2nd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 50% of the project, 3rd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 75% of the project and the 4th installment of 25% to be released after 100% completion of the project.
- Sealed bids sent through Registered Mail/ Couriers Service should be reached on or before **19-11-2024 up to 12.00 PM and will be opened on the same date at 02:00 PM** in the presence of bidders by the Tender Committee.
- These documents are compulsory with tender form:
i. Fresh Registration of LCB. ii. Fresh Registration of KP Revenue Authority.
iii. The downloaded BOQ must be attached. iv. The attested CNIC copy of MD /owner duly attested by 17 or above officer.
- After issuing the work order, if the contractor / firm do not commence the work in one week, then the tender will be cancelled including forfeiting of security.
- Issuance of work orders/ commencement of work on the above schemes shall be subject to availability of funds.
- According to the Government Laws, all the taxes will be deducted.
- In case of receiving equal offers, the award of contract shall be decided through a free toss which shall be final.
- Tender form and BOQ, can be downloaded after Twelve (12) days of wide publicity on the website **www.lgk.gov.pk**.
- Any cutting/ over-writing on the BOQ will be liable to rejection of the tender and will be declared non-responsive.
- The rules and regulation / instructions in future if issued by Provincial Govt. of KPK will be applicable.

Note: The office of TMA Barikot may be reached for further queries during office hours.

INF (P) 2855/24

ADVERTISED BY:
TEHSIL OFFICER (I&S)
TMA BARIKOT SWAT

BY THE ORDER OF:
TEHSIL MUNICIPAL OFFICER
TMA BARIKOT SWAT

CM performs groundbreaking of public sector cancer hospital

LAHORE (APP): Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif laid a foundation stone of the largest and first ever public sector cancer hospital in the history of Pakistan in which level 3 and level 4 cancer patients will also get free treatment. She assigned a 12-month target for the completion of the first phase of cancer hospital.

She also announced to establish first ever public sector bone marrow transplant centre. The CM directed to review a proposal with regard to building hotels for attendants in front of hospital. She also announced to launch a programme of building specialised hospitals for blood diseases, paed, organ transplant and bone marrow in Punjab along with hiring specialist doctors from abroad with incentives in Punjab.

During a briefing on Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer Treatment and Research, she was apprised that 915-bedded cancer hospital to be established in

Lahore and will be completed in two phases. Pediatric, oncology, operation theatre, 10-radiation therapy bunker, ICU and 30 beds emergency ward will be established in the cancer institute. A waiting hall and 24 beds for the attendants will also be built.

It was further apprised in the briefing that bone marrow centre, cancer care clinic, doctor residencies and a mosque will be constructed in the first phase of the main building. In the second phase, a new building with 300 beds and a parking plaza will also be constructed. Radiation therapy, chemotherapy, endoscopy and other facilities will also be provided in the first public sector cancer hospital. Prayers were also offered after laying foundation stone of the cancer hospital.

Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique apprised about details of the project. He expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign

Minister Ishaq Dar and others for their special assistance. CM Maryam Nawaz

Sharif while addressing groundbreaking ceremony of hospital said, "Good

doctors will be given houses, vehicles and handsome salaries in Punjab.

TENDER NOTICE		
Pak Everbright Development Organization Invite Sealed Tender for Hiring of Vehicle on Rental Basis from Register Suppliers/Companies as per Given Below Details.		
Description	Quantity	Duty Areas
Motor car, • Engine Capacity 1300 cc-1800 • Petrol engine, • Model/Year of Manufactured 2016 or above • AC Functional • Type: Toyota, Honda, Grand or equal (including With Driver Maintain ace etc. on monthly basis)	01	Hiring of Rental Vehicle on Monthly Rental Basis for Peshawar with visits to Nowshera, Swat, D.I.Khan and Islamabad- for CRS-PEDO-ERA-USAID
Detail Term and Conditions are available in the tender documents that can be download free of cost from PEDO Website https://pedo.org.pk are obtain from Office in working Hours. The deadline for submission of tender is November 04, 2024 till 3:00 Pm to the undersigned office at Peshawar.		
Administrative Officer Pak Everbright Development Organization		
Office# opposite CTD Police Station Qafila Road Peshawar Cantt – Pakistan		
Email: pakpedo@gmail.com		
Phone: 091-3040293 , 0336-9313484		

PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders are invited from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa based, Sales Tax & Income tax Registered Firms / Suppliers for the purchase of the following items with given specification for the MPA's Hostel, Peshawar so as to reach the undersigned not later than 20/11/2024 at 10:00 A.M

1. Machinery/IT Items

- Supply, Installation, testing and commissioning of Full DC Inverter 1.5 (18000 BTU) Wall Mounted Type AC having the following characteristics: T-3 compressor, Long Air Throw capability, 5 and above energy efficiency ratio, low voltage startup capability, Fire proof PCB cards, turbo cooling, Copper tube kit minimum 10 Feet long with all accessories.
- Supply of Full DC inverter type Refrigerator 2 door medium size with Low voltage startup capability, low electricity consumption, integrated humidity control feature, Anti-fungal detachable gasket, thickest insulation for enhance energy efficiency, ion deodorization technology.
- TV 43 Inch, Type: Branded LED, Screen Size: 43", Resolution: 3840x2160, Pure Color, PQI 2000, HDR 10+, Support Micro dimming, UHD dimming, sound output 20w, adaptive sound yes, WIFI, Bluetooth (BT 4.2), Bazel type3 Bazel less and operating system Tizen Wall Mount Bracket & Installation.

2. Furniture Items

- Supreme Quality Solid Wood Sofa Set (5 sealer) with Centre Table Set.
- Supreme Quality Solid Sheesham Wood Easy Chair.
- Supreme Quality Double Bed Double Ply Blanket.
- Branded Mattress for Single Bed.

Conditions for the Tender

- The Firms/ Suppliers will have to enclose earnest money @ Rs. 100000/- in shape of Call Deposit from any schedule bank of the State Bank of Pakistan in the name of Secretary, Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the tender otherwise tender will not be entertained.
- Income Tax/ Sales Tax/ Professional Tax and stamp duty at the prescribed rates, will be deducted from the bills of the successful tenderer.
- Attested Photocopies of the Sales Tax Registration and Professional Tax Certificates must be attached with the tender.
- Tenderers will have to bring the catalogs for electronics and samples for furniture. Otherwise their Call Deposit will be forfeited. Incomplete tender/ documents will not be entertained.
- All the Equipments should be branded and according to given specifications.
- Supply/ work will have to be completed within stipulated period of the receipt of supply order by the successful bidders.
- Further details can be obtained from the Supervisor Store of this Secretariat on any working day. Contact Number 091-9210489 Ext: 1242.
- Tenders will be opened in the office of the Secretary, Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on 20/11/2024 at 11:00 A.M. in presence of the interested tenderers or their representatives.
- The Secretary, Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders under rule 47 of "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement of Goods, Works and Services Rules, 2014".

Shahid Rehman

Deputy Secretary (Estab:)/DDO
Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

INF(P) 2854/24

PPP stresses fortifying judiciary with 26th amendment

LAHORE (APP): The 26th Constitutional Amendment is not meant to undermine the higher judiciary but to strengthen institutions.

This was stated by Shehzad Saeed Cheema, Secretary Information of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Central Punjab, at a press conference held at the PPP Secretariat in Model Town, on Wednesday. He clarified that the amendment was aimed to regulate and reinforce judicial processes.

Cheema acknowledged Bilawal Bhutto's efforts for the amendment, noting the involvement of leaders from other parties, including Maulana Fazlur

Rehman. He highlighted that Bilawal repeatedly reached out to PTI's founder, but without a positive response.

Cheema praised Justice Mansoor Ali Shah as an exemplary judge, adding that labeling him as "incorrigible" was harmful. "We have endured significant judicial exploitation, and ideology of PPP founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto remains alive to this day," he remarked.

Barrister Amir Hassan affirmed PPP's commitment to the Constitution of Pakistan, observing a leadership vacuum in the country.

**URBAN AREA DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY KOHAT**

ADDENDUM / CORRIGENDUM

The following addition in compliance with Rule 37 (A) in the Terms & Conditions of UADA Kohat's advertisement regarding auction of land for Shadi Hall/Marquee already published in Daily Express on 24/10/2024 may please be published in your Newspaper for one insertion only: -

"All bidders are required to be registered with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority, established under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act 2013 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act No. XXI of 2013), for works, consulting and non-consulting services as listed in Schedule-II of the Act ibid."

HOUSING OFFICER

Urban Areas Dev; Authority Peshawar Road Kohat
PH: 0922-920336

INF(P)2862/24

KP Govt achives Digital Revenue platform

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has achieved another milestone towards digital transformation by introducing ‘Digital Mahasil’ an integrated and unified platform for collection of fines, taxes and other revenues in the province.

The Chief Minister, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Wednesday formally launched the e-fines portal under ‘Digital Mahasil’ initiative at a ceremony held at chief Minister’s Secretariat, Peshawar. Provincial cabinet members, Arshad Ayub Khan, Nazir Abbasi, Zahir Shah Toru, Brig. (R) Musadiq Abbasi, Muzzamil Aslam, Pir Mussawir Shah, Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretaries, Senior Member Board of

Revenue, concerned administrative secretaries, high ups of KP ITB attended the ceremony. Divisional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners also attended the ceremony via video link.

As per details, e-fines portal has been piloted from the provincial capital Peshawar, which will be extended to rest of the districts of the province. Initially, the line departments, functioning under district administration will collect fines through digital portal, however, in later stages the initiative will be extended to other districts with addition of other features including collection of taxes and other revenues.

The portal is an integrated digital platform with an ability to function offline as well. With the implementation of this

integrated system alongside ensuring transparency in taxes and fines collection windows for forgery, duplication and mistakes will also be closed. Through e-fine portal, violators will be notified that they have been fined legally and their fines have been deposited in government kitty. Other features of the portal include, availability of artificial intelligence based dashboard recording all the details related to fines and revenues. Moreover, QR code generation facility has been incorporated for online verification of fines and taxes. Similarly, in next phase, a digital payment system will also be introduced for online payments.

Addressing the ceremony, the Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, said that e-fines portal

besides creating convenience for the citizens would also help in increasing the performance of the government departments and institutions. He added that the provincial government was committed to digitizing all sectors under the e-governance policy, and the launch of the e-fines portal was a milestone in promoting e-governance in the province. He directed the district administration and all relevant departments to ensure effective use of newly launched portal. He emphasized that the ultimate goal of digitization was to bring transparency and to improve public service delivery in the province.

He urged upon the provincial government departments to fulfill their responsibilities diligently to achieve this purpose.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur formally launching the e-fines portal under ‘Digital Mahasil’ initiative.

We are reviving Peshawar as a hub for tourism: Zahid Chanzab

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Tourism, Culture, Archaeology and Museums Zahid Chanzab has said that the provincial government is reviving the city of flowers, Peshawar, as a center for tourism activities with new spirit.

He said that with the increase in tourism activities in the province, more tourists would be attracted to visit the cultural and heritage opulence of the province.

Peshawar is known for its ancient history which attracts tourists from all over the world.

He shared these views during a meeting with Farida Tariq Nishtar from Pakistan Bloom and Floral Art Society and Coordinator Fauzia Inayat regarding the arraignment of Pakistan Bloom 2024.

Director General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority, Tashfeen Haider, Event Manager Hasina Shaukat and other officials were also present.

Advisor for Tourism and Culture, Zahid Chanzab, further stated that restoring Peshawar’s heritage sites and organizing tourism activities is essential to attract tourists from across the country and the world with insights into the province’s heritage and culture.

He commended that organizing Pakistan Bloom 2024 at Peshawar’s historical heritage sites is an appreciable step.

Farida Tariq Nishtar mentioned that this year’s event theme would feature Peshawar’s cultural heritage showcased through floral displays, with plans to hold the event in November.

University of Peshawar Convocation 334 degrees and 18 gold medals conferred

KP universities must follow UoP reforms model: Meena Khan Afridi

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pro-Chancellor Meena Khan Afridi has conferred 334 master, MPhil and PhD degrees during annual convocation on its foundation day on Wednesday at main convocation building. Besides, this higher education minister confers 18 gold medals among master students.

Speaking on the occasion, the Higher Education Minister praised the performance of the current vice chancellor University of Peshawar in his three month time.

He pointed out that its time for other universities to emulate university reforms pattern.

He thanks relentless efforts by university vice chancellor, registrar and Dr. Suleman Khan for community and university uplift in recent times. The minister affirmed his commitment for continuously funding the University of Peshawar and public sector universities despite federal government step-mother treatment by not releasing 2000 billion rupees due to

province.

He congratulated graduated students and called upon them to move away thinking from governmental and private jobs to entrepreneurship and industrialized oriented jobs. Meena Khan Afridi announced that all eligible teaching faculty notably including PhD lecturers will be given promotions as a due right.

The Vice Chancellor University of Peshawar Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naeem Qazi presenting performance report stated that continued reforms process are only lifeline for struggling universities. He paid rich tribute to department heads from Pharmacy, Computer Science, Management Studies and Commerce College for commencing 19 new disciplines.

He reiterated his commitment to ensure peaceful and academic environment to wardoff traffic congestion, drug usage, noise pollution, illegal hostel occupancy and mafias nefarious designs at the university campus.

The Vice Chancellor thanked chief minister and

higher education minister for patronising reforms and helping university endeavors during last three months.

The vice chancellor at the end of his speech addressing media commented on the piece of land roughly 600 kanals that was owned by University of Peshawar and formerly bought by former vice chancellor Ali Khan through a cheque is wrongly vested in the hands of agriculture university. He alluded to University of Engineering and Technology who were given 3200 kanals of land in Jalojai and 10 billion rupees by government to establish a campus at Jalojai and to relocate there. Despite formal agreement, Engineering university is unable to either pay rent or move to Jalojai Campus. He pointed out to students, parents and media that financial crises is a buzzword but we need to see the context how University of Peshawar has drained out of its assets and earning hands systematically by successive government short-term goals.



PESHAWAR: Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi who is also the pro-Vice Chancellor of UoP awarding degrees during convocation.

CGPA holds workshop on SMEs’ development

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Center for Governance and Public Accountability (CGPA) recently hosted a three-day workshop focused on improving the environment for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Utilizing the Technology of Participation (TOP), the event emphasized the Theory of Change for SMEs, fostering collaboration among business owners, associates, and chamber representatives. This gathering served as a crucial platform for dialogue and cooperation, aimed at enhancing the growth and sustainability of SMEs in the region. Over three days, consultations engaged Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stakehold-

ers, revealing SMEs face challenges like limited financing, regulatory hurdles, inadequate infrastructure, and competition from larger firms. The discussions underscored the urgent need for a supportive ecosystem.

Ms. Hina discussed the theory of change in relation to the consultation workshop, highlighting how stakeholder engagement can lead to tangible improvements for SMEs. She detailed the steps involved, including identifying challenges, setting goals, and implementing strategies that leverage collaboration among participants. This approach aims to create a sustainable impact on the SME ecosystem.

A diverse group from the government and entre-

preneurial sectors participated in the event. Members from different entrepreneurial sectors, FBR, SMEDA, chambers of commerce, academia, media, local and international organizations, and the banking sector participated and addressed all relevant questions as follows with the following respected members, Mr. Rashid Awan provincial Chief (SMEDA), Mr. Ashfaq Masood, Commissioner of Inland FBR KP, Mr. Asim Imam, Commissioner of RTS, Mr. Jalil, SVP of the Sharhad Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Iqbal AD TEVTA, Sana Imtiaz, DC KAPRA, Mr. Saifullah, Ms. Quratulain, Ms. Nighat BOK, Mr. Khalid Director/Security General FPCCI.

Dept of Art and Design organizes Anti-Drug Poster Exhibition

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Department of Art and Design at the University of Peshawar has organized an Anti-Drug Poster Exhibition titled "Empowering Minds, Breaking Chains", at the Department of Art and Design. This event is part of the "Drug-Free Peshawar" campaign initiated by Commissioner Peshawar Division, Mr. Riaz Khan Mahsood. The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Qazi Naeem, served as the chief guest, with the program organized by the Head of Department, Dr. Imrana Seemi, and supervised by Assistant Prof. Younas Masood and Ms. Farah Javed. The exhibition features 50 posters, manually created by 3rd-semester students, to raise awareness about the misuse of drugs across the city.

KPRA launches monitoring, enforcement drive in wedding halls, restaurants

PESHAWAR (APP): As the wedding season kicks off and winter approaches, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) has launched a targeted monitoring and enforcement drive in wedding halls and restaurants across the province.

The initiative, directed by KPRA’s Director General Fauzia Iqbal, aims at enhancing tax compliance within these sectors during this peak business period. Teams of KPRA are conducting visits to wedding halls and restaurants in Peshawar and other districts to check records and educate management on sales tax on services. The teams are

also issuing instructions to ensure that the management of the businesses pay their sales tax on services based on their actual sales, avoid tax evasion and underreporting, and submit their monthly sales returns on time.

According to a statement from KPRA’s communication wing on Wednesday, the campaign aims at enhancing tax compliance in these sectors due to the increase in business activities in restaurants with the approach of winter and the onset of the wedding season in the region. Teams comprising KPRA officers, including assistant collectors and inspectors, have

been tasked with visiting wedding halls and restaurants as part of this special drive to improve compliance through in-person visits and to provide on-the-spot support to management by addressing their issues directly.

Director General KPRA, Fauzia Iqbal, highlighted in her statement that the timely payment of sales tax on services is essential for a financially self-reliant Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. “We urge taxpayers and the business community to pay their taxes on time, submit their returns regularly, and play their role in the development of our country,” she stated.

To make tax compliance easier for wedding halls, KPRA has introduced a fixed tax regime alongside the percentage-based system. Under this new regime, wedding halls have been categorized based on their sizes, with a fixed tax applied to each category. This tax is to be collected from clients on a per-event basis and deposited directly into KPRA’s account.

Fouzia Iqbal emphasized that KPRA is committed to making the tax payment process simpler and more accessible. “Our teams are here to guide taxpayers and are actively reaching out to provide assistance,” she assured.

Steps to be taken to restore student unions: Saif

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Advisor for Information Barrister Dr. Saif has affirmed that possible measures would be taken to restore students union and said that the step would give students a chance to highlight their concerns. He was addressing an event that was organized by All Parties Students Union in Markaz Islami. The event was attended by representatives from student organizations including Insaf Students Federation, Islami Jamiat Tulaba, Muslim Students Federation, Pakhtun Students Federation and others.

CM aide underscored that student unions serve as a vital channel for producing true representatives of the people and are essential to safeguarding students’ rights. He said that restrictions on student gatherings in educational institutions are in violation of Article 17 of the constitution and the right to freedom of expression. He assured that a meeting of students’ representatives, minister for higher and secretary higher education would soon be arranged to discuss concerns of students.

RHC Putwar Bala observes Pink October with breast cancer awareness seminar

PESHAWAR (APP): In observance of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Rural Health Center (RHC) Putwar Bala organized a seminar on Wednesday to educate rural women about breast cancer detection and treatment.

District Health Officials, including Dr. Feroz Shah, Dr. Muhammad Atif, Dr. Mamoon, and Dr. Khalid Yousaf, joined forces with Alkhidmat Hospital Peshawar’s Breast Care Team, comprising Dr. Shahid Ullah (Breast Surgeon), Dr. Kainat (General Surgeon), and Dr. Shafaq (Radiologist).

Dr. Mir Karim Shah, Medical Superintendent of RHC Putwar Bala, welcomed guests and emphasized the importance of breast cancer awareness for early detection and saving lives.

In his Key highlights Dr. Shahid Ullah stressed the need for rural women’s awareness on early breast cancer detection for prompt treatment.

Dr. Kainat discussed breast cancer stages, routine examinations, and referral pathways while Dr. Feroz Shah, District Deputy Health Officer Peshawar, praised RHC Putwar Bala’s initiative and announced district-wide awareness sessions. In closing remarks, Dr. Mir Karim Shah thanked participants and offered free screening services for the community. “This seminar aligns with our commitment to Universal Health Coverage and Primary Health Care services,” said Dr. Shah.

Amplifying divides: How social media algorithms shape political polarization

Qaiser Iqbal

As a number of Facebook, Twitter, and other social media users increase, these sites become key battlefields of political struggle and the major sources of voters’ information. This evolution is primarily as a result of algorithms that are developed to optimize engagement of clients in social sites such as Face book, Twitter and Instagram among others. These algorithms work on user engagement history and generate user specific timelines. To this extent, this personalization retains users on the platforms while playing an important role in the deepening of polarization by offering echo chambers where users are mostly presented with affirming opinions.

The underlying mechanics of these algorithms are simple yet powerful: it is always better to focus on contents which stir up users in some way. Again, active content draws the emotion of the user, leading to increased sharing and commenting which creates the desired user engagement and dwell time on the platform. This model prefers sensational or highly polarizing content mainly for

entertainment, which is interesting, but unhelpful in providing balanced, accurate views. Such contents lead to filter bubble - people are fed more content from one side of the political spectrum, and less from the other. The lack of exposure to different opinions can widen the polarization of political rivals and increase the animosity level between them. There is research evidence that shows that the political nature of polarization on social media is actually elicited by the algorithms of the social media platforms in question. Consistently consuming political content from a single side of the political spectrum subsequent analysis has found that this causes polarization of the user due to amplification of their opinions. This is so because these algorithms tend to produce feedback loops, in which interactions with specific content dictate more of the same, thereby amplifying users’ biases. In the long-run, this makes the gap between the populations increase as individuals move from being open-minded from the other side’s perspective.

These algorithms also result in the diffusion of mis-information another crucial matter. Social media sites such as Facebook have come under scrutiny for

their part in spreading fake news, which gets much more attention than real news. In particular, during certain election periods, the spreading of misdeclarations influences the civil population and directs voters’ choices. This is rather worrisome as election process can only be credible if the electorate is well informed. However, this is unhealthy algorithm driven dynamics are recognized with potential harm, there is growing demand for changes. Others suggest that algorithms must be adjusted to make more diverse content for there to be less echo chambers. Some call for specific practices such as the companies to do a better job to explain their algorithms to the public and for others argue maybe these platforms should be regulated to see they do not endanger democracy.

Despite this, it critical to observe the fact that polarization is influenced by social media although it is not the main determinant. It is also important to note that cultural changes and economic realities as well as traditional mediums also have huge parts to play on political arenas. However, unlike other forms of media, social media algorithmic operations to enhance and promote spe-

cific content afford it as a political tool in the current world. Minimizing the negative impacts of these algorithms can only be done through a collective and coordinated approach from various interests including the manufacturers of the technologies, the government and the users of the technologies. Silicon Valley organizations cannot continue to ignore the effects of their apps on the world’s population. This include increasing openness and moving to eliminate any role their algorithm plays in societal harm. On the other hand, the authorities must decide on the formation of rules determining design and functioning of such algorithms for the sake of democratic procedures protection.

However, there is also a role in raising awareness of how algorithms function, and what implicit bias they might bring into the information space. An informed public is one that can easily choose what media to consume and is wise enough to analyze information found on the social media platforms. In addition, to overcome the problem of the presence of fake news it is necessary to work on increasing user recognition of such content to avoid its interaction. The role of social media companies can

include the tagging of verified content as well as offering users means by which to report dubious content. Lastly, despite the social structuring affordances of social media to improve public discourse by giving voice to the masses and encouraging active participation in civility, the existing design of social media algorithms go against these opportunities. The difficulty in addressing these issues is rooted in how best to deal with incorporating these companies’ commercial imperatives while at the same time preserving political debate and democratic institutions.

In general, social media algorithms terms are influential in shaping the voter perception and the levels of polarization within the electorate. This problem can only thus be solved using a systemic approach based on technological tools, the need for new legislations, the mobilization of the public and corporate accountability. Thus, the more the platforms are developing the need for strategies for controlling their impacts increase in order to ensure that democracy is not affected while the social benefits are realized.

Writer is Lecturer in Department of History and Politics, The University of Haripur



In brief

Board of Studies meeting held F.P. Report

KOHAT: Kohat University English Department Holds Board of Studies and Relevance Assessment Committee Meetings Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) recently held meetings for the Board of Studies and Relevance Assessment Committee, chaired by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Nasiruddin. The primary objective was to discuss the initiation of an MPhil program in English Literature at the university. The meetings brought together committee members from KUST and various other universities, who deliberated on different aspects of the new program to ensure its relevance and alignment with academic and professional standards.

1122 launches operation

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): A fire broke out in pine forests on Koh-e-Sulaiman mountain range early on Wednesday in Darrazinda sub-division, prompting the district emergency-Rescue 1122 to respond and extinguish the inferno. According to a Rescue 1122 spokesman following reports of a fire in the pine forests of the Kundai Qaisah Ghar mountain range of Koh-e-Sulaiman under the supervision of Emergency Officer Naumanullah Marwat, a 16-member team of firefighters was dispatched, including firefighters from all rescue stations across the district. He said that rescue 1122's efforts were ongoing, and attempts were being made to control the fire. He said the team consists of firefighters from all rescue stations across the district and has been equipped with essential firefighting gear, including fire extinguishers and personal protective equipment. He added that Rescue 1122's team had also successfully extinguished a fire in the same area in 2022, providing services in both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the adjoining areas of Balochistan. In this emergency, techniques such as smothering and starvation were employed to extinguish the fire, which were effective in high mountainous areas where fire trucks could not reach.

Dr Shazia new GCWUS VC

SIALKOT (INP): Prof. Dr. Shazia Bashir has been appointed as the sixth vice chancellor (VC) of Government College Women University Sialkot (GCWUS). According to a spokesperson, after the notification, issued by the Higher Education Department, she has assumed charge of her post. Earlier, Dr. Shazia Bashir she the honour of being the first woman vice chancellor of Government College University Lahore. She did her Master's in Physics from Government College Lahore and MPhil from the University of Engineering and Technology Lahore. She completed her PhD degree from the Technical University of Vienna (Austria), and she has written 150 research papers in international journals. Dr. Shazia was also the Dean of Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences of GC University Lahore, said the spokesperson. On her arrival at Government College Women University Sialkot (GCWUS), Pro Vice Chancellor GCWUS Prof. Dr. Zarrin Fatima Rizvi warmly welcomed her and congratulated her on assuming the post.



BUNER: Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions and President of PML-N KP Engr. Amir Muqam in a group photo with party leaders after announcement of abolishment of Nazriyati Group.

Commissioner inspects ongoing polio drive

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division, Syed Motasim Billah Shah on Wednesday along with the District Health Officer reviewed and monitored the ongoing anti-polio campaign in different areas of the district. The Commissioner, under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa program Awami Agenda also reviewed the implementation of the action plan for vaccinating children in various villages and streets, besides monitoring the campaign in several basic health units and hospitals.

He also met with the parents who refused to vaccinate their children against polio at different places. After highlighting the importance and effective-

ness of polio drops, the parents were convinced and allowed anti-polio drops to their children.

He also administered anti-polio drops to some children.

Motasim Billah visited various vaccination points and encouraged the polio workers and security personnel for their dedication.

MPA Shafi Jan lauds performance of WSSCK

A provincial legislator and Chairman District Development Advisory Committee Shafi Jan praised the performance of Water and Sanitation Service Company Kohat.

He made these remarks during his visit to WSSCK office wherein the Company CEO Babar Khan Tanoli briefed him about the ongoing water supply system in the city under the Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project.

The meeting was attended by regional Municipal Officer Atiqur Rehman, Tehsil Municipal Officer Mohammad Shoaib, WSSC Kohat Deputy General Manager Tahir Afif, CIU Resident Engineer Faseehullah, Infrastructure Engineer Junaid Hasan and area elders.

Local elders demanded inclusion of all city areas in the water supply project on an emergent basis and take benefit from the water supply project. During the meeting, provincial lawmaker and DDAC Chairman Shafi Jan ordered timely payment of salaries and dues to Tehsil Municipal Officer Muhammad Shoaib that the salaries and arrears of TMA employees.

Preparation for Diwali in full swing

MIRPURKHAS (APP): The preparations for Deepavali (Diwali), the big festival of the Hindu community, are in full swing in the district, and the district administration has assured full cooperation for holding festival in peaceful manners.

At the main Mandir of the city "Lal Mandir" Deputy Commissioner Mirpurkhas, Dr. Rashid Masood Khan, SSP Mirpurkhas, Shabbir Ahmed Sithar brought sweets to join the joy of the Hindu community and reviewed the security arrangements.

Lal Mandir administration Lohana Hindu Panchayat President Kiran Hari Ram Kishori Lal, Ramesh Kumar Vansimil Prakash Kumar Fethwani, Babu Suresh and others welcomed the deputy commissioner and the Senior Superintendent of Police. The deputy commissioner and the SSP in a media talk, said that they had come to congratulate the Hindu community on the occasion of the big festival and also ensuring their security.

Shabbir Ahmed Sithar said that a police force had been deployed in all temples across the district, including Mirpurkhas city, adding that there would be full security from November 1 to November 3.

The SSP said that the district administration and police were in constant contact with Lal Mandir and Lohana Hindu Panchayat.

On this occasion, the management of Lohana Hindu Panchayat Lal Mandir, Kiran Hari Ram Kishori Lal, Ramesh Kumar Vansi Mal and Babu Suresh Kumar thanked the district administration and said that the Hindu community in Pakistan was independent to perform their rituals and do business in open air, adding "We are grateful to the Government of Pakistan for giving us equal rights."

Nazriyati group abolished

Expressed confidence in Amir Muqam

BUNER (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and President PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engr. Amir Muqam held a meeting with Nazriyati Group leaders on Wednesday.

During the meeting held at residence of Ishtiaq Chhattan, the Leaders of Nazriyati Group announced to abolish the Nazriyati Group and expressed full confidence on the leadership of PML-N, president Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Engr Amir Muqam and Murtaza Javed Abbasi.

Extending full support

to provincial president Engr Amir Muqam, the leaders vowed to work together for strengthening the party.

The Nazriyati Group leader Abdul Subhan Khan, Malik Imran, group president from Peshawar Arbab Ghulam Haider Khan, group leader from Abbottabad Sardar Abdur Rashid also spoke on this occasion

Provincial President Engr Amir Muqam hailed their decision and termed the decision of abolishment of group as "better late than never".

He expressed the resolve to work under the dynamic leadership of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif.

On this occasion President PML N Mardan Inayat Shah Bacha, Swabi President Shiraz Khan, Buner President Salar Khan, Shangla president Intikhab Alam, Babar Salim, Nawabzada Khan, Adil Khan, Ajar Akram Bacha, Shah Bakht Rawan, Amanullah Khan, Liaqat Khan, Ishtiaq Khan, Javed Ghazali and others were also present.

Food authority confiscates substandard products

F.P. Report

NOWSHERA: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority (KPFSHA) on Wednesday confiscated huge amount of substandard and unregistered products during raids conducted in Mardan and Nowshera.

According to spokesperson for the authority, a surprise raid was conducted on a spice factory situated in Sherabad area of Mardan.

Food authority team confiscated 54 cartons of unregistered spices, 12 kg of coloring agents and expired flavorings. The factory was sealed on the spot.

In another raid, canteen of Mardan Medical Complex was sealed due to sale of substandard items

and unhygienic conditions. Meanwhile, a snack manufacturing units on Swabi Road was inspected and fine was imposed on owner due to violation of standard operating procedures.

In another raid in Nowshera, over 1900 liters of fake and substandard beverages from a vehicle were recovered.

CEO Education for raising quality standards

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Newly-Appeointed Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad Nazia Shahzadi has said that imparting quality education in government schools, curriculum activities, making results of examination ideal and strengthening accountability system in education department are my mission.

While giving details of her priorities as a Chief Executive Officer, she said that with the cooperation of experienced, dedicate and

qualified teachers not only annual results of schools would be improved but steps would also be taken for making character of subdents ideal for bright future of students.

She determined that she herself would visit schools of district to check educational situation and other arrangements of the schools.

She said that problems of teachers would also be resolved without any delay and teachers who would show good results would be encouraged at all forums

while strict action would be taken against those teachers showing poor results, attendance and wrong attitude.

She made it clear that all computer labs, science labs be made functional so that students could get benefits of government expenditures.

All heads of schools are responsible to ensure cleanliness, tree plantation and to implement on Anti-Dengue SOPs in their respective schools and be deliver lectures about Anti-dengue SOPs on daily basis, she added.



QUETTA: View of closed shops during shutter down strike called by Balochistan National Party. — INP photo

Inter-district dacoit gang arrested

MUZAFFARGARH (INP): The Seetpur police busted an inter-district dacoit gang and arrested four criminals besides recovering looted valuables and weapons from them during a special crackdown on Wednesday. Taking action on the rising incidents of dacoity, robbery and other crimes, District Police Officer (DPO) Husnain Haider, directed officers concerned to launch a crackdown on criminals involved in depriving citizens of valuables at gunpoint.

The police, led by Station House Officer (SHO) Rao Shahroz, busted the notorious Bohar Gang and arrested four members of the gang including the ring leader Fazal Bohar, Atta Muhammad, Siraj Munir and Ahsan alias Papu. The police have also recovered looted valuables including cash Rs 500,000, motorcycles and other valuables from their possession by tracing over dozens of cases.

Lahore's smog season: A crisis demanding immediate action

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

THE smog crisis in Pakistan, particularly in Lahore, has become an annual ordeal, impacting lives, disrupting daily routines, and posing severe health risks. The phenomenon of dense, toxic smog enveloping cities is neither new nor exclusive to Pakistan, but its worsening scale and frequency have made it a major public health and environmental concern in the country. The inability to effectively control smog stems from a complex interplay of environmental pollution, policy inadequacies, economic constraints, and transboundary challenges, specifically with neighboring India.

Environmental pollution, especially air pollution, is a principal driver behind smog formation. Emissions from vehicles, factories, and agriculture contribute to high levels of harmful pollutants, including sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter, all of which interact under certain meteorological conditions to produce smog. In major cities like Lahore, industrial emissions and vehicular exhaust account for significant air pollution. The rapid urban-

ization, coupled with increasing industrial activities without proper environmental safeguards, only worsens this issue. Power plants and factories often operate on substandard fuel, releasing hazardous emissions into the atmosphere unchecked. Moreover, the transport sector in Pakistan predominantly relies on older vehicles with outdated technology, often lacking emission control devices. The widespread use of two-stroke engines in motorcycles and rickshaws further exacerbates air pollution due to incomplete fuel combustion.

The agricultural practices, particularly the burning of crop stubble, are another major contributor to smog. Farmers in Punjab, both in Pakistan and India, burn leftover crop residue after harvest, releasing vast amounts of smoke into the atmosphere. Although laws exist to curb this practice, their enforcement remains lax.

The government's failure to provide cost-effective alternatives for crop waste disposal leaves farmers with few options other than burning. The air currents that carry smoke from these fields merge with urban pollution, creating a toxic blanket over cities.

Pakistan's proximity to India plays a significant role in the worsening of smog levels, especially in Punjab. The state of Punjab in India, bordering Pakistan, practices extensive crop residue burning during certain seasons.

The smoke from these fires often drifts across the border, adding to the smog levels in Pakistan. While Pakistan has voiced concerns over this transboundary pollution, efforts for bilateral cooperation on the issue have been limited and often unproductive due to geopolitical tensions. Nevertheless, joint measures between the two countries could significantly alleviate the impact of cross-border pollution, but such collaboration requires sustained diplomatic efforts and mutual commitment to tackle air pollution as a shared crisis.

The health implications of smog are alarming. Exposure to smog has been linked to a range of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, including asthma, bronchitis, lung infections, and even heart attacks. Vulnerable populations, such as children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions, are particularly susceptible. The persistent presence of smog also

aggravates symptoms in asthma patients and increases hospital admissions due to respiratory issues. The fine particulate matter (PM2.5) found in smog penetrates deep into the lungs, causing long-term health problems that may lead to premature death. Reports from hospitals in Lahore reveal an alarming increase in respiratory issues, eye irritation, and throat infections during smog season, underscoring the public health crisis posed by air pollution.

Lahore's struggle with smog is especially dire due to its geographic and climatic conditions. The city's high population density, extensive vehicular traffic, and industrial activity make it one of the most polluted urban centers in Pakistan. During the winter months, a temperature inversion-a phenomenon where a layer of warmer air traps pollutants near the ground-aggravates smog formation. Unlike other cities that might benefit from winds that disperse pollutants, Lahore's relatively calm winter weather causes pollutants to stagnate, creating a dense, immobile smog layer that lingers for days or even weeks. The lack of green spaces within and around the city further hinders natural air purification, as vege-

tation plays a crucial role in absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen.

Addressing the smog crisis requires a multifaceted approach and strong political will. The government must enforce stricter regulations on industrial emissions and vehicular pollution. Incentives should be introduced to encourage the adoption of cleaner technologies, such as electric vehicles, and to phase out older, polluting vehicles. Establishing low-emission zones in heavily trafficked areas could also help reduce pollution levels. Pakistan could take cues from cities like Beijing, which implemented rigorous policies and achieved significant air quality improvements. Lahore, for instance, could benefit from a public transportation overhaul to reduce dependency on private vehicles.

Additionally, crop residue burning must be addressed through agricultural reform and support for farmers. Providing affordable and accessible alternatives to crop burning, such as subsidies for equipment that converts residue into compost or biofuel, can alleviate this practice. Encouraging crop rotation and promoting less polluting harvest techniques are also

viable long-term solutions. Investment in research to develop cost-effective crop waste management techniques could empower farmers and mitigate a major source of pollution. Tree plantation drives around urban centers and the development of green belts are essential to combat pollution. Increasing vegetation can help absorb pollutants and improve air quality over time.

The use of air quality monitoring systems and data transparency is also crucial. Real-time data on air pollution can help authorities make timely interventions and raise public awareness about smog-related precautions. Awareness campaigns highlighting the health risks associated with smog and promoting lifestyle adjustments, such as minimizing outdoor activities during high pollution days, can also protect vulnerable groups.

The road to a smog-free Pakistan is challenging and demands commitment, but the costs of inaction are too high to ignore. Smog control cannot be achieved overnight, but with a collaborative approach and sustained efforts, Pakistan can take strides towards cleaner and healthier air.



At least 72 people die in devastating flash floods in eastern Spain

BARCELONA (AP): Flash floods in Spain swept away cars, turned village streets into rivers, disrupted rail lines and highways and killed at least 72 people in the worst natural disaster to hit the European nation in recent memory.

Rainstorms that started Tuesday and continued Wednesday caused flooding in a wide swath of southern and eastern Spain, stretching from Malaga to Valencia. Muddy torrents tumbled vehicles down streets at high speeds, while pieces of wood swirled in the water alongside household items. Police and rescue services used helicopters to lift people from their homes and rubber boats to reach drivers stranded atop cars.

Emergency services in the eastern region of Valencia confirmed a death toll of 70 people on Wednesday. Another two casualties were reported in the neighboring Castilla La Mancha region. "Yesterday was the worst day of my life," Ricardo Gabaldón, the mayor of Utiel, a town in Valencia, told national broadcaster RTVE on Wednesday. He said six residents had perished and several more are unaccounted for. "We were trapped like rats. Cars and trash containers were flowing down the streets.

The water was rising to 3 meters (9.8 feet)," he said. Spain's government declared three days of mourning starting Thursday. "For those who are looking for their loved ones, all of

Spain feels your pain," Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said in a televised address. Rescue personnel and more than 1,100 soldiers from Spain's emergency response units were deployed to affected areas. Spain's central government set up a crisis committee to coordinate rescue efforts.

The elderly were the most vulnerable. RTVE broadcast footage of seniors at a nursing home in chairs and wheelchairs with waters rising over their knees, and a military unit rescuing an elderly couple from the top story of their house in the bucket of a bulldozer. Television reports showed videos shot by panicked residents showing waters flooding the ground floors of apartment buildings, streams bursting their banks and bridges giving way. People gasped as they pointed to what they feared could be bodies bobbing in the swift brown flood.

Spain's national weather service called the rainfall "extraordinary" in parts of Valencia. Located south of Barcelona on the Mediterranean coast, Valencia is a tourist destination known for its beaches, citrus orchards, and as the origin of paella. The region has gorges and small riverbeds that spend much of the year completely dry but quickly fill with water when it rains. Many of them pass through populated areas. Spain has experienced similar autumn storms in recent years. Nothing, however, compared to the devastation over the last two days,

which recalls floods in Germany and Belgium in 2021 in which 230 people were killed. The death toll will likely rise with other regions yet to report victims and search efforts continuing in hard-to-reach places.

"We are facing a very difficult situation," minister of territory policies Ángel Víctor Torres said. "The fact that we can't give a number of the missing persons indicates the magnitude of the tragedy." Spain is still recovering from a severe drought and has registered record high temperatures in recent years. Scientists say increased episodes of extreme weather are likely linked to climate change. The prolonged drought makes it more difficult for the land to absorb high volumes of water.

The storms also unleashed a rare tornado and a freak hailstorm that punched holes in car windows and greenhouses. Transport was also affected. A high-speed train with nearly 300 people on board derailed near Malaga, although rail authorities said no one was hurt. High-speed train service between Valencia city and Madrid was interrupted, and the transport ministry said it could take up to four days to restore highspeed service to the capital due to the damage done to the line. Bus and commuter rail lines were likewise interrupted. Many flights were cancelled Tuesday night, stranding some 1,500 people overnight at Valencia's airport. Flights resumed Wednesday.



VALENCIA: Residents look at cars piled up after being swept away by floods in Valencia, Spain. —AP Photo

New Hezbollah chief open to truce with Israel

BEIRUT (AFP): Hezbollah's new leader says the beleaguered Lebanese militia could agree to a ceasefire under certain terms, as Israeli forces warn civilians to flee more cities as they expand their bombardment of the group's bastions.

His statement came as Israel's security cabinet met to discuss a possible truce, but also as Israel attacked the eastern Lebanese city of Baalbek and said it had claimed the scalp of yet another senior Hezbollah commander. Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem became leader of the Iran-backed armed movement on Tuesday, after the long-serving former chief Hassan Nasrallah was assassinated by Israel in a massive air strike last month.

In his first speech since taking over, Qassem insisted he would follow his slain predecessor's "work program" and that Hezbollah could continue to resist Israel's air and ground attacks inside Lebanon for months to come. But he also opened the door to a negotiated truce, if presented with an Israeli offer.

"If the Israelis decide that they want to stop the aggression, we say we accept, but under the conditions that we see as appropriate and suitable," he said. Qassem insisted Hezbollah would not "beg for a ceasefire," however, and warned that it had not yet received a credible proposition.

Meanwhile, in a sign of political machinations behind the scenes of the devastating military conflict, Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen said the country's security cabinet was meeting to discuss what terms it might

offer to secure a truce. "There are discussions, I think it will still take time," Cohen told Israeli public radio.

According to Israel's Channel 12 television, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held talks with ministers on Tuesday evening on Israel's demands in return for a 60-day truce.

These include that Hezbollah withdraw to the north of the Litani River, some 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the Israeli frontier, and that the Lebanese state's army deploy along the border. An international intervention mechanism would be established to enforce the truce, but Israel would demand a guarantee that it will maintain freedom of action in case of threats.

"Thanks to all the army's operations these past months and particularly these past weeks ... Israel can come in a position of strength after the entire Hezbollah leadership was eliminated and over 2,000 Hezbollah terrorist infrastructures were hit," said Cohen, a former intelligence minister. According to Israeli media, US President Joe Biden's Middle East adviser Brett McGurk and special envoy Amos Hochstein will head to the region Wednesday to meet Netanyahu and other Israeli officials to discuss conditions for a ceasefire with Hezbollah.

Their goal is to implement the deal prepared by Hochstein, which is reported to be based on UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

Under the resolution, which ended Israel's last war with Hezbollah in 2006, only the Lebanese army and UN peacekeeping force UNIFIL would be deployed in areas south of

the Litani. On the ground explosions rocked the eastern Lebanese city of Baalbek shortly after Israel's military warned residents it would "act forcefully against Hezbollah interests within your city and villages."

Baalbek mayor Mustafa Al-Shall confirmed strikes hit in and around the city, while state media said "enemy warplanes launched a series of strikes on the Asira area of the city of Baalbek." The war in Lebanon began late last month, nearly a year after Hezbollah began low-intensity cross-border fire into Israel in support of Hamas following its October 7, 2023 attack on Israel.

The war has killed at least 1,754 people in Lebanon since September 23, according to an AFP tally of health ministry figures, although the real number is likely to be higher due to gaps in the data. Israel's military says it has lost 37 soldiers in Lebanon since ground operations began on September 30. In the year-old parallel conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, there were more deadly strikes on Wednesday, as international mediators prepared to propose a short-term truce to free hostages and avert a humanitarian catastrophe.

News of a potential breakthrough in truce talks came a day after an Israeli strike on a single Gaza residential block killed nearly 100 people and triggered international revulsion.

US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators have for months been trying to negotiate a truce between Israel and Hamas in Gaza to allow a prisoner swap, humanitarian access and talks on a longer-term peace.

Brussels hopes to advance Ukraine, Moldova entry talks

BRUSSELS (AFP): The European Commission said Wednesday it hopes to move entry talks with Ukraine and Moldova to the next stage "as soon as possible" in 2025, as part of a renewed enlargement push faced with the "existential threat" from Russia.

In an annual update on the EU enlargement process, the commission also reaffirmed that Georgia's path to joining remained "de facto" halted without a change of course from its ruling party -- accused of steering Tbilisi back into Russia's orbit.

Ex-Soviet Ukraine and Moldova opened European Union accession negotiations in June, setting them on a long -- and yet uncertain -- path towards membership that Russia has tried to block. The commission said the task of screening how far laws in both Ukraine and Moldova comply with EU standards -- and how much work lies ahead -- was "progressing smoothly". Once complete, actual negotiations can begin on 35 subjects, from taxation to environmental policy -- grouped under what are known in enlargement jargon as "clusters".

For both Ukraine and Moldova, the commission said it was "looking for-

ward to the opening of negotiations on clusters... as soon as possible in 2025" -- subject to a green light from the EU's 27 member states.

For Ukraine, the opening of talks in June marked the beginning of a protracted process that will likely take many years -- and may never lead to membership.

So far, Ukraine has won plaudits for kickstarting a raft of reforms on curbing graft and political interference, even as it battles the Russian invasion.

"Ukrainians are fighting two battles at the same time," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told a news conference. "One in the battlefield, a real war, and another striving to push the reforms needed to become member of the European Union."

"We will support Ukraine on both fronts," he said. Moldova only narrowly voted in favour of joining the bloc in a referendum this month marked by allegations of interference by Moscow -- casting a shadow over the country's EU aspirations. But enlargement commissioner Oliver Varhelyi told the press conference "it is very clear that Moldova has come a long way" -- citing in particular the recovery from oligarchs

of tens of millions in "stolen" funds. Kyiv and Chisinau lodged their respective EU bids in the aftermath of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which has reinvigorated a push to take on new members.

No 'business as usual' with Russia

EU also granted candidate status to ex-Soviet Georgia last December -- but negotiations were frozen after it passed a controversial "foreign influence law" targeting civil society, which critics said mirrored Russian legislation. "Should there be a political will from Georgia's leadership, we are offering a clear path for re-engagement on the way to the European Union -- the repeal of the law on foreign influence," Borrell said.

But the commission's enlargement report also warned: "Unless Georgia reverts the current course of action which jeopardises its EU path... the commission will not be in a position to consider recommending opening negotiations with Georgia."

Borrell said the invasion of Ukraine had made "clear that Russia is posing an existential threat to Europe now more than ever, and that European Union membership becomes a strategic choice."

Shehbaz meets Vietnamese counterpart

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday met with his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Minh Chinh and expressed Pakistan's desire to enhance its ties with Vietnam, while highlighting the immense potential of the two countries to enhance trade and investment cooperation.

In the meeting held on the sidelines of the 8th Future Investment Initiative (FII) Conference, the two leaders discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations, particularly in trade and investment.

Prime Minister Shehbaz proposed an exchange of trade and business delegations between both countries to further explore these opportunities. The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening people-to-people ties and promoting tourism between the two countries.

Appreciating Vietnam's role in the ASEAN region, Prime Minister Shehbaz sought support for Pakistan's efforts to become a full dialogue partner of ASEAN. He also extended an invitation to the Vietnamese prime minister to undertake an official visit to Pakistan.

Tuberculosis cases hit record high: WHO

GENEVA (AFP): A record 8.2 million new tuberculosis cases were diagnosed worldwide last year, the World Health Organization said -- the highest number since it began global TB monitoring in 1995.

The WHO said its Global Tuberculosis Report 2024, released Tuesday, highlights "mixed progress in the global fight against TB, with persistent challenges such as significant underfunding".

While the number of TB-related deaths declined from 1.32 million in 2022 to 1.25 million last year, the total number of people contracting the infectious disease increased from 7.5 million to 8.2 million.

However, not all new cases are diagnosed, and WHO estimates that around 10.8 million people actually contracted the disease last year. "The fact that TB still kills and sickens so many people is an outrage, when we have the tools to prevent it, detect it and treat it," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement.

"WHO urges all countries to make good on the concrete commitments they have made to expand the use of those tools, and to end TB." The increase in cases between 2022 and 2023 largely reflects global population growth, the report said.

UK's Labour government hikes taxes in first budget

LONDON (Reuters): Britain's new Labour government on Wednesday announced major tax hikes and higher borrowing to meet Prime Minister Keir Starmer's aim of investing for long-term growth.

In the highly-anticipated fiscal update -- the first under the center-left government after 14 years of Conservative rule -- finance minister Rachel Reeves said tax increases would raise an additional £40 billion (\$52 million).

Addressing parliament in a speech lasting more than one hour, Reeves also confirmed changes to fiscal rules that will allow the government to invest billions more in public services. "This government was given a mandate," Reeves told MPs.

"To restore stability to our country and to begin a decade of national renewal. The only way to drive economic growth is to invest, invest, invest," she insisted.

Labour won a landslide general election in July and had already announced a raft of economic measures, including improved workers' rights and minimum wages, a vast green-energy plan and plans for mass building of homes.

Ahead of the budget, it also drew strong criticism for scrapping a winter-fuel benefit scheme for millions of pensioners, hurting Starmer's approval rating

in polls. "I am restoring stability to our public finances and rebuilding our public services," Reeves said Wednesday.

Reeves said £25 billion would come from hiking employers' national insurance -- a payrolls tax used to help pay for social care. Changes to inheritance tax will raise more than £2 billion while the government is also hiking taxation on capital gains and property purchases as part of its plans to claw back money.

The pound won back ground as Reeves spoke, while London's stock market was little changed.

"At this stage, massive tax rises have not spooked financial markets," said Kathleen Brooks, research director at traders XTB. The government kept its pledge not to raise income taxes, employee national insurance charges, or value added tax. Outgoing Tory leader Rishi Sunak, Britain's former prime minister, said the budget contains "broken promise after broken promise."

Ahead of her tax and spend plans, Reeves made a technical change to the way UK debt is measured to allow her to borrow more, even though the country's public sector borrowing is now at levels last seen in the 1960s. To boost investment, the chancellor will use a wider measure of debt that

takes into account the future returns on investment. Reeves on Wednesday said the extra investment in capital infrastructure projects would start to "repair the fabric of our nation."

The government will invest billions of pounds to rebuild schools, hire teachers and fund childcare. In a surprise move, she extended the freeze on fuel duty until next year. The cash-strapped National Health Service will receive a substantial boost, with the day-to-day health budget receiving an increase of nearly £23 billion.

Alongside the budget, Reeves said Britain's economy was set to grow faster than forecast this year and next. The nation's gross domestic product will expand 1.1 percent in 2024 and by 2.0 percent next year -- above estimates given in March by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), Britain's fiscal watchdog.

Britain is benefiting from its annual inflation rate dropping to under the Bank of England's 2.0-percent target, easing a cost-of-living crisis. The International Monetary Fund this month also estimated that Britain's economy would grow 1.1 percent in 2024. Looking beyond next year, the OBR on Wednesday downgraded Britain's growth forecasts for the 2026-2028 period.

Vietnam jails six over deadly karaoke bar blaze

HANOI (AFP): A court in Vietnam on Wednesday jailed six people including four police officers over a fire that ripped through a karaoke bar two years ago, killing 32 people.

The blaze in a province close to business hub Ho Chi Minh City shocked Vietnam and led to the closure of thousands of karaoke bars nationwide for failing to meet fire regulations. The court in southern Binh Duong province convicted the bar owner, a contractor involved in its construction and four police officers on charges of breaching fire regulations and negligence.

Bar owner Le Anh Xuan was given eight years in jail, while the bar's fire prevention system contractor was sentenced to five years. Four police officers were jailed for between four and seven and half years. In his final words before court last week, bar owner Le Anh Xuan apologized to victims and their families, saying "my mistakes had caused huge losses."

Flames engulfed the second floor of the 30-room An Phu karaoke building in Binh Duong in September 2022, trapping customers and staff as dense smoke filled the staircase and blocked the emergency exit.

Many crowded onto a balcony to escape the flames, which spread quickly through the wood-



en interior, while others were forced to jump from the building. A total of 32 people died in the inferno, 17 men and 15 women.

The police officers were charged for their involvement in designing and approving the fire prevention system at the bar.

Vietnam regularly experiences deadly fires -- 56 people were killed

in a Hanoi apartment disaster last year -- and the Binh Duong blaze prompted a nationwide crackdown on karaoke bars that failed to comply with fire regulations.

More than two-thirds of the country's approximately 15,000 karaoke bars were forced to close, according to state media, citing police sources.

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Where is Israel's proof about UNRWA?

UNRWA – the UN relief agency for Palestinian refugees – has been on trial in the court of Israeli political opinion for years. As far back as 2017, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was telling Cabinet colleagues that the 74-year-old humanitarian organisation – which he deems to be a hotbed of anti-Israeli incitement – should be dismantled. The Knesset, Israel's parliament, gave its verdict on Monday when it voted overwhelmingly to ban UNRWA operations in the country and designated the agency a terrorist organisation.

Since the October 7 attacks that claimed the lives of many Israeli civilians, the invective and accusations directed at UNRWA have intensified. The claim that several individuals among the agency's 13,000 staff in Gaza were involved in the killing and kidnapping of Israelis was particularly serious and merited investigation.

On August 5, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini released details of an inquiry into 19 Gaza staff members carried out by the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services. In 10 cases it found no or insufficient evidence linking the employees to October 7. "For the remaining nine cases," Mr Lazzarini said, "the evidence – if authenticated and corroborated – could indicate that the UNRWA staff members may have been involved in the attacks of 7 October". These employees were promptly fired.

This investigation was accompanied by further scrutiny. Three research centres led by former French foreign minister Catherine Colonna began a nine-week review of the agency; they concluded that "UNRWA possesses a more developed approach to neutrality than other similar UN or NGO entities". Most major donor countries that had suspended their UNRWA funding pending the outcome of the investigations resumed their financial aid.

This begs the question: following UNRWA's corrective measures after October 7 and in the absence of evidence of any continued wrongdoing – by individual staff members or the agency as a whole – why have Israeli MPs ignored appeals from some of the country's main international allies and voted to ban the agency? The move cannot realistically be presented as a security measure – how does hamstringing aid supplies to Gaza, disrupting children's education and jeopardising Palestinian refugees' health care make Israelis any safer? Instead, many will concur with Mr Lazzarini's assessment, tweeted shortly after the Knesset vote, that the new laws "increase the suffering of the Palestinians and are nothing less than collective punishment".

Israeli authorities surely know that the UNRWA's vital work has become integral in maintaining the cohesion of Palestinian society, not just in Gaza and the occupied West Bank but in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, too. In spite of this – or, some critics allege, because of it – Israel's military has frequently targeted UNRWA facilities in Gaza. More than 230 of the agency's staff members have been killed since October 7.

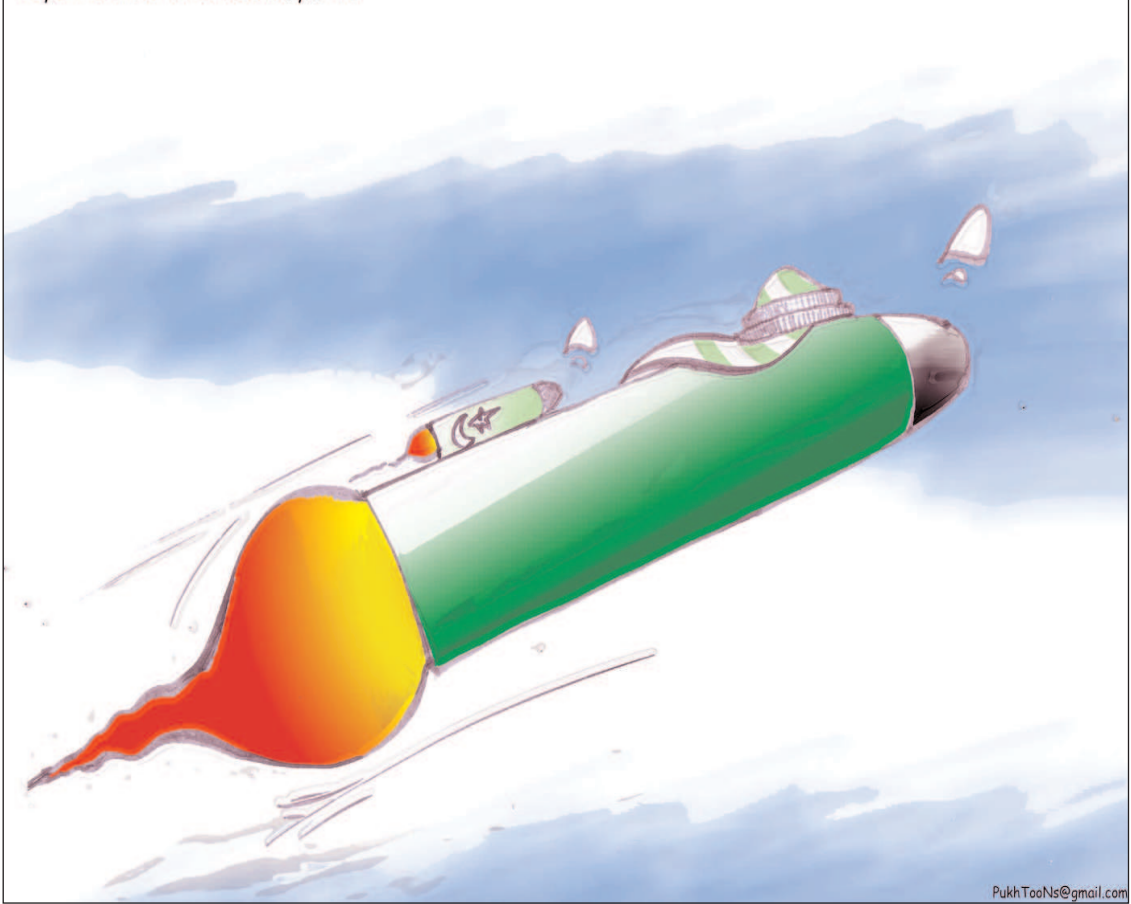
By undermining the agency in Palestine and spreading a chill factor among governments, aid groups and banks that facilitate the UNRWA's operations, Israel is further disempowering and impoverishing Palestinians and undercutting legitimate ways to provide for their basic needs. There are few other ways to interpret this ban.

There are now fewer than 90 days to go until the new Israeli laws take effect. This leaves time for Israel's international partners to persuade the government to change course. The US, Israel's greatest supporter, has already urged Mr Netanyahu's government to "pause the implementation of this legislation" – though most American calls for moderation throughout this war have gone unheeded. Failure to do so will mean those countries that fund a vital UN agency – an arm of the international community – may want answers about exactly what evidence has prompted this attempt to cripple one of the few lifelines Palestinian refugees have left.

Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.

Riyadh central to Pak economy... PM



Kamala Harris's pursuit of Republican voters may backfire

Elias Khoury

As the United States presidential election nears, Vice President Kamala Harris has escalated outreach to Republican voters. Over the past several weeks, she has been accompanied by former Republican Congresswoman Liz Cheney at campaign events in the swing states of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin and more recently by former President George W. Bush's daughter, Barbara.

On October 16 after Harris held an event with former Republican lawmakers in Pennsylvania, she gave an interview to Fox News, saying: "I invite ideas, whether it be from the Republicans who are supporting me, who were just on stage with me minutes ago, and the business sector and others who can contribute to the decisions that I make."

Many prominent Republicans have endorsed Harris, including former Vice President Dick Cheney, former Congressman Adam Kinzinger, and late Senator John McCain's son Jim. She has also gained the approval of 200 staffers of former Republican presidential nominees. Trying to encourage this momentum, Harris's campaign even established Republicans for Harris chapters in several swing states.

However, Harris's pursuit of Republican voters may not bring the results she hopes. At the grassroots level, things remain hopelessly polarised. Prominent endorsements notwithstanding, few members of the opposition party will cross "enemy lines" to back Harris. In fact, her rightward sway may actually cost her more Democratic votes than the Republican ones she gains.

In a poll released on October 25, just 4 percent of Republicans said they intended to vote for Harris. The same percentage of Democrats said they would vote for Republican candidate Donald Trump. In other words, Democrats for Trump are just as much of a thing as Republicans for Harris. This makes the prediction that "millions of

Republicans" will cast a ballot for Kamala Harris utterly fanciful.

Some may argue that Harris is trying to sway Republican voters specifically in swing states. But even there, the numbers do not differ dramatically.

According to New York Times/Siena polls, Harris is winning 7 percent of registered Republicans in Arizona while 6 percent of the state's Democrats back Trump. In Pennsylvania, these numbers are 12 percent and 10 percent respectively. In Nevada, Harris is getting 6 percent of registered Republicans and Trump is getting 10 percent of the Democrats. The margin of error for all these polls is 3 to 4 percent.

While Harris is running after the few Republican voters who may flip, she is alienating many others on the progressive side. According to the Pew Research Center, progressives constitute roughly 12 percent of the Democratic base. The millions of votes who went for Senator Bernie Sanders, a prominent progressive, in the Democratic primaries in 2016 suggest this group may be even larger.

Harris's swing to the right is definitely not well received by progressives. Her promise to sign "the toughest bipartisan border" bill in decades has earned rebukes from immigration advocates. Likewise, her unequivocal support for Israeli aggression is a cold shoulder to proponents of peace and basic human rights. On healthcare, after endorsing universal coverage during her 2020 run, Harris has now stopped well short of that.

Given their political commitments, progressive leftists won't flip to Trump, but they may vote for a third party or stay home, which would hurt Harris, especially in the battleground states.

Chasing Republicans is, therefore, unwise. And history proves it. Democrats pursued them hard in 2016 as well. Before that presidential election, Democratic Senator Chuck

Schumer claimed that: "For every blue-collar Democrat we lose in western Pennsylvania, we will pick up two moderate Republicans in the suburbs in Philadelphia, and you can repeat that in Ohio and Illinois and Wisconsin."

Needless to say, Schumer was wrong. Democratic candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton lost to Trump in a historic, humiliating upset. The only state Schumer mentioned that Clinton won was Illinois, a Democratic stronghold that also happens to be where she was born.

As the former secretary of state campaigned in deeply red states like Nebraska, her "blue wall" crumbled. No Democrat since Walter Mondale in 1984 had lost Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. And that was the biggest loss in American presidential history with Mondale only winning his home state of Minnesota.

Harris would have had a higher chance of winning if she had not pursued voters whom she cannot win and instead focused on those whom she can: independents and progressives and key groups within them.

A recent poll from AtlasIntel shows Trump ahead with independents by 8.5 points. The two most important issues for independents are the economy and crime, and Harris could have easily appealed to them on these points without swinging so far to the right and chasing after endorsements from neo-conservatives and others on the hard right.

Furthermore, independents also embrace positions that are more moderate. Independents overwhelmingly favour marriage equality, expansion of Medicare and marijuana legalisation – issues that progressives also care about.

Harris could have also won back some progressives by walking back some of her right-wing rhetoric and changing her posture on US foreign policy and more specifically, Israel.

Like her running mate, Tim Waltz, Harris has been fully in Israel's corner. She has refused to distance herself from the complicity of President Joe Biden's administration in Israeli militarism, occupation and terror. That complicity has only mounted in recent weeks as the White House, which she is part of, oversees Israel's "General's Plan" of ethnically cleansing northern Gaza through bombing, starvation and expulsion of civilians. Biden's last-ditch effort to push for a short-term truce and release of Israeli-American captives would not change voters' perceptions of where Harris stands.

This aggressive posture has especially alienated Arab and Muslim Americans. The latter accounted for under 1.5 percent of registered voters in 2022, but their distribution gives them disproportionate power, which they already demonstrated with the uncommitted movement they led during the Democratic primaries.

While people tend to focus on Michigan, Muslim voters are also a significant group in Georgia and Arizona. Their numbers far outstrip Biden's razor-thin margin of victory in those states in 2020. Even in Rust Belt states like Pennsylvania and Wisconsin where Biden won more comfortably, Muslim Americans alone can make the difference. That's not even taking into account the many Arab voters who aren't Muslim.

As per usual, the American duopoly is treating voters to a choice of bad vs worse. But merely being the lesser of two evils won't be enough for Harris to win.

Still, as November nears, she's chasing voters who don't want her and shunning those she needs the most. It's not even just Arabs and Muslims. Scores of voters across demographic groups are disgusted by the Gaza genocide and desire more progressive politics. Harris does not intend to deliver those policies and may suffer electorally for it.

Peace needed to prevent people from embracing fatalism

Mohamed Chebaro

It is concerning to hear people in the Middle East applauding Iran's strikes on Israel. Others equally celebrated Israel's retaliatory strikes against Iran last weekend. A large number from both these camps seem increasingly willing to entertain the idea of total war – many even seem to be wishing for it. This sense of fatalism is no doubt another reflection of the loss of trust in ourselves, our society and our leadership, as well as the institutions that have long worked but often failed to underpin the idea of freedom and justice for all.

It is now more than a year since the Oct. 7 attacks and the start of Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza. Also, the war in support of Hamas, launched by groups allied to Iran like Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen, has been widening. Over the past four weeks, thousands have been injured and hundreds of thousands displaced.

Not far from me, the

control the narrative amid toxic currents pumping out despair at every juncture, boosted by a self-defeating social media algorithm that thrives on the amplification of false narratives and blunt lies for profit, even though such tools have been eroding societal peace and cohesion.

Amid this, fatalism has all of a sudden started sticking its neck out in advanced and non-advanced countries alike, as a sense of uncertainty and lower than usual trust in politicians and the state have led people to support a total overhaul of the political landscape. They are rejecting the norms and values governing the relationship between the ruled and their rulers, such as by accepting erroneous populist approaches that are later expressed in a total rejection of the status quo, even if the alternatives are clearly not conducive to lessening their despair.

In the rest of the world, events have only served to amplify this fatalistic approach. Look at the rise of populism in the West, which was a form of protest vote that went on to become the norm, reflecting state failure and people's intensified fear of the future and of others. This is an age where the organs of the state have struggled to control the narrative amid toxic currents pumping out despair at every juncture, boosted by a self-defeating social media algorithm that thrives on the amplification of false narratives and blunt lies for profit, even though such tools have been eroding societal peace and cohesion. Amid this, fatalism has all of a sudden started sticking its neck out in advanced and non-advanced countries alike, as a sense of uncertainty and lower than usual trust in politicians and the state have led people to support a total overhaul of the political landscape.

placed in Lebanon. While all efforts to reach a ceasefire have failed, people everywhere in the region have been despairing and sensing the void in world leadership.

This fatalism is surely permeating through all of the above crises, which have also been causing a heightened sense of desperation, as people see no end in sight to the continuous state of war in the Middle East, from Gaza to Lebanon and not discounting Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Sudan. This also reflects a worldwide trend of general malaise bordering on a fatalistic drive, calling for the end of everything. Leaderships and institutions are increasingly becoming less trusted, as people's confidence in their systems of government sink further. This is even leading to a loss of belief in the shared ethos of the sanctity of human life and common historic achievements, anchored in the pursuit of peace and happiness.

Such a universal deficiency of trust has crept up through populist thoughts that have drummed up racist rhetoric and the fear of the other. This is manifesting itself in a growing ethnoreligious isolationism that is pushing us to the brink of destroying all tenets of international law and order.

This trend is not unique to the Arab Middle East, where the long-standing Palestinian question continues to brew dispossession, displacement and discontent. This is pushing people into a spiral of no confidence in the existence of justice as guaranteed by international humanitarian laws and their development over centuries. In the rest of the world, events have only served to amplify this fatalistic approach. Look at the rise of populism in the West, which was a form of protest vote that went on to become the norm, reflecting state failure and people's intensified fear of the future and of others. This is an age where the organs of the state have struggled to

UK's Brexit vote was one such lurch into the unknown, despite all of the clear writing on the wall regarding the futility of the project, which further impoverished the state and its people. Donald Trump, the clearest example of the rise of populism, is another case that reflects the negative impact on the livelihoods of working class people. Their financial security and sense of community has been destroyed, provoking anger and resentment and resulting in a total rejection of the political establishment and the rule of law that has governed life and wealth in advanced countries since the Second World War.

The Oct. 7 attacks and Israel's retaliatory war have unfortunately served to awaken Israelis' existential fears, which had been dormant for decades. The war has reaffirmed to many in the Arab region their long-held, incorrect conclusion that Palestinian, Arab and Muslim lives are somehow worth less.

Hence, many have been inclined to surrender to fatalism and wish that the war would expand and destroy everything, in the hope that this would invite a solution and ultimately end their suffering.

In the Middle East and throughout the world, many are feeling that a total war would be a kind of solution, but they should be careful what they wish for. The war theorist Carl von Clausewitz wrote in the early 19th century that every age has "its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions and its own peculiar preconceptions."

Wars and conflicts start, but no one can control their fire or their ramifications. It is inconceivable that wars could bring an end to suffering or eliminate adversities. Only diplomacy, engagement and reasonable compromises can end conflicts, however elusive they may be. For Palestine and Israel, only a recommitment to a two-state solution or any other reasonable formula can replace people's fatalism with hope.

Wars hang in the balance as Harris-Trump showdown looms

Bakir Oweida

The multiple fronts of Israel's military campaign – stretching from Gaza and Lebanon to Yemen and Iran – are not the only conflicts awaiting the outcome of next Tuesday's electoral showdown between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump, the respective Democratic and Republican candidates for the US presidency.

While the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and Sudan's civil war remain significant in US foreign policy calculations – particularly after Vladimir Putin's reported deployment of North Korean troops to Russia at Kim Jong Un's behest, according to President Volodymyr Zelensky – it is the Middle Eastern theater that stands

to be most profoundly shaped by the outcome of the Harris-Trump faceoff.

Israel's preeminence in Western, particularly American, foreign policy calculations is no accident – it reflects Tel Aviv's status as the West's indispensable regional ally. While friction occasionally emerges between Israel's leadership and Western governments – as evidenced by recent concerns over Benjamin Netanyahu's brutal Gaza campaign affecting civilians beyond Hamas targets – such disagreements rarely endure. They ultimately bow to an ironclad Western principle: strategic imperatives demand back-

ing Israel, even when its actions trigger international condemnation and protests. This unwavering support, a constant since Israel's establishment, was starkly displayed in Western leaders' immediate solidarity visits and swift pilgrimage to Israel in the wake of last year's Oct. 7 attacks. In light of this entrenched dynamic, what real impact could Tuesday's White House race have?

The simplistic view suggests nothing will change, pointing to the bedrock strategic principles that govern American policy toward Israel and beyond, regardless of who occupies the Oval Office. Yet, while these fundamentals indeed

constrain any president's options, we cannot ignore how individual leadership styles, personal beliefs and presidential temperament can significantly influence policy execution.

Whether Harris or Trump prevails, their victory will likely impact Israel's military campaign in Gaza and the broader region – though within the boundaries of America's strategic imperatives, which remain sacrosanct. How exactly this influence might manifest itself will remain uncertain during the "lame duck" transition period before January's transfer of power. Meanwhile, as Washington's political drama unfolds, the wars grind on and civilian suffering continues unabated.

Harris needs to pull a rabbit from the hat if she is to beat Trump

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

As the US presidential election gets closer, the polls are getting scarier for Kamala Harris. She is losing the margin she had over her Republican opponent and, unless she pulls a rabbit out of the hat, she might lose the election.

When Harris replaced President Joe Biden as the Democratic candidate, there was a glitz factor among the electorate. She had a clear lead over Donald Trump. However, this margin started eroding, probably because her campaign was more about attacking Trump than providing the American people with convincing answers to their concerns. In interviews, her entire narrative has been focused on stating how dangerous and unstable Trump is. However, she has not clarified what she plans to do should she become president. At least, she has not explained it to the average American in a plain, concrete manner.

She is banking on the idea that people will rush to vote for her to keep Trump out, but this will not necessarily be the case. People who are not convinced by her will not give their vote to either candidate. Therefore, it is not necessarily right that, if they hate Trump, they will line up to vote for her. Harris has been taking her original base, which is largely made up of minorities, progressives, Arabs and Muslims, for granted and instead trying to court white men without a college degree. She has been touring with Liz Cheney instead of with someone like Bernie Sanders.

However, the latest polls should be a wake-up call. Harris needs to do something of value to earn voters' trust. Hence, she should take advantage of the fact that CIA Director Bill Burns was back in Doha this week to push a ceasefire down the throat of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. What the US is proposing is a partial deal that involves the release of some Israeli

hostages and some Palestinian prisoners and a pause in the fighting. Of course, Hamas did not agree to that plan. The Palestinians need a complete end to the fighting. Harris can help push for an end to the war. It is very simple. Yahya Sinwar is dead and the fighting in Gaza is minimal; it is time for the hostages to go home. A deal can be pushed through before next week's election. Also, as it is just a few days before the elec-

tion, it is too late for the pro-Israel lobby to hurt her. She needs to push for a ceasefire deal, otherwise it is finished. By pushing for an agreement, she will show she has the leadership the country needs. Public opinion can change overnight. If she demonstrates such leadership, many who are hesitant about voting for her will decide to do so. She needs to act fast. The

push, during those three weeks, for the Lebanese to elect a president and form a ceasefire deal, otherwise it is finished. By pushing for an agreement, she will show she has the leadership the country needs. Public opinion can change overnight. If she demonstrates such leadership, many who are hesitant about voting for her will decide to do so. She needs to act fast. The

It is time to show leadership. The fact the current administration cannot even pressure Netanyahu to end his carnage, his genocide, does not reflect well on Harris. Especially since Trump is claiming he will quickly end the war if he is

Americans are fed up with the current administration's hypocrisy. It mourns the women and children of Gaza while giving Netanyahu the bombs to kill them. And in the end, the White House says it does not have leverage over Netanyahu. When you have such an attitude, it is highly unlikely anyone will trust your leadership. Harris needs to act fast because the numbers are not in her favor. Polling by FiveThirtyEight shows Trump being ahead, though only by a small margin, in Nevada, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia, Wisconsin and Arizona. Hence, Trump is ahead in six of the seven swing states that will decide the election.

hostages and some Palestinian prisoners and a pause in the fighting. Of course, Hamas did not agree to that plan. The Palestinians need a complete end to the fighting. Harris can help push for an end to the war. It is very simple. Yahya Sinwar is dead and the fighting in Gaza is minimal; it is time for the hostages to go home. A deal can be pushed through before next week's election. Also, as it is just a few days before the elec-

US was able to pressure Netanyahu into a mere token response to Iran's missile attack on Israel. There is a deal on the table that reportedly plans to end the conflict in three weeks. It starts with a ceasefire, an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and a prisoner exchange. Harris could also show she is firm on Lebanon by insisting on the 21-day ceasefire that was suggested by the US last month but Netanyahu refused. The US could then

elected. This is how he is courting Arab Americans in Michigan. Regardless of whether people view Trump as erratic or unheinged, he takes pride in claiming that he delivers on his promises. A tagline in his 2020 campaign was "Promises made, promises kept."

On the other hand, Americans are fed up with the current administration's hypocrisy. It mourns the women and children of Gaza while giving

Netanyahu the bombs to kill them. And in the end, the White House says it does not have leverage over Netanyahu. When you have such an attitude, it is highly unlikely anyone will trust your leadership.

Harris needs to act fast because the numbers are not in her favor. Polling by FiveThirtyEight shows Trump being ahead, though only by a small margin, in Nevada, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia, Wisconsin and Arizona. Hence, Trump is ahead in six of the seven swing states that will decide the election. Harris definitely needs to be worried and she definitely needs to act fast.

The attitude that Harris has displayed so far will not serve her well in the election. While campaigning in August, she was interrupted by pro-Palestine protesters and, instead of showing compassion, she said: "I am speaking." Is this the way she thinks she can win the hearts and the minds of the American people? She cannot win like this. She must show compassion and leadership.

The current administration has sent top aide Jon Finer to Michigan to try to court Arab Americans. However, statements made by the likes of Finer do not make any difference unless they are coupled with decisive action.

And showing compassion in private while there is no firm public position is viewed as hypocrisy. Only a few days are left until the election. Harris has to pull a rabbit out of the hat. This rabbit is a ceasefire.

Lebanese must think again in the face of divergent US priorities

Eyad Abu Shakra

cally and socially fragile country.

The second affliction is the reliance of this entity's various communities on "foreign powers" to avoid domestic consensus. They do this although it has become evident that each and every time, this incurs high costs. Domestic consensus would be a more effective and safer option; unfortunately, however, this futile reliance on others has not changed since the emergence of the first "national identity" project — centered around the Mount Lebanon region — in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The third affliction is that the forces surrounding this entity — or "nation," as some prefer to call it —

mined by global decision-makers.

The US election campaigns have shown us what it means for Washington to be busy with its own problems. It has also shown some regional players, especially Israel, to be adept at exploiting this pre-occupation to advance their own projects aimed at reshaping the region.

Naturally, many questions about the future are being posed by the Lebanese, both those in their homeland and the diaspora. I believe that the result of the US elections, now only days away, will be crucial for shaping the broad trajectory of the region.

Some may argue that there are no notable differences between the policies of the two major parties,

The fourth affliction is that, throughout its long history — from the days of the "city-states" in ancient times to its current status as an independent state — Lebanon has always been in contact with external forces by land and sea. Over the decades, various Asian, African, and European powers have passed through this land and held territory; this foreign influence in and over Lebanon persists to this day. Thus, the current state of affairs presents both severe existential threats and valuable opportunities that could save the country if the Lebanese tread wisely. By that, I mean if they come to an understanding among themselves, build common ground, and agree on priorities, before losing control over their resources in a Middle East, where the role of "small players" is shrinking and their fate is determined by global decision-makers. The US election campaigns have shown us what it means for Washington to be busy with its own problems.

have always had a powerful impact on it. On the one hand, it is not an isolated island, while on the other, its borders have always been vulnerable, which, in turn, affects demographic balances.

The fourth affliction is that, throughout its long history — from the days of the "city-states" in ancient times to its current status as an independent state — Lebanon has always been in contact with external forces by land and sea. Over the decades, various Asian, African, and European powers have passed through this land and held territory; this foreign influence in and over Lebanon persists to this day. Thus, the current state of affairs presents both severe existential threats and valuable opportunities that could save the country if the Lebanese tread wisely. By that, I mean if they come to an understanding among themselves, build common ground, and agree on priorities, before losing control over their resources in a Middle East, where the role of "small players" is shrinking and their fate is deter-

the Republicans and Democrats, regarding the Middle East, despite their clear contrast on domestic issues.

This may be somewhat true. However, it is also somewhat true that we, as Lebanese, Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims, are far too weak to ensure the changes we seek within the corridors of decision-making in Washington.

We do not have a good grasp of the "deep state" there.

Our understanding of its political culture and network of interests is limited, and we are pursuing divergent goals. Our focus is on the short term, and our short attention span is not long enough to build strong foundations for advancing our interests, preempting developments, and using our "leverage" to achieve objectives.

For all these reasons, we find ourselves constantly reacting without foresight. Meanwhile, the politicians who are on the rise distance themselves from us and curry favor with our adversaries. They only come running to us for their "retirement."

A welcome reunion between Macron and Moroccan king

Zaid M. Belbagi

A diplomatic waltz is coming to an end. After two years of tensions and sideways glances, Emmanuel Macron this week flew to Rabat. His three-day visit was far from trivial, as it crystallized the stakes of a Franco-Moroccan relationship that is both passionate and strategic. A period of differences between the two is swiftly evolving into an era of bilateral cooperation that will bolster both Rabat and Paris' spheres of influence.

In the hushed corridors of the Quai d'Orsay, there are whispers that everything changed during a simple phone call: an exchange between the French president and King Mohammed that allegedly turned into a minor protocol drama. The French air of haughtiness was stonewalled by the rigid protocol of Rabat. But in Morocco, where protocol is not just a mere formality but the very essence of power, one does not trifle with codes. It has a centuries-old tradition in which each gesture, each word, carries the weight of history.

Over the last two years, a rift emerged between these historical and cultural partners. France sought to restrict immigration from Morocco and it steadily improved relations with Algeria. Morocco rightly perceived this to be an effective rejection of its claim over Western Sahara and indeed of the cordial ties that had existed between Paris and Rabat. As the rift grew, Rabat withdrew its ambassador to France and delayed the appointment of the French

ambassador to Morocco. Rabat also declined French aid following the devastating earthquake in the Atlas in 2023, perceiving that Macron again breached protocol by seemingly addressing Moroccans directly.

Yet, there was a striking paradox: while the chancel-

Europe. Tourists, staying faithful, were not even discouraged by the earthquake. It was as if the heart had its reasons that diplomacy ignores.

But make no mistake, if Paris and Rabat are reuniting today, it is also due to geopolitical calculations.

Morocco is not in a position of weakness in this rapprochement. Without a doubt, as Morocco's regional and global status has grown, its appetite for France's traditional paternalistic approach has reduced. Since Paris clearly now supports Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara, it is France that seems to be making eyes at its former protectorate. After decades of shuffling between its two former colonies, France has decisively supported Morocco and set the course for renewed bilateral collaboration — an evolution that has not gone unnoticed in Rabat, where the art of diplomatic patience is cultivated. There is something almost romantic about this Franco-Moroccan relationship. Two countries that can neither fully love nor truly hate each other. Two nations condemned to dance together, between crises and reconciliations, in a diplomatic ballet as old as their modern states.

leries were eyeing each other warily, life continued on its natural course. In Casablanca, Rabat and Tangier, French cultural centers remained consistently busy. French, even while jostled by the rising power of English, remains the language of business and culture. Last year, Morocco remained the most popular holiday destination for French tourists seeking to venture out of

France — which sees its influence in the Sahel dangerously eroding (it has already exited Mali and Niger) — needs solid allies in the region now more than ever. And Morocco, strong in its economic and religious diplomacy in sub-Saharan Africa, has become an essential partner. As Morocco is inching closer to new international partners and adopting the English language, Paris has

no option but to reengage or risk losing further influence over FrancAfrique.

Morocco is not in a position of weakness in this rapprochement. Without a doubt, as Morocco's regional and global status has grown, its appetite for France's traditional pater-

Rabat, where the art of diplomatic patience is cultivated.

There is something almost romantic about this Franco-Moroccan relationship. Two countries that can neither fully love nor truly hate each other. Two nations condemned to dance together, between crises and reconciliations, in a diplomatic ballet as old as their modern states.

With Macron returning to Moroccan soil for the first time in more than six years, this visit reminds us of a fundamental truth: France and Morocco are like an old couple that regularly quarrel but never divorce. They stay together not out of mere habit, but because they know, deep down, that they are stronger together. Morocco is forever entwined with France through historical and cultural ties and the occasional quarrel only strengthens the partnership between the two countries.

Decades of cooperation cannot be tarnished by fleeting misunderstandings. During Macron's visit, the two partners rightly looked at a vision for the next 30 years. The agreements they signed are the visible part of a deeper rapprochement. Beyond disputes and misunderstandings, Paris and Rabat share a conviction: their alliance, however complex it may be, remains a pillar of regional stability. In a world undergoing major changes, where geopolitical cards are being reshuffled at dizzying speeds, this certainty is worth a few protocol compromises.

Labour's 100-day honeymoon finished before it even started

Yossi Mekelberg

The political calendar is replete with artificial milestones, and none more so than the 100 days of grace new governments expect to enjoy free of criticism from the public, their political rivals, and the media. Although this notion goes back to France under Napoleon, it has been very much associated with US politics since 1933 when Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in the midst of the Great Depression and embarked on introducing extensive legislation in his first 100 days that constituted his New Deal, a program that put the US economy on the path of recovery.

We live in much less patient times, and the newly elected British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his Labour government have had a few rough months in office since their landslide victory in early July, much of that due to the nature of modern poli-

tics, but equally out of their own somewhat inept machinations that can also be attributed to inexperience. Starmer himself has confessed to having some "choppy days" in his few months as prime minister. In an interview with the BBC, he revealed that so far, his new job had been "much tougher than anything I've done before, but much better," admitting that it had been somewhat of a hard landing after his party's great election victory, but he was also optimistic about his ability to exert a positive influence on the future of his country.

Inevitably, following a dismal 14 years of Conservative government that inflicted the most unnecessary self-harm exercise of Brexit on the country, while overseeing dangerously declining public services and unbearable hikes in the cost of living, there have been unrealistic expectations that the new

government would be able to turn the UK's fortunes around almost instantly. It is true that before the general election the Labour Party, and especially Starmer, took great care not to over-promise, but all things considered, even if one is generous in assessing their early performance in office, it has been clumsy and far from inspiring confidence, but still a long way from being a disaster. As a matter of fact, they got on with the job rather quickly, even if not always hitting the right notes.

The British electorate decided to unseat the Conservatives on grounds of substance, style, the sense that they were serving the few and not the many, and an overwhelming fatigue in the wake of so much incompetence and corruption. They expected Labour to do way better than this and swept them into power with a massive majority of 172 MPs. Such

a majority is a major blessing that guarantees a full term and enables the government to smoothly implement its agenda to the full. But it is also a minor curse, as at any given moment, as has already been demonstrated, it could create a mini-opposition from within the ruling party and expressions of its discontent with certain policies and pieces of legislation, and we have already seen something of a rebellion over cuts to the usual winter fuel payment for millions of pensioners, as well as the capping of child benefit at two children. This has created very early on a public perception of disunity and lack of discipline that implies doubts about the authority of the prime minister, something that tends to take place much later in the election cycle.

Consequently, opinion polls currently make

gloomy reading for Labour as 43 percent of Britons said of the 100 days milestone that Labour hadn't done anything positive yet, although this is quite harsh, and a number of blunders of presentation have made things look worse than they are. To be sure, Labour has to deal with a horrendous economic inheritance left by the previous government. It claims to have found a £22 billion "black hole" in the public finances that will require some tough decisions to rectify. Blaming the previous government for the ills of the country, as justified as it might be, can certainly buy some time, but this time will quickly pass. The electorate dumped the Conservatives in order to hear answers to their problems and resolve them, but are less open to hear of more doom and gloom and austerity.

Probably out of inexperience and its eagerness to crack on with the job, most of the output from the new government has felt more task-oriented and less derived from an inspiring grand strategy based on Labour values. The public would like to see more policies that ensure the right of everyone to a decent standard of living that entails unrestricted access to health, education, and food security, and by extension social mobility, instead of the previous government's operational code of safeguarding the privileges of the already privileged.

Things got worse just before Labour's recent annual conference, when it was revealed that the prime minister and his wife, the deputy prime minister, and the chancellor all accepted thousands of pounds of free outfits. Starmer also had to give some explanation about his use of a free corporate box to watch his

beloved Arsenal, which someone should have told him is never as satisfying anyway as watching with supporters on the terraces. This was not only inappropriate for politicians who for years accused their opponents of corruption through benefiting in their relations with wealthy party benefactors, but in particular for leaders of a party which represents those who are struggling with the ever-increasing cost of living in times when reliance on food banks is at a record high, when the government is warning us that the way out of austerity is a long road ahead economic hardships are far from over.

However, it would be wrong and unfair to only dwell on the stuttering start of the first Labour government in more than 14 years. It has dealt in a principled manner and with determination with the anti-migration riots and scrapped the

ill-conceived Conservative plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda. It has also ended long-running strikes by doctors and railway workers, set up a publicly owned green energy firm, and is introducing bills to strengthen rights of workers, among them challenging the use of zero-hour contracts, and to boost sick pay.

The government must surely be relieved to have seen off the over-expectations of its first 100 days, and with them the weight of unrealistic hopes for a quick fix to some of the deep-seated and profound failures in British society. It must rectify and put aside the early teething problems, ensure that its ministers are attentive to the voters; adhere to the principles that brought it to power, learn the right lessons from both its successes and its failures, and it has five years to get this great country back on its feet again.



PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan speaking during a session on "Theory of Change regarding SMEs".

Uplift of SMEs sector: SCCI demands proactive steps

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry demanded the government to take proactive steps for development and facilitation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Speaking during a session on "Theory of Change regarding SMEs" organized by Centre for Governance and Public Accountability (CGPA) here at local hotel on Wednesday, SCCI Senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan emphasized that government and institutions need to adopt such policies which would assist SMEs and strengthening and stabilize them on sustainable grounds.

Only a peaceful and favorable environment can flourish small-scale business and industry, SCCI senior office bearer remarked.

Abdul Jalil Jan mentioned joint collaboration between SCCI, Smeda and other relevant departments for uplift of the small and medium sector in the province.

He added they have gained remarkable achievements through this collaboration. SCCI SVP pointed out various hurdles and problems of SMEs, especially difficulty in provision of soft loans from commercial banks.

He was of the view that commercial banks are reluctant to improve lend-

ing ratio in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Abdul Jalil Jan highlighted the role and importance of SMEs in economic growth, provision of employment, poverty alleviation and rural development.

Senior office bearer asserted that the document process should be simplified and to ensure provision of soft loans to SMEs on priority basis.

Abdul Jalil Jan called for elimination of double-taxation, and stop imposition of heavy fines and harassment of the business community.

Abdul Jalil Jan also demanded electricity and gas should be ensured uninterrupted to business hubs and industries in the province.

PSX turns bearish, loses 577 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 577.52 points, a negative change of 0.64 percent, closing at 90,286.57 points as compared to 90,864.09 points on last trading day.

A total of 614,564,066 shares were traded during the day as compared to 602,810,650 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs27.341 billion against Rs28.203 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 308 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 103 of them recorded gains and 200 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 05 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Silk Bank Limited with 68,504,399 shares at Rs1.18 per share, The Searle Company with 26,744,475 shares at Rs65.33 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 22,729,844 shares at Rs1.24 per share.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs154.84 per share price, closing at Rs7,750.00, whereas the runner-up was Philip Morris (Pakistan) Limited with Rs74.92 rise in its per share price to Rs824.13.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs192.49 per share closing at Rs18,987.51 followed by Ismail Industries Limited with Rs117.98 decline to close at Rs1,582.01.

Rupee sheds 05 paise against dollar:

Pakistani rupee on Wednesday depreciated by 05 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs277.79 against the previous day's closing of Rs277.74.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs277.35 and Rs278.85 respectively.

SBP hold Pakistan Women Entrepreneurship Day 2024

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Women Entrepreneurship Day 2024, hosted by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), celebrates the achievements of women entrepreneurs across the nation. Part of the global Women Entrepreneurship Day (WED) initiative recognized in over 144 countries, this event aims to amplify the voices of women in business and promote greater financial inclusion. Through key initiatives and engaging activities, the event highlights the contributions of women-led enterprises to Pakistan's economy.

Empowering women entrepreneurs is essential for economic growth. The

State Bank of Pakistan is committed to creating an inclusive financial ecosystem where women-led businesses can flourish. This event celebrates their resilience, innovation, and success. SME Baithak meetings, awareness workshops, and mentorship programs to support women entrepreneurs nationwide. Banks are urged to provide maximum financing to women entrepreneurs from July 1, 2024 until November 10, 2024. The top three banks with highest financing nationwide will be honored during the main ceremony in Karachi, while the top three regional lenders will be recognized at ceremonies held at BSC field offices.

A competition encourag-

ing aspiring women entrepreneurs to showcase innovative ideas. The ideas would be submitted through a dedicated form which will be circulated through SBP social media channels and website; last date for submission of ideas in November 10, 2024. Top 3 winners will be recognized at main ceremony and they will have the opportunity to showcase their ideas on a bigger stage.

The Women Entrepreneurship Day celebrations on November 19, 2024, will take place nationwide, with events hosted across 16 SBP BSC field offices. In addition, banks will organize a series of events and ceremonies throughout the week leading up to November 19, making it a

week-long celebration of women's entrepreneurial achievements.

The Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan will grace the main ceremony as the Chief Guest, alongside senior SBP executives. Distinguished Country Representatives from UN Women, USAID, and the British Asian Trust will also offer their perspectives. Presidents and CEOs of major banks, together with their senior leadership, have been invited to attend this prestigious event. The occasion will also witness the presence of several accomplished women entrepreneurs, including award recipients, showcasing their exceptional contributions to the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

39th Management Association of Pakistan Awards: Meezan Bank wins 'Best Company in Financial Category' award

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Meezan Bank, Pakistan's leading Islamic bank, has been honored with the prestigious 'Best Company in the Financial Category' award at the 39th Corporate Excellence Awards, hosted by the Management Association of Pakistan (MAP) at the Marriott Hotel, Karachi. The event brought together prominent government officials, dignitaries, thought leaders, regulators, and leading business community from across the country. Meezan Bank has won this prestigious award, for the third consecutive year, highlighting its contributions to the success of Islamic banking in Pakistan.

Syed Amir Ali - Deputy CEO, Meezan Bank, received the award from the Chief Guest, Murad Ali Shah - Chief Minister of Sindh, in recognition of the Bank's outstanding performance in Pakistan's banking sector. The distinguished audience also included Mr.



Faisal Karim Kundi, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; Senator Sarmad Ali, President of MAP; and other notable dignitaries.

Recently, the Bank was honored by the CFA

Society of Pakistan as the 'Best Bank of the Year - Large Size Banks,' marking its fifth consecutive year of receiving this prestigious award. Additionally, the Bank received awards for:

'Best Islamic Bank of the Year,' 'Best Digital Banking Services of the Year,' 'Best Investor Relations (Runner-up),' and 'Best Transaction of the Year (Runner-up).'

Remarkable growth of 58% in before tax profit: BOP announces financial results for 1st nine months of year 2024

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Board of Directors of The Bank of Punjab convened on October 30, 2024, to review and approve the unaudited financial statements for the first nine months ending September 30, 2024.

During the review of the Bank's performance for the period, the Board expressed its satisfaction with the overall growth across all areas of operations. The Board also commended the Bank's management for achieving an impressive 58% growth in profit before tax compared to the same period last year.

In the first nine months

of 2024, the Bank recorded a profit before tax of Rs. 14.10 billion, compared to Rs. 8.94 billion in the same period of 2023, reflecting remarkable growth of 58%. Non-markup/interest income rose significantly to Rs. 15.74 billion, an 80% increase from Rs. 8.77 billion in the corresponding period last year. The Bank's Net Interest Margin (NIM) improved to Rs. 29.24 billion, while non-markup expenses stood at Rs. 34.36 billion. Earnings per Share (EPS) also increased to Rs. 2.42 per share, up from Rs. 1.83 per share during the same period in 2023.

As of September 30, 2024, the Bank's total assets

stood at Rs. 2,136 billion, compared to Rs. 2,259 billion as of September 30, 2023. Deposits increased to Rs. 1,574 billion from Rs. 1,393 billion in the same period last year. Investments and lending to financial institutions rose to Rs. 1,224 billion, while gross advances amounted to Rs. 682 billion. The Bank's equity improved to Rs. 84 billion, marking a 13% increase from Rs. 74 billion as of September 30, 2023. Additionally, the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) improved significantly to 20.23%, up from 17.08%, and the Leverage Ratio increased to 3.62% from 2.98% during the same period last year.

The Bank has been assigned a long-term entity rating of "AA+" by PACRA, with a short-term rating of "A1+," the highest possible rank. Currently, the Bank operates a network of 861 online branches, including 180 Taqwa Islamic Banking branches and 16 sub-branches. The Bank also maintains 851 ATMs, ensuring 24/7 service for customers. Furthermore, the Bank offers a wide range of products and services to its valued clients, including branchless banking, mobile banking, internet banking, credit cards, and cash management services.

Bank Alfalah launches its flagship new Alfa App



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Bank Alfalah, a leading commercial bank in Pakistan and the incumbent Best Bank for Digital Banking, has unveiled its new mobile banking applica-

tion, Alfa. Designed to promote financial inclusion, the new Alfa app transcends traditional banking by integrating advanced features for savings, investments, and borrowings into a seamless digital lifestyle platform. Users can now experience a comprehensive net worth view, instant investments in mutual funds and securities, quick loans up to PKR 750,000, and personalised financial goal setting-all within a user-friendly interface that integrates banking into everyday life.

The Alfa app launch event was held at Bank Alfalah's Digital Lifestyle Bank and inaugurated by Mr. Syed Sohail Jawaad, Executive Director of the State Bank of Pakistan. It

was attended by Syed Salim Raza, Former Governor of State Bank of Pakistan, Senior leadership from Bank Alfalah, along with prominent digital influencers. Muhammad Yahya Khan, the Chief Digital Officer of Bank Alfalah, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the new Alfa App, highlighting its innovative features such as simplified digital onboarding using CNIC, customisable home screens, multilingual options, and seamless payment solutions, including automated bill payments and virtual debit cards. This launch marks a significant milestone in the bank's commitment to digital innovation and enhancing customer lifestyles through technology.

Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Haleem Civil Judge V /Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar Buner. Case No.136/1. Institution 30/7/2024. Date of hearing, 8/11/2024. Afaren Khan VS mohmad Malak. Notice to no.3.Ali Rehman s/o Afaren Khan resident of Bulandai at present at Jata in the limit of Chanarh tehsel Gagra district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.00 am dated 8/11/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Afshen Civil Judge VII/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar.Suit No 15/6.Institution 2024. Date of hearing. 26/11/2024. Azam Kgan VS Dawa Khan etc . Notice to No .2.Said Ghani.3.Said Alam sons of Sher Dad resident of Biam Dara Kalpani tehsel Gagra district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.00 am dated 26/11/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Dr. Syed Jaffar appointed GS



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Ms. Sadia Rashid, President - Hamdard Foundation Pakistan and the Pakistan Historical Society (PHS), has appointed Professor Dr. Syed Jaffar Ahmed, a distinguished expert in social sciences, as the General Secretary of the society, following the recommendation from the PHS Executive Committee.

Dr. Syed Jaffar Ahmed brings extensive experience in education, teaching, and

research, having served as the Director of the Pakistan Study Centre at the University of Karachi for 18 years. He currently holds the position of Director at the Institute of Historical and Social Research and serves as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Sohail University, Karachi.

The Pakistan Historical Society is a research organization established in 1950 by history researchers to promote and advance research on various aspects of the national history of Pakistan. The founder of Hamdard Pakistan, Shah-eed Hakim Mohammed Said, accepted the patronage of the society in 1978. Since 1953, the society has been publishing 'Historicus' a quarterly peer-reviewed journal featuring scholarly research papers on history.

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Hashoo Group's Real Estate Division, Pearl Real Estate Holdings Pvt. Ltd. (PREH), is pleased to announce a landmark partnership with Mujahid Properties to bring PC Residences to the heart of Islamabad. This transformative project is set to redefine the city's commercial and residential landscape, combining the expertise and resources of both entities to deliver world-class real estate. The signing ceremony, held in Islamabad, was attended by

Murtaza Hashwani, Deputy Chairman & CEO of Hashoo Group, alongside senior management teams from both Hashoo Group and Mujahid Properties. Offering a state-of-the-art living experience, the complex seamlessly blends the luxury of serviced hotel apartments with the convenience of managed residential spaces. Spanning six consecutive floors (10th to 15th), PC Residences will feature premium studio and one-bedroom apart-

ments, designed to offer elevated urban living with seamless service integration. An adjacent service floor will be dedicated exclusively to apartment-related support, ensuring uninterrupted, high-quality services for residents.

Commenting on the partnership, Shakir Bhura, Chief Executive Officer of the Real Estate Division and Group Chief Financial Officer of Hashoo Group, said, "This joint venture with Mujahid Properties is a pivotal step in our mission to reshape Islamabad's real estate landscape. PC Residences merge the best of serviced hotel apartments with managed residential living, setting new standards of luxury, convenience, and hospitality. We are proud to collaborate with Mujahid Properties and look forward to offering residents and visitors an unparalleled lifestyle experience with the latest in premium services."

Hashoo Group's Real Estate Division provides comprehensive services, including hospitality, resi-



dential, corporate, and commercial assets, and development services that facilitate luxurious and welcoming experiences nationwide. With a proven track record of excellence, the Division has successfully delivered notable property projects such as Pearl City Multan and is working on exciting new developments with DHA and other notable private sector real estate developer groups across the country.

Mujahid Group of Industries is an Islamabad-based family business conglomerate founded in the early 1970s. With its roots

in the field of edible oil, the group has since expanded geographically across Pakistan and into the sectors of steel manufacturing, real estate development, construction, and hospitality. Having breathed new life into commercial property development in Islamabad with a unique hospitality model, Mujahid Group has branched into residential development with the same focus on exemplary service provision and implementation of international best practices.

Amanah is the exclusive sales and marketing partner of 16 Sina that is offering

shariah compliant investment model in PC Residences and Mujahid Properties, a strategic alliance at 16 Sina located at the heart of New Blue Area Islamabad. Hashoo Group is Pakistan's premier conglomerate, boasting a diversified business portfolio that spans national and international markets. The Group owns and operates the Pearl-Continental Hotels & Resorts, PC Legacy, and Hotel One brands in Pakistan and maintains interests in the information technology, fintech, water, investment, travel and tourism, and real estate sectors.



In brief

Pakistani cueists to play round 32 of Snooker C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani cueists Asjad Iqbal, Ahsan Ramzan and Muhammad Asif will play Round of 32 of the IBSF World Snooker Championship 2024 at Doha, Qatar. According to details, in last 16 result, Simon Lichtenberg (Germany) beat Asjad Iqbal (Pak) 4-1 (44-62, 75(60)-06, 81(77)-0, 74-50, 54-10). In Round of 64 Results, Ahsan Ramzan (Pak) beat Sami Al Hamrashdi (Oman) 4-1 (68-37, 78-0, 80(64)-01, 54-58, 80(68)-29); Muhammad Asif (Pak) beat Mohammad Al-Binali (Qatar) 4-2 (90-20, 98(66)-01, 27-72, 84-10, 14-80, 60-40).

Netball C'ship in Dec

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 24th National Men's Netball Championship under the auspices of Pakistan Netball Federation and Pakistan Sports Board will kick off from December 1 at Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Coaching Centre, Karachi. According to Chairman Pakistan Netball Federation (PNF) Mudassir Arain a total of 17 teams from across the country are participating in the championship, including Pakistan Army, Pakistan Air Force, Pakistan Navy, Wapda, Police, Pakistan Railways, Higher Education Commission, Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, LUMS University, PNF Elite Academy and Cosmopolitan Rose Netball Academy. He said that invitations have been issued to all the relevant departments, academies, provincial and regional associations participating in the championship and the officials of all teams can register to participate in the championship before November 10. The championship will continue till December 3 and at the end of the championship, prizes will be distributed among the winning players. The top five teams of the championship will participate in the 35th National Games 2024-25 to be held in Karachi, he said.

Table tennis tournament held

SARGODHA (APP): Under the auspices of the Board of Education Sargodha, inter-collegiate girls table tennis tournament was held here on Wednesday. The tournament was organized at Government Graduate College for Girls Chandni Chowk ground. Eight teams, including Government Graduate College for Girls Chandni Chowk, Government Girls College Farooq Colony, Superior Girls College Sargodha, City Standard Girls College 46 SB, Reader Girls College Sargodha, Superior Girls College Shahpur, Iqbal Girls College Sargodha and Superior Girls College Sillanwali participated in the competition. The Superior Group of Colleges for Girls secured the first position, Government Graduate College for Girls Chandni Chowk clinched the second position and the Government Girls College Farooq Colony College table tennis team got third position in the tournament. Director Sports of Education Board Sargodha Roshan Zameer said that the Board of Education was providing all possible facilities for the promotion of sports. Later on, Director Roshan Zameer and Principal Government Graduate College for Girls Chandni Chowk Dr Safana Shaheen gave trophies and certificates to players.

Noman, Saud progress in ICC Test Rankings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's spinner Noman Ali and batter Saud Shakeel have progressed huge in the ICC Men's Test Rankings, released Wednesday.

In the latest weekly rankings update that also considers performances in the third Test between Pakistan and England in Rawalpindi and the second Test between India and New Zealand in Pune, left-arm spinners Noman Ali of Pakistan and Mitchel Santner of New Zealand have also made huge progress, said a press release.

Noman is in the top 10 for the first time, moving up eight slots to ninth position after finishing with nine wickets in Rawalpindi as Pakistan won by nine wickets to clinch the WTC series 2-1. Santner, whose haul of 13 for 157 in the 113-run victory in Pune is the third-best by a Kiwi bowler after Richard Hadlee's 15 for 123 and Ajaz Patel's 14 for 224, has progressed 30 slots to 44th position, five places off his career-best 39th position attained in January 2017.

South Africa fast bowler Kagiso Rabada has also regained the number position in the ICC Men's Test Bowling Rankings after finishing with nine wickets in the first match of

their ICC World Test Championship series against Bangladesh in Mirpur.

The 29-year-old, who became the fastest to 300 Test wickets on the first day of the Test match, has overtaken Ravichandran Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah and Josh Hazlewood to take the top spot after helping his team win the match by seven wickets.

Rabada had first topped the rankings after the Newlands Test against India in January 2018 and held the top spot for much of the next 12 months. Other bowlers to advance include Bangladesh's Taijul Islam (up three places to 18th), England's Gus Atkinson (up two places to 22nd), Pakistan's Sajid Khan (up 12 places to 38th) and South Africa's Wiaan Mulder (up nine places to 50th).

In the batting rankings, India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal is back at number three after scores of 30 and 77 while other left-handers Saud Shakeel of Pakistan and Rachin Ravindra of New Zealand have moved into the top 10 for the first time in their careers.

Shakeel has advanced 20 slots to reach seventh position after his knock of 134 won him the Player of the Match award while Ravindra is up

eight places to 10th with a useful half-century in the first innings.

New Zealanders Devon Conway (up eight places to 28th), Tom Latham (up six places to 34th) and Glenn Phillips (up 16 places to 45th), England's Jamie Smith (up seven places to 37th), Pakistan captain Shan Masood (up five places to 57th) and Bangladesh's Mehidy Hasan Miraz (up nine places to 63rd) are other significant gainers in the batting rankings.

Mehidy has also moved up two places to third position in the all-rounders' list, while India's Washington Sundar has re-entered the rankings in 53rd position among bowlers, 84th among batters and 25th among all-rounders. After the recent Test results, New Zealand are fourth in the ICC World Test Championship table with 50 percentage points and the potential of going up to 64.29 with one more match remaining in the series against India and three home Tests against England. India lead with 62.82 percentage points but have a challenging five-match away series against Australia, who are a close second at the moment with Sri Lanka in third position.

Medvedev loses to Australian Popyrin at Paris Masters



PARIS (AFP): Daniil Medvedev is still searching for his first ATP tournament victory this year after the world number five lost to Australia's Alexei Popyrin for the first time in his career at the Paris Masters on Wednesday.

Medvedev won the Paris title in 2020 but has not found the indoor tournament to his liking in recent years -- the defeat to Popyrin is the third successive time he has gone out in his opening round.

Popyrin, who has been in a rich vein of form this year winning his first Masters tournament in Montreal in August and beating Novak Djokovic in the US Open, edged Medvedev 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (7/4) in a gripping second round match.

For Popyrin, ranked 24 in the world, it was only his third win over a player in the top five.

"It is the first time I have beaten him (in four meetings)," said Popyrin, who will play the winner of the match between France's

Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard and Karen Khachanov of Russia.

"We have had some right old battles in the past and it is a real pleasure to have performed like this this time round."

Medvedev, who has already qualified for the season-ending Masters, fought back twice in the deciding set.

He came back from 4-1 down to force a tie-break and then trailing 4-1 in that he levelled at 4-4.

However, with Popyrin leading 5-4, Medvedev double-faulted giving the 25-year-old Australian two match points and he wasted no time in sealing the victory on the first one.

"Still a contender"

Medvedev is not the first high profile seed to fall at the first hurdle as his compatriot Andrei Rublev and Norway's Casper Ruud have already lost.

"It was a tough match," said Medvedev. "I should have played better but at the same time, I had my opportunities, and I did not

take them. "It was a very tight match."

Carlos Alcaraz remains in the mix having won his first match on Tuesday and is favoured to take the title after Italian world number one Jannik Sinner withdrew from the tournament due to an intestinal virus.

Alcaraz will play France's Ugo Humbert in the third round, the French number one breezed past America's Marcos Giron 6-3, 6-2 on Wednesday.

A potential dark horse for the title is Bulgarian eighth seed Grigor Dimitrov who beat Tomas Martin Etcheverry 6-7 (9/11), 6-3, 7-5.

Dimitrov still has a chance of qualifying for the Masters, if he won the Paris title he would move past Djokovic (sixth), Ruud (seventh) and Rublev (eighth).

Just the top eight qualify for the climax to the ATP season in Turin.

"I would give a lot to be in (Turin)," said Dimitrov, who reached the Paris final last year. "I'm in a place where I am still a contender, I'm still fighting against the best players in the world, and still beating the younger guys."

"This gives me confidence and makes me happy." Germany's world number three Alexander Zverev is already booked into Turin and begins his Paris campaign later on Wednesday against the Netherlands' Tallon Griekspoor.

Pakistan squad reaches Australia for white-ball series

MELBOURNE (Monitoring Desk): The second contingent of Pakistan white-ball squad, under the leadership of Mohammad Rizwan, reached Melbourne, Australia for the three-match ODI and T20I series.

The second group of the Pakistan squad that reached Australia on Wednesday evening included white-ball captain Rizwan, his deputy Salman Ali Agha, alongside Abdullah Shafique, Aamir Jamal, Saim Ayub, Kamran Ghulam, Haseebullah and Arafat Minhas.



Remember, seven players from the Pakistan team Babar Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf, Naseem Shah, Muhammad Irfan Khan and Faisal Akram reached Melbourne on Tuesday.

The Australia tour will run from 4-18 November, followed by a white-ball series in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, which will be played from 24 November to 5 December.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced the squads for the tours to Australia and Zimbabwe yesterday.

The cricket board also appointed wicket-keeper Mohammad Rizwan as the captain for Pakistan's white-ball team ahead of the upcoming tours of Australia and Zimbabwe.

Key players like Babar Azam, Naseem Shah and Shaheen Shah Afridi, who were rested from the last two Tests against England, retained their place in the white-ball squads for the Australia matches but will be rested for the Zimbabwe tour.

Similarly, Mohammad Rizwan will be available for the Australia tour and Zimbabwe ODIs, but will be rested from the Zimbabwe T20Is.

All-rounder Salman Ali Agha, who has been appointed as the vice-captain, will lead the team in Rizwan's absence during the T20I series against Zimbabwe.

Pakistan Squad for Australia Tour

ODI SQUAD: Mohammad Rizwan (c)(wk), Aamir Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Arafat Minhas, Babar Azam, Faisal Akram, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah (wk), Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Hammad, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha (vc) and Shaheen Shah Afridi.

T20I SQUAD: Mohammad Rizwan (c)(wk), Arafat Minhas, Babar Azam, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah (wk), Jahandar Khan, Muhammad Abbas Afridi, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Omaid Bin Yousuf, Sahibzada Farhan, Salman Ali Agha (vc), Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufyan Moqim, Usman Khan.

CNS Amateur Golf Cup 2024 opening ceremony held



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The opening ceremony of the 17th Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) Amateur Golf Cup 2024 was held here at the Margalla Greens Golf Club (MGGC) on Wednesday.

Speaking at the media briefing, Patron of Pakistan Navy Golf (North), Commodore Saqib Ilyas, highlighted key aspects of the event and its organization across various categories.

The matches will be played in four major categories: Men's Amateur,

Ladies' Amateur, Seniors' Match, and Juniors' Match. In addition to the main categories, an invitational match for guests and sponsors will also be held, he said.

He said the Chief of the Naval Staff Amateur Golf Cup has been a regular and significant event on the national golf circuit since 2007. The event has become a platform for fostering healthy competition, providing a unique opportunity to showcase Pakistan's positive image to the world, while also promoting healthy activity within society, he said.

Last year, around 300 golfers from across Pakistan participated in the Chief of the Naval Staff Amateur Golf Cup, with Irtaza Hussain clinching the title and returning as the defending champion.

The regular conduct of this event demonstrates the Pakistan Navy's commitment to promoting golf at both national and international levels.

The opening ceremony of the mega event was attended by civil and military dignitaries, sponsors, golf players, and media representatives.

Conquerors, Strikers win 9th round matches in U19

LAHORE (APP): Conquerors off-spinner Laiba Nasir picked up the best figures of the ongoing National U19 Women's Tournament as she dismissed five Challengers batters for just five runs in the first match of the ninth round at the LCCA Ground on Wednesday.

In the second match of the day Strikers beat Stars by six wickets. Conquerors proved their decision to bowl first right after they bundled out Challengers for a mere 34 in 15 overs. Laiba removed the opening pair with just eight runs on the board before going on to take the second five-wicket haul of the tour-

nament. Minahil Javaid and Ayesha Imran Riaz picked up two wickets each while Fatima Khan struck once.

In turn, Conquerors chased 35-run target in 3.3 overs losing just their skipper Komal Khan (13, 7b, 3x4s), who is also the top run-scorer in the tournament (161). Samiya Afsar, who is currently the third-leading run-scorer with 122 runs, hit four fours to finish 20 not out off nine balls.

In the second match, Strikers romped to a six-wicket win as they chased the 68-run target with 49 balls to spare. After Stars won the toss and opted to bat first, only Sumaiya Taj (17, 30b,

1x4), Ayesha Khalid (14, 25b, Fariha Fahim Taimoor (13, 12b, 3x4s) reached double figures as they score 67-8 in the allotted 20 overs.

Barira Saif (2-12) and Areesha Sheikh (2-11) picked up two wickets each while Rozina Akram and Amina Abid struck once each.

Strikers were reduced to 31-4 from 20-0 before skipper Zoofishan Ayyaz (24 not out, 21b, 3x4s) and Amina Abid (10 not out, 13b, 1x4) stitched an unbeaten 37-run fifth-wicket stand to take their team over the line. The tenth and last round of the tournament will be played on Friday, 1 November.

Valencia match postponed after flash floods in Spain

VALENCIA (Agencies): Valencia's Copa del Rey match against Parla Escuela has been postponed after the devastating flash floods in Spain.

At least 62 people have died after torrential rain in the country, with the town of Chiva, near Valencia, receiving more than a year's worth of rain in eight hours.

Valencia's away game against the sixth-tier side was to be played in Parla, located 15 miles from the Spanish capital of Madrid, on Wednesday. The match has been rescheduled to 6 November and will be played at the same venue.

The Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) says it is "working intensively" with affected clubs with five five matches now postponed. Second division Levante's trip to fourth-tier Pontevedra in north-west Spain has been pushed back to next week, as has as has the tie between Xerez, also in the fourth tier, and AD



Ceuta, of the third.

Thursday's fixtures were also affected, with fourth-tier Ejea versus third-tier Hercules de Alicante postponed by a week and sixth-tier Manises' home tie against top-flight Getafe now postponed to an undecided date. Several La Liga clubs, including Real Madrid and Barcelona, expressed condolences to the victims of the floods.

"Barcelona wishes to express its sympathy to the relatives of the victims and our solidarity with the commitment and experience of my fellow coaches and the wider staff have ensured the journey has been extremely successful," McDonald said Wednesday.

"But just as importantly (it has) created a culture of unity, trust and inclusivity."

"International cricket has many challenges for all teams and I am particularly proud how the group, players and staff, across all formats have navigated those together."

Australia face India in a blockbuster five-match home Test series starting on November 22 in Perth.

McDonald inks 2027 deal as Australia's Head Coach

SYDNEY (AFP): Andrew McDonald will remain Australia's head coach until at least the end of 2027 after having his contract extended, cricket officials said Wednesday.

The 43-year-old has been in charge since 2022 and masterminded World Test Championship and one-day World Cup titles, and an away victory over England to retain the Ashes.

Australia are ranked number one in the ICC Test rankings and two in one-day and T20 cricket, although they suffered an early exit from the T20 World Cup in June.

"Andrew has proven to be an outstanding men's head coach who as well as delivering exceptional results has built a strong coaching team, methodology and an excellent environment for the team to perform at its best," said Cricket Australia CEO Nick Hockley.

"We are delighted to extend his tenure for a further two years."

Former Test all-rounder McDonald took on one of the most high-profile jobs in cricket initially on an interim basis following the shock resignation of Justin Langer.

"The professionalism,



In brief

ANF arrests 9 drug dealers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 7 operations managed to arrest 9 drug dealers with over 120 kg drugs worth more than Rs 10 million, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He said, 340 grams hashish was recovered from an accused arrested near a university in Haripur. The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. 24 kg opium and 48 kg hashish were recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Indus Highway Kohat and an accused was arrested during the operation. 25.2 kg hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up near Zhob Road, Quetta. 12 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects netted near M-1 Islamabad. 7 kg hashish was recovered from two women arrested near PDA Park on Peshawar Motorway. In two other operations conducted near GT Road, Attock, over 4.2 kg hashish were recovered from two accused including a woman. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

IRSA releases 115,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 115,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 62,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1529.99 feet and was 131.99 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 34,500 cusecs and 55,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1188.90 feet, which was 138.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 5,800 cusecs and 38,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 60,300, 45,600, 37,400 and 6,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Chenoy donates painting to PNCA

ISLAMABAD (APP): A renowned artist, Tabinda Chenoy has generously donated a significant painting from her art collection to the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). A significant painting from her latest collection has been added to the PNCA Gallery, enhancing the institution's growing repertoire of contemporary artwork. Alongside this contribution, Tabinda Chenoy has also donated a beautifully crafted book of her paintings titled "Between Dreams and Reality," which is now available at the PNCA Library for art enthusiasts, students, and scholars. "PNCA is deeply grateful to Tabinda Chenoy for her invaluable contribution. Her painting will undoubtedly inspire visitors, while the book will serve as an educational resource for future generations," said Dr. Bilal Karim, Director PRR, PNCA. "This donation reflects our shared vision of fostering a vibrant art culture and preserving it for the future," Mr. Hassan Raza, Member Board of Governors PNCA, Ex. Federal Minister Mr. Jamal Shah, Engr. Muhammad Arif, Deputy Director PDC PNCA and Mr. Kashif, Advisor to the Minister National Heritage and Culture were also present at the occasion. Dr. Bilal Karim thanked Tabinda Chenoy for her generous donation of her painting and book to PNCA.

PMYP and Australia join hands to empower youth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan on Wednesday said that as many as 186 billion rupees had been distributed among young entrepreneurs to foster economic development and self-sufficiency.

During a meeting with the Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins to discuss various initiatives and collaborations aimed at empowering the youth of Pakistan, he emphasized his long-standing commitment to youth affairs, having served in this domain since 2002.

Mashhood highlighted the significant strides made by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) as the first political party to

introduce a comprehensive youth policy.

The discussions also focused on the potential for cultural exchange programs between Australia and Pakistan, particularly in the areas of sports and education. Rana Mashhood proposed initiatives for mutual training in sports, aimed at enhancing skills and building partnerships.

Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins expressed his admiration for the talent and potential of Pakistani youth, stating, "The youth of Pakistan are an asset to the nation." He also announced plans to introduce new scholarships for Pakistani students, reinforcing Australia's commitment to supporting education and

skills development.

Moreover, Commissioner Hawkins expressed a keen interest in enhancing cooperation in sports, particularly hockey, highlighting the importance of collaboration with the Prime Minister's Youth Programme to implement strategic initiatives in this field.

The meeting concluded with both leaders expressing optimism about future collaborations that would empower Pakistani youth and foster closer ties between Australia and Pakistan.

The meeting was attended by key officials including Khawaja Junaid, the focal person for sports, and Syeda Aamna Batool, the focal person for PMYP's international relations.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan in a meeting with Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins. —APP Photo

Dengue claims three more lives

RAWALPINDI (APP): Dengue fever has claimed three more lives in Rawalpindi district making a total of 11 deaths so far this year. The deceased includes Haseeb Iqbal 50, from Rawalpindi Cantt, Nadia Naureen 32, from Taxila and Zakia Bibi 50, from Kalar Syedan. All three recent deaths occurred during the last seven days. The two among three died in two consecutive days in the Holy Family Hospital (HFH).

According to the statistical information released by District Health Authority Rawalpindi here on Wednesday, 141 confirmed cases have been reported during the last 24 hours. The data shows that as many as 836 positive cases were reported during the last seven days with an average of 120 per day in the district.

The report shows total 4427 confirmed cases have been reported since January 2024. However with continued hospital management by the health department, admitted patients in allied hospitals remained under control. Currently 267 patients are being treated in hospitals, much less than the beds capacity of 600 patients.

IG orders proactive measures against criminal elements

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, presided over high-level meetings at the Central Police Office and Safe City Islamabad here Wednesday.

A police spokesperson told APP that the meetings were attended by DIG Headquarters Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer, DG Safe City Shakir Hussain Dawar, SSP Operations, SSP Safe City, all zonal SPS and SDPOs. During the meetings, the IG assessed the overall crime situation in the federal capital, interrogated all officers, and sternly reprimanded those exhibiting poor performance.

He instructed SDPOs to take action against crime in their respective areas and emphasized the need for a comprehensive strategy to prevent crime and improve performance. The IG said that all officers should formulate a special plan to eradicate serious crimes, ensuring effective crackdowns against those involved in robbery, theft and other crimes by utilizing modern technology and available resources. He emphasized the importance of apprehending judicial fugitives and wanted absconders, as well as taking strict action against those providing them shelter. The officers were ordered to conduct indiscriminate operations against vehicles without number plates, with tinted glasses, and with blue lights.

Furthermore, the IG directed the officers to enhance the effectiveness of the Dolphin Squad's to ensure the prevention of criminal activities. Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi stressed that police officers must remain accessible to citizens at all times. He reiterated that their presence should provide safety for citizens and instill fear in criminals.

Wafaqi Mohtasib highlights commitment to HR in insurance oversight

ISLAMABAD (APP): Wafaqi Mohtasib Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has said that Pakistan was among the few countries in the world which has unique distinction of establishing a dedicated insurance ombudsman institution which offers a sound oversight mechanism for judicious protection of the interests of various stakeholders.

He was addressing an international webinar organized by the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) in cooperation with the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat on Wednesday.

Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi is the current President of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA), which is a 47-member strong non-political, professional body of ombudsman institutions in the Asian region.

Addressing the participants Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi said that the commitment

to the protection and promotion of human rights is a cornerstone of the country's Constitution. Pakistan has ratified several human rights instruments on the subject and is committed to achieving the collective aspirations of the internationally recognized human rights regime, he added.

He referred to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights as endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council and underlined the need to address the adverse human rights impact resulting from the business activities. The institution of the Federal Insurance Ombudsman (FIO), therefore, has a significant role in promoting and protecting the best standards of business practices in the insurance industry, he added.

Later, Federal Insurance

Ombudsman (FIO), Mumtaz Ali Shah made a presentation on the mandate and the scope of work of the institution which was established under the Insurance Ordinance 2000. He said that the FIO offers a sound oversight mechanism based on contemporary and equitable principles and takes cognizance of maladministration in the insurance industry of Pakistan.

He said that the institution since its inception is providing free and expeditious relief to the aggrieved citizens at their doorsteps. The Webinar was intended to share Pakistan's experiences, best practices and the exchange of knowledge on the framework of the Insurance Ombudsman's institution with the ombudsman fraternity in the Asian region and beyond.

Police nab 4,414 suspects; seize valuables worth 1.29 billion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police, in line with the vision of Federal Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi and the directives of IG Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, have launched a vigorous crackdown against criminal elements over the last six months to ensure law and order in the city.

In this regard, a total of 2,142 criminals involved in heinous and other crimes were arrested during the last 06 months recovered cash and valuables worth Rs 1.29 billion from their possession, a public relation officer told APP on Wednesday.

Additionally, the ICT Police also arrested 992 drug dealers during the

ongoing anti-drug "Nasha Ab Nahi" movement, which resulted in the seizing of 221 kilograms of hashish, 276 kilograms of heroin, 23.9 kilograms of ice, and 10,334 liters of liquor, he said.

He said that the Islamabad Police conducted extensive operations against individuals possessing illegal firearms, resulting in the arrest of 1,150 accused. From these arrests, police teams also recovered 46 rifles and 944 pistols with ammunition, he added.

Moreover, Islamabad Police also carried out indiscriminate actions against wanted absconders, judicial fugitives, and habitual offenders, resulting in the arrest of 2,272 individuals.

During this period, he said that six accused were killed in 19 police encounters, while 10 accused, including three injured individuals, were also apprehended.

IG Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi said that the ICT Police are utilizing all available resources to combat criminal elements, including drug dealers and individuals involved in other crimes in the federal capital. He further emphasized that the police will ensure that those engaged in the heinous business of drug and liquor trafficking are brought to justice.

Citizens are urged to cooperate with police and report any suspicious activity or individuals to their local police station or at the emergency helpline "Pucar-15".

NDMA hosts INSARAG conference to enhance emergency standards

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and participating delegates at the two-day Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Wednesday devised a comprehensive regional work plan focused on mapping hazards and committing resources to effectively address future risks and refine emergency preparedness and response standards in the region.

The two-day INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Conference was hosted by NDMA, in its role as Regional Chair of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG). The event brought together 55 international delegates from across the Asia-Pacific region, including representatives from China, Russia, Australia, South Korea, Türkiye, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Japan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Further discussions led to key agreements, including Asia-Pacific's ongoing contributions to the INSARAG Guidelines 2026, ensuring regional insights are integral to the development process. The group expressed appreciation for the leadership

shown by Pakistan in hosting this pivotal conference, which underscored the country's significant role in strengthening regional disaster preparedness.

Key stakeholders from global humanitarian organizations, UN agencies and local government departments also attended. During the two days, participants from member countries presented updates and positions for the ongoing INSARAG Governance Review, while the Asia-Pacific (AP) Regional Group conducted an After-Action Review (AAR) of the Türkiye response.

The conference concluded with the Asia-Pacific Group formally welcoming Japan as the INSARAG Asia-Pacific regional Chair for 2025. Tokyo will host the next regional conference in August 2025, while South Korea has been invited to consider hosting the 2026 INSARAG Global Meeting. At the conclusion of the event, Chairman NDMA Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik distributed participation certificates to attendees, commending their engagement and commitment to strengthening regional

resilience efforts. Participants also visited National Emergency Operation Center (NEOC) at NDMA HQs, where the participants were briefed about facility's capabilities in development of early warning (DEW), Anticipatory Actions (AAs), collaborations with humanitarian partners and risk communication to inform and prepare the public for potential emergencies and disasters. The INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Conference 2024 marked a milestone in regional disaster response collaboration, reinforcing the shared commitment to resilience-building and disaster preparedness among Asia-Pacific nations.

This year on 17 January, the NDMA assumed the chair of INSARAG, reinforcing its leadership role in regional disaster management efforts. INSARAG is a global network dedicated to enhancing international disaster response, strengthening preparedness through Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) practices. INSARAG sets global standards to ensure teams are fully equipped for action during disasters.



RAWALPINDI: A vendor arranging and displaying flower garlands to attract the customers at Banni Chowk. —APP Photo

9 Afghan citizens released

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation of Afghanistan has announced that nine Afghan citizens were released from Pakistani prisons by Interpol police and have returned to Afghanistan. The ministry issued a statement saying that these individuals entered the country through the Torkham border crossing. The statement cited the reason for their arrest as "lack of legal residency documents."

268 Afghan families deported

KABUL (Khaama Press): 268 Afghan refugee families returned to Afghanistan from Iran and Pakistan. These families entered the country through Torkham, Spin Boldak, Pul-e-Abrisham, and Islam Qala border crossings. Both Iran and Pakistan have increased the deportation of Afghan refugees in recent months. The UN Refugee Agency announced that over 733,000 Afghans have been expelled from Pakistan and returned to Afghanistan.

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

Afghanistan seeks foreign investment

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting Minister of Energy and Water stated that during his trip to China, he invited foreign companies to invest in Afghanistan's energy sector.

Abdul Latif Mansoor, the acting minister, also added that during this visit, he urged the officials of Power China and MCC companies to fulfill their commitments regarding signed agreements and to start work on projects.

Abdul Latif Mansoor, acting Minister of Energy and Water, said, "Our homes, hospitals, and everything we have need electricity. Therefore, it was necessary to invite foreign companies with extensive resources and present them with our five-year plan."

Representatives of a Ukrainian company, in a meeting with Mujibur Rahman Omar Akhundzada, the deputy minister of energy and water, also expressed interest in cooperating on water and energy development projects in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, several economic experts say that given Afghanistan's need to develop energy resources and improve water management, cooperation with foreign companies could boost productivity and help achieve major projects.

"Investment by Chinese private companies in Afghanistan's energy sector will not only lead us toward self-sufficiency, but it will also create jobs and reduce poverty," said Seyar Qureshi, an economic expert.

"If investments are made in Afghanistan's energy sector, it can play a significant role in energy production, and investment in energy can greatly benefit Afghanistan's economy and strengthen its infrastructure," said Qutbuddin Yaqubi, another economic expert.

They believe that if investors honor their commitments, Afghanistan could become a key energy production hub in the region.

Abdul Latif Mansoor led a delegation to China on October 24 to participate in the China Energy Conference.

‘Kabul to face severe water shortage by 2030’



KABUL (Ariana News): The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has warned that Afghanistan is experiencing a severe water crisis, and if no action is taken, Kabul's underground water resources could be depleted by 2030.

In a message on X, UNICEF reported that Roza Otunbayeva, head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and Tajudeen Oyewale, head of UNICEF Afghanistan, visited a Kabul district to assess the city's water supply network.

Both officials expressed concern over the worsening water shortage in the capital. "Water is life," United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) stated, emphasizing that rapid urbanization and climate change are accelerating the depletion of groundwater in Kabul.

"If we don't act now, we cannot stop this process," The rapid population growth, unplanned construction of high-rise buildings, urban development without proper planning, and the excessive use of underground water resources are major factors contributing to the decline in both the quantity and quality of groundwater in Kabul.

Although Kabul has faced water shortages for years, the crisis has become more severe in recent times.

The Ministry of Energy and Water recently announced that it is working on a project to transfer water from the Panjshir River to Kabul to help mitigate the shortage.

4,000 literacy classes established across country

KABUL (TOLONews): In the current solar year, more than 4,000 literacy classes have been established across the country.

The Ministry of Education states that last year, they had also succeeded in creating over 9,000 literacy classes nationwide.

According to Mansoor Ahmad Hamza, the spokesperson for the ministry, "This year, 4,583 new courses were established, with a total of 85,785 students actively engaged in learning."

Some students enrolled in these classes say that by participating, they have gained the ability to read and write and are asking officials for more resources to facilitate literacy education.

Farhad, one of the literacy students, said, "We are very grateful to our teacher, who worked so hard to teach us and helped us reach a point where we can now write. Our request to the Islamic Emirate is for more support in this effort."

Another student, Gul Mullah, said, "In the past, we couldn't even write a single name. We thank our teacher for his cooperation, and our request to the Islamic Emirate is to continue this effort and to establish more courses."

According to ministry officials, last year, the Ministry of Education created more than 9,000 literacy classes, with over 49,000 people actively engaged in learning.

Economic growth: Central Bank reaffirms commitment in meeting



KABUL (BNA): Noor Ahmad Agha, the governor of the Da Afghanistan Bank, held a meeting with Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General, to discuss the pivotal role of the financial and banking sector in Afghanistan's economic reconstruction.

During the meeting, Noor Ahmad Agha reiterated the Central Bank's commitment to fostering growth and development within the financial sector.

Noor Ahmad Agha, the governor of the Da Afghanistan Bank emphasized that these efforts are essential for the country's broader economic recovery and stability.

Ms. Otunbayeva acknowledged the critical importance of a robust financial and banking system in rebuilding economies, particularly in post-conflict situations. She pledged the UN's support and cooperation to enhance the financial sector in Afghanistan, highlighting the potential for transformative impacts on the nation's economic landscape.

The discussions reflect a shared vision for a revitalized financial system that can contribute to sustainable development and improved living standards for the Afghan people.

Immunity cards issued to ex-officials

KABUL (BNA): The Commission for Contact with Afghan Personalities and their Return to the Country has announced the distribution of immunity cards to several officials from the previous administration, signaling a significant step toward reconciliation.

In a statement released by Aurg, the commission highlighted that among those receiving immunity cards was the head of Kunduz's Provincial Council. This initiative aims to facilitate the safe return of former officials to Afghanistan.

The recipients expressed their gratitude to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan for creating favorable conditions for Afghans to return home. They noted that the current situation in Afghanistan is markedly different from the negative portrayals often presented by foreign media.

Mawlawi Zakirullah Zakir, head of the Commission, reiterated the Islamic Emirate's commitment to a general amnesty, aiming to foster a better future for the country. He assured former officials that they would not be questioned about their past positions.

Qatar to host meeting on Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the holding of the fourth meeting of special representatives from various countries in Afghanistan in Doha.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar said that Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al Thani, Qatar's permanent representative to the UN, discussed the outcomes of the third Doha meeting on Afghanistan with Rosemary DiCarlo, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

The statement mentioned that both sides emphasized the need to capitalize on the positive momentum from the third Doha meeting and to utilize its outcomes in the fourth Doha meeting.

The United Nations has not yet announced the date for the fourth meeting.

The third Doha meeting, held on June 30 and July 1 of this year, included special representatives from over 25 countries and a delegation from the Taliban in Qatar. The Taliban had described the third Doha meeting as positive and stated that the special representatives from various countries demonstrated a spirit of cooperation with Afghanistan.

At that time, the UN Secretary General's spokesperson mentioned that the purpose of the third Doha meeting was to encourage the ruling authorities to engage with the international community through a coordinated and structured approach for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan.

However, despite these diplomatic efforts, the lack of representation of Afghan women and civil society in these talks remains a critical issue.

Minister advocates for formalization of mosques

KABUL (BNA): In a recent meeting with scholars from various provinces, Sheikh Noor Mohammad Saqib, the Acting Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs, underscored the critical need to formalize mosques and unofficial places of worship.

The meeting brought together esteemed representatives from both Shia and Sunni communities, including professors from the Jihad School in Kapisa and notable scholars from the Provincial Council and Bamyan province.

During the discussions, Dr. Saqib highlighted the vital role that scholars play as symbols of knowledge and reform within society. He emphasized their importance in promoting unity and cohesion among community members. "Scholars guide and educate people based on religious principles, fostering a deeper understanding of faith," he stated.

The Acting Minister also revealed that the Ministry is actively engaged in repairing and constructing mosques, husainiyas, and khanqahs.

He reiterated the commitment to formalizing places of worship that remain unofficial, stressing the need for designated positions for speakers, imams, muezzins, and caretakers. This initiative aims to bolster religious and moral values across the community.



Scholars from Kapisa and Bamyan expressed their appreciation for the Ministry's initiatives, acknowledging that the construction and repair of mosques, along with the increase in academic positions, are pivotal in enhancing religious services.

Annual trade volume between Afghanistan and Iran reaches \$4b

KABUL (TOLONews): The trade volume between Afghanistan and Iran has reached \$4 billion annually. The Iranian Consul General in Herat considers Afghanistan to be his country's most important economic partner.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce reports that minerals, raisins, lead, various beverages, and sesame are among Afghanistan's main exports to Iran, while diesel, petrol, gas, raw materials for factories, and cement make up Afghanistan's primary imports from Iran.

Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, said, "The trade between Afghanistan and Iran in the first nine months of 2024 amounted to \$2.194 billion, with \$38 million in exports and \$2.156 billion in imports."

The Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Investment also reports that due to recent trade challenges between Afghanistan and Pakistan, Afghan merchants have increased their trade with Iran and, through Iran, with other countries this year.

Jan Agha Naveed, spokesperson for the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said, "Afghanistan has expanded both its exports and imports through Iranian ports. Reports indicate that this year, the majority of our trade has been conducted via Iran."

Additionally, some economic experts see the strengthening of trade relations with Iran and the use of Iran's Chabahar Port for global transit as beneficial for both countries.

Mohammad Asif Stanikzai, an economic expert, said, "Our trade relations with Iran, including the use of Chabahar Port, indicate that the ties between the two countries will only strengthen further."

Three days ago, Iran's Special Envoy for Afghanistan announced that Tehran is working to attract Afghan entrepreneurs and private-sector investors to invest in large-scale projects in Iran by offering increased facilities.

Nine MoU signed to boost entrepreneurship in country

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce announced on Wednesday the signing of nine memorandums of understanding (MoUs) aimed at enhancing entrepreneurship in the country.

The agreements were established during a meeting chaired by Nooruddin Azizi, the Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, and attended by officials from nine domestic organizations.

During the meeting, representatives from these organizations shared insights into their respective projects and activities. Azizi highlighted the critical need for transparency and adherence to Islamic principles in all initiatives, emphasizing that the beneficiaries—particularly families and unemployed individuals—should be the priority in these projects.

The total value of the projects, which are set to be implemented across various provinces, is approximately \$3,284,056. The initiatives will focus on providing vocational and professional skills training in regions including Kabul, Parwan, Maidan Wardak, Herat, Balkh, Baghlan, Samangan, Faryab, Nimruz, Jawzjan, and Badghis.

This collaborative effort aims to strengthen the economic foundation of families and create opportunities for those seeking employment, ultimately contributing to the development of a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem in Afghanistan.



Turkey restores Herat public library and donates 2,000 books

HERAT (TOLONews): The public library in Herat has been reopened after restoration by Turkey's TIKA office.

Additionally, Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism has donated 2,000 books in Turkish to this library.

Ahmadullah Muttaqi, head of Information and Culture in Herat, said, "TIKA, an important institution of the Republic of Turkey, has not only restored this library but also donated a thousand books."

Thousands more books are expected to be donated by Turkey to the library in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Mohammad Noori Parmasiz, a representative of a Turkish cultural organization, said, "The books we gifted today include titles on religion, philosophy, literature, psychology, children's literature, and other areas. This donation totals 2,000 books."

Mustafa Haqqani, the director of Herat's public library, said: "Our friendly country, Turkey, has gifted us 2,000 books. These will be highly beneficial in enriching the library's language section, and we already have visitors in this area."

The Herat Public Library is one of the oldest libraries in the country.

Equipping this library with new and up-to-date books is considered important for promoting a reading culture among the youth and book enthusiasts in Herat.

Mohammad Daoud Munir, a university professor, said, "The Ministry of Information and Culture and all Emirate institutions working to enhance public knowledge and promote a reading culture should update the library's books. They should bring in contemporary books."

According to Herat's Department of Information and Culture, the public library in this province houses over 35,000 books. Dozens of men and women visit daily for reading and research.

During the meeting, representatives from these organizations shared insights into their respective projects and activities. Azizi highlighted the critical need for transparency and adherence to Islamic principles in all initiatives, emphasizing that the beneficiaries—particularly families and unemployed individuals—should be the priority in these projects.

The total value of the projects, which are set to be implemented across various provinces, is approximately \$3,284,056. The initiatives will focus on providing vocational and professional skills training in regions including Kabul, Parwan, Maidan Wardak, Herat, Balkh, Baghlan, Samangan, Faryab, Nimruz, Jawzjan, and Badghis.

This collaborative effort aims to strengthen the economic foundation of families and create opportunities for those seeking employment, ultimately contributing to the development of a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem in Afghanistan.

Trans-Afghan railway to boost Central Asia trade and cut costs

KABUL (TOLONews): Uzbekistan's Minister of Transport, in an interview with an Azerbaijani media outlet, said that implementing the Trans-Afghan railway project will significantly enhance the transit status and mutual relations of Central Asian countries.

According to Ilkhom Makhkamov, the Minister of Transport of Uzbekistan, this project will reduce delivery times from 35 days to 5 days and cut costs by at least 40 percent.

Makhkamov added that with the Trans-Afghan railway project, Central Asian countries will gain access to ports on the Indian Ocean.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Works said that the groundwork for implementing the Trans-Afghan project in Afghanistan has been prepared, and the Islamic Emirate has prioritized this project.

Mohammad Ashraf Haqshenas, spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Works, said: "The groundwork for implementing this project in Afghanistan is set so that work can begin practically. The Ministry of Public Works of the Islamic Emirate welcomes and collaborates with the countries participating in implementing this project."

Jan Agha Nawid, spokesperson for the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment, commented, "As you know, railways are currently the cheapest and fastest system for moving large volumes of goods across countries. The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment welcomes this plan and hopes practical steps are taken promptly."

According to officials from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan, the estimated construction cost of the Trans-Afghan railway project is \$5 billion.

During the meeting, Noor Ahmad Agha reiterated the Central Bank's commitment to fostering growth and development within the financial sector.

Noor Ahmad Agha, the governor of the Da Afghanistan Bank emphasized that these efforts are essential for the country's broader economic recovery and stability.

Ms. Otunbayeva acknowledged the critical importance of a robust financial and banking system in rebuilding economies, particularly in post-conflict situations. She pledged the UN's support and cooperation to enhance the financial sector in Afghanistan, highlighting the potential for transformative impacts on the nation's economic landscape.

The discussions reflect a shared vision for a revitalized financial system that can contribute to sustainable development and improved living standards for the Afghan people.

During the meeting, Noor Ahmad Agha reiterated the Central Bank's commitment to fostering growth and development within the financial sector.

Noor Ahmad Agha, the governor of the Da Afghanistan Bank emphasized that these efforts are essential for the country's broader economic recovery and stability.

Ms. Otunbayeva acknowledged the critical importance of a robust financial and banking system in rebuilding economies, particularly in post-conflict situations. She pledged the UN's support and cooperation to enhance the financial sector in Afghanistan, highlighting the potential for transformative impacts on the nation's economic landscape.

The discussions reflect a shared vision for a revitalized financial system that can contribute to sustainable development and improved living standards for the Afghan people.

During the meeting, Noor Ahmad Agha reiterated the Central Bank's commitment to fostering growth and development within the financial sector.

Noor Ahmad Agha, the governor of the Da Afghanistan Bank emphasized that these efforts are essential for the country's broader economic recovery and stability.

Ms. Otunbayeva acknowledged the critical importance of a robust financial and banking system in rebuilding economies, particularly in post-conflict situations. She pledged the UN's support and cooperation to enhance the financial sector in Afghanistan, highlighting the potential for transformative impacts on the nation's economic landscape.

The discussions reflect a shared vision for a revitalized financial system that can contribute to sustainable development and improved living standards for the Afghan people.

During the meeting, Noor Ahmad Agha reiterated the Central Bank's commitment to fostering growth and development within the financial sector.

Noor Ahmad Agha, the governor of the Da Afghanistan Bank emphasized that these efforts are essential for the country's broader economic recovery and stability.

Ms. Otunbayeva acknowledged the critical importance of a robust financial and banking system in rebuilding economies, particularly in post-conflict situations. She pledged the UN's support and cooperation to enhance the financial sector in Afghanistan, highlighting the potential for transformative impacts on the nation's economic landscape.

The discussions reflect a shared vision for a revitalized financial system that can contribute to sustainable development and improved living standards for the Afghan people.

Discovery of petroleum, gas in North Waziristan

Gandapur constitutes commission to resolve matters

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An introductory meeting of the Provincial Joint Commission constituted by the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to resolve the matters with regard to the recently discovered petroleum and gas resources in North Waziristan, was held here at Chief Minister's Secretariat on Wednesday with Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair.

Elected members of National and Provincial Assemblies from North Waziristan, high ups of energy department and relevant divisional administration, representatives from 11 Corps, SNGPL, Mari Petroleum Company and other concerned institutions attended the meeting. Senior officials of Federal Ministry of Petroleum also attended the meeting via video link.

It is pertinent to mention here that the aforementioned Provincial Joint Commission was constituted to protect the rights of the local population with regard to the revenue/royalty of the recently discovered

natural resources in North Waziristan by ensuring fair and just disbursement/utilization of that development funds. The commission will also formulate long-term policies/strategies to ensure that the recently discovered natural resources are utilized in the best interests of the country, region, and local population, acting as a liaison amongst committees at district and tehsil level, provincial and federal governments, and other stakeholders.

The Chief Minister on this occasion, urged the commission to move forward swiftly under the established guidelines, and directed that district and tehsil-level committees should be finalized without any delay.

He emphasized that the committees must include elected local representatives, community elders, and district administration officials. He directed the commission to come up with viable recommendations within the next fifteen days by conducting extensive consultation with local community through the mentioned committees.

He reiterated that the provincial government is committed to fulfilling the legitimate and legal demands of the local population, while matters involving the federal government will be raised with the relevant federal authorities. Ali Amin Gandapur made it clear that unnecessary delays in such projects is neither in the interest of the nation nor the local communities.

He stressed the need for timely solutions to drive the region toward development and added that delays in projects also discourage investment; we are striving to foster a conducive environment attracting investors to the province.

The Chief Minister maintained that the development of oil and gas producing districts remains a top priority for the government, which is dedicated to fulfilling the legitimate demands of North Waziristan's people, for which purpose, a three-tier consultative framework has been established.

He said that the commencement of gas production from North Waziristan would yield an annual royalty

of five billion rupees for the province; 15% of this royalty would be earmarked for the development of the producing district. However, he emphasized that royalties and other initiatives will only be realized if progress is made collaboratively and production begins.

The Chief Minister further outlined that practical steps are underway to provide employment opportunities for the youth of the merged districts.

He directed TEVTA officials to immediately establish a technical and vocational training center in a suitable building already available in North Waziristan in order to equip local youth with market-based skills and provide them interest-free loans under the approved schemes of the provincial government.

Additionally, he said that local leaders' input will be included in development projects. He expressed his commitment to see underdeveloped districts like North Waziristan thrive and assured that all necessary measures will be taken to achieve this goal.



WASHINGTON: U.S. Vice President and Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris boards Air Force Two at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, U.S.

China implies Trump could 'discard' Taiwan

BEIJING (Reuters): China implied on Wednesday that if US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump won the Nov. 5 election he could 'discard' Taiwan, saying the United States has always pursued an "America First" policy.

Trump, neck and neck in the polls with Vice President Kamala Harris, has made comments on the campaign trail that Chinese-claimed Taiwan should pay to be protected and also accused the island of stealing American semiconductor business.

Asked about Trump's remarks this month vowing to impose additional, massive tariffs on China if it were to "go into Taiwan" as well as about Taiwan having to pay for protection, a spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office said Taiwan's people had a clear understanding of US policy.

"Whether the United States is trying to protect or harm Taiwan, I believe most of our Taiwan compatriots have already made a rational judgement and know very clearly that what the United States pursues is always 'America First'", Zhu Fenglian told a regular news briefing.

She was referring to Trump's favored slogan about prioritizing US interests.

Taiwan's people know that "Taiwan at any time may turn from a pawn to a discarded child," Zhu added, without using Trump's name.

Zhu's wording refers to a tactic in the game Go, in which a player sacrifices a smaller piece to secure a greater advantage or victory.

The United States is bound by law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself, even in the absence of formal diplomatic ties between Washington and Taipei.

Trump, in a weekend interview on "The Joe Rogan Experience" podcast, repeated his claims about Taiwan "stealing" US chip business and needing to pay to be protected.

On Wednesday, Taiwan Economy Minister Kuo Jyh-huei told reporters in Taipei he would not be commenting, as the US election campaign was underway.

"I wish the United States well for a successful democratic election," he added.

Taiwan received strong backing from Trump's administration during 2017 to 2021, including arms sales, which have continued under the government of President Joe Biden.

The United States announced a new arms package for Taiwan on Friday worth almost \$2 billion for missile systems, which angered Beijing, as do all weapons sales to Taipei.

"I sternly warn the Lai Ching-te administration that buying weapons won't buy security," Zhu said, referring to Taiwan's president whom China detests as a "separatist."

Taiwan's democratically elected government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only the island's people can decide their future.

Harris vows to serve 'all Americans'

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Democratic candidate Kamala Harris vowed on Wednesday to serve "all Americans" if elected president, as she sought to contain fallout from a remark by President Joe Biden that threatened to undercut her message of unity.

"When elected president, I'm going to represent all Americans, including those who don't vote for me," the vice president told reporters before flying to a campaign event in North Carolina, one of seven battleground states that will determine the outcome of the Nov. 5 election.

Her Republican rival Donald Trump is due to hold a rally there as well on Wednesday.

Harris is spending the final week of the campaign telling voters that she would respect those who disagree with her and portraying former President Trump as a threat to democracy.

That promise -- delivered at a massive rally in front of the White House on Tuesday night -- was muddled by Biden, who criticized racist comments made at a Trump rally on Sunday.

According to a White House transcript, Biden said: "The only garbage I see floating out there is his supporter's - his - his demonization of Latinos is unconscionable." Trump's campaign said Biden was referring to Trump supporters as "garbage," while Biden said later he was talking about the language used by a comedian at the rally.

A Tuesday Reuters/Ipsos poll showed Harris leading Trump 44% to 43% among registered voters nationally, within

the margin of error. Other opinion polls show tight margins in the seven election battleground states. Last month's hurricane damage has made North Carolina's results especially hard to predict.

On Wednesday, Harris will be in the state's fast-growing capital Raleigh, while Trump will hold a rally in Rocky Mount.

Trump won North Carolina by under 1.5 percentage points in 2020. The last Democrat to win the state was Barack Obama in 2008, though it has had a Democratic governor, Roy Cooper, since 2017.

Trump currently leads Harris by just one percentage point in the state, according to a polling average by FiveThirtyEight.

Trump and his allies have sought to portray voting by people who are noncitizens as a potential risk to the election, though private and state reviews have repeatedly shown that the illegal practice is very rare. The campaign to focus on the issue won a victory on Wednesday when the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated Virginia's decision to purge from its voter rolls 1,600 people who state officials concluded may not be citizens, a claim that Biden's administration disputed.

At stake on Nov. 5 is who will run the world's richest and most powerful country. Harris and Trump diverge on support for Ukraine and NATO, abortion rights, taxes, basic democratic principles and tariffs that could trigger trade wars.

Residents in North Carolina, especially in the rural, hard-hit western region, are still trying to put their lives back together after devastating hurricane damage last month. The Republican-leaning area accounted for about 9% of the vote in 2020, according to an analysis by Republican pollster Patrick Ruffini.

While some state officials - including some Republicans - have praised federal cleanup efforts, Trump has falsely claimed that disaster aid intended for the state was diverted to help immigrants.

Republican Representative Andy Harris said last week the state legislature should preemptively declare that Trump won the state's 16 Electoral College votes, to avoid "disenfranchised voters."

Cooper ruled that out. The outcome in North Carolina may remain unclear for a week or more after the election. Absentee ballots that arrive on Election Day, as well as ballots from overseas and military voters, can be counted for up to 10 days afterward.

In 2020, media outlets did not call the result in North Carolina for Trump until Nov. 13, 10 days after the election. More than a third of North Carolina's registered voters have already cast ballots in the 2024 election, according to the state's election board.

Later on Wednesday, Harris will travel to Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, two other election battleground states. Her Madison, Wisconsin, rally will feature performances from musicians, including the band Mumford & Sons. Trump will also be in Wisconsin for a rally with retired National Football League quarterback Brett Favre.

PHC seeks response against delay in NFC Award

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Syed Arshad Ali has issued notices to the federal and provincial governments, seeking a response regarding the distribution of National Finance Commission (NFC) Award shares to the merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Wednesday.

The counsel Ali Gohar Durrani advocate representing former provincial minister Timur Salim Jhagra, requested the court

to direct the federal government to hold a regular NFC meeting. Convene an urgent Council of Common Interest (CCI) meeting.

The argued for release of allocated funds (Rs. 90 billion annually) to the merged districts under the NFC Award. He added that former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) regions suffered greatly due to terrorism, resulting in significant human and financial losses.

The 25th Constitutional Amendment merged FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018.

The FATA Reforms Committee recommended allocating 3% of the NFC Award to the merged districts for development. Despite promises, the federal government has not fulfilled its constitutional obligation to provide funds. The provincial government faces financial constraints due to the increased financial burden after merger the lawyer stated.

The counsel further argued that NFC meeting has not been convened since 2022, contrary to the previous practice of bi-annual meetings. The National Economic

Council decided on May 24, 2018, to present the FATA funding issue to the National Security Committee. Political parties have politicized the issue.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa contributes significantly to the national revenue but is denied its share. The petitioner pays taxes regularly and has the right to information about tax payments and utilization.

PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Arshad Ali issued notices to the federal and provincial governments, seeking a response.

N Korean troops in Russian uniforms are heading toward Ukraine, US says

WASHINGTON (AP): Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Wednesday that North Korean troops wearing Russian uniforms and carrying Russian equipment are moving to the Kursk region near Ukraine, in what he called a dangerous and destabilizing move.

Austin was speaking at a press conference with South Korean Defense Minister Kim Yong-hyun, as concerns grow about Pyongyang's deployment

of as many as 11,000 troops to Russia.

He said officials are discussing what to do about the deployment.

Austin said the U.S. remains concerned that Russia will use the North Korean troops in combat, but "whether they will be employed in the fight is yet to be seen."

Kim said he doesn't necessarily believe the deployment will trigger war on the peninsula, but could increase security

threats between the two nations. There is a "high possibility" that Pyongyang would ask for higher technologies in exchange for its troop deployment, such as in nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities, he said, speaking through an interpreter.

Seoul and its allies assess that the number of North Korean troops now dispatched in Russia has increased to 11,000, according to a senior South Korean presidential

official, who spoke on condition of anonymity during a background briefing. More than 3,000 of them are believed to have moved toward combat zones in western Russia, the official said, without specifying the locations.

Some North Korean advance units of those troops have already arrived in Kursk, where Ukraine has successfully held territory after a surprise counter-incursion in August.

Iranian missile production unscathed amid recent Israeli airstrikes

TEHRAN (AFP): Iran said on Wednesday that its production of missiles remained intact, following Israeli air strikes targeting military facilities last week.

"There has been no interruption in the process of producing offensive systems such as missiles," Defence Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh told reporters.

"The enemy tried to damage both our defensive

and offensive systems," he added.

Israel launched strikes on military sites in Iran on Saturday, citing Tehran's October 1 missile attack that followed the killing of Iran-backed militant leaders and a Revolutionary Guards commander.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said later that the strikes "hit Iran's defence capabilities

and missile production".

Iran's armed forces said the attack killed four soldiers and caused "limited damage" to a few radar systems. Iranian media said a civilian was also killed.

Israel has warned Iran against retaliating, while Tehran, asserting it does not seek war, vowed an "appropriate response".

Western governments have long criticised Iran's

missile programme which has come under severe sanctions in recent years.

In September, the European Union imposed sanctions on prominent Iranian officials and entities over their alleged involvement in transferring missiles and drones to Russia to use in its war against Ukraine.

Tehran has repeatedly denied the accusations.



WASHINGTON: Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, center right welcomes South Korean Defense Minister Kim Yong Hyun, Center left, to the Pentagon on Wednesday.

UNGA votes to condemn US economic embargo on Cuba

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The U.N. General Assembly voted overwhelmingly Wednesday to condemn the American economic embargo of Cuba for a 32nd year after several speakers called for lifting of the blockade on the Caribbean Island nation.

The vote in the 193-member Assembly was 187 in favour, two against (United States and Israel), with Moldova abstaining.

During the two-day debate before the vote, a number of countries pointed out that there is broad and long-standing international opposition to the United States' economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, with many saying it runs counter to the UN Charter and undermines faith in multilateralism.

The resolution's full title is: "the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

Under its terms, the Assembly voiced concern that despite its resolutions dating back to 1992, "the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba is still in place", and that "the adverse effects of such measures on the Cuban people and on Cuban nationals living in other countries".

It recalled measures adopted by then US President Barack Obama in 2015 and 2016 "to modify several aspects of the application of the embargo, which contrast with the measures applied since 2017 to reinforce its implementation".

The General Assembly reiterated its call for all States to refrain from promulgating and applying such restrictive laws and measures, in line with their obligations under the UN Charter and international law.

In explaining his vote, the US representative said that Washington recognizes the challenges the Cuban people face, but asked the General Assembly to urge the Cuban Government to adhere to its human rights obligations.

General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding and are unenforceable, but they reflect world opinion, and the vote has given Cuba an annual stage to demonstrate the isolation of the U.S. in its decades-old efforts to isolate the Caribbean nation.

'No one can deprive citizen of right to access to info'

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court (SC) judge Justice Athar Minallah has said that although Article 19 A of the constitution guarantees citizens the right to access to information, but the right is subject to certain limitations.

In his additional note on the petition, seeking access to information about the SC employees, the judge has said that despite some restrictions, however, the

parliament does not have the power to limit the scope of this constitutional right.

The judge, while saying he completely agrees with the decision pronounced by ex-chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa in the case, has said that neither the government nor any of its departments can deprive a citizen of the right to access to information. "Article 8 of the constitution bars the state from doing any such legislation that either infringes upon fundamental

human rights or restricts them," he has said, adding neither the apex court could place limitations on individual liberties. "It is simply unimaginable."

Justice Minallah has observed that if people think that those institutions, which are supposed to protect their rights, are themselves trampling upon them, they will lose their trust in these institutions. "And if the people's trust is eroded, the independence of the judiciary will be weakened."