

PoL prices likely to go up
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has recommended increasing the prices of petrol and diesel by Rs 3 and Rs 2.87 per litre, respectively. According to sources well placed in OGRA, if approved, the price of petrol will rise from Rs 248.38 to Rs 251.38 per litre, while high-speed diesel will increase from Rs 255.14 to Rs 258.01 per litre.

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Govt to establish Anti-Riots Force to combat violence: PM

— vows to transform country's economic landscape, says national security directly linked with economic security

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that the government will establish an Anti-Riots Force in Islamabad and across the country to combat future attempts to create violence and unrest in the country.

This force will be equipped with professional training and necessary equipment, on the lines of international standards. Legal actions will be taken against those who damage public and private property, along with armed individuals, the prime minister said.

Chairing a meeting to review law and order situation in the country, the prime minister instructed that a comprehensive strategy be developed to prevent any future attempts to march towards Islamabad or any other city for personal or political gains. He emphasized that those who attempted to bankrupt the country to save their government were brought to justice.

The prime minister was briefed on the recent protests across the country, where demonstrators targeted government property and attacked Rangers and police personnel. The government, he said demonstrated restraint by preventing armed individuals from spreading chaos under the guise of peaceful protests. The prime minister said, "Instead of following legal procedures, repeated efforts were made to create chaos by mobilizing forces towards Islamabad, attempting to spread unrest across the country." He said during the mobilization of these disruptive elements, several security forces' personnel were injured and martyred.

"How can these individuals claim to be revolutionary when they are attempting to destroy the nation and create chaos?" the prime minister

Shehbaz congratulates nation as PSX hits 100,000 milestone for first time

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday felicitated the entire nation as the 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange hits the milestone of 100,000 points for the first time. The prime minister, in a statement, said the stock market surge reflected the confidence of the business community and investors in the government's economic policies. Lauding the efforts by the government's economic team for the promotion of investment in the country, he said that he had pledged with the nation to take all-out measures for economic stability and national development.

The prime minister said that the government's sacrifice of its politics to save the country from the default did not go in vain. "The positive trend (in the stock market) returned with the return of the insurgent group. The enemies of the country's stability are once again attempting to derail the country," Prime Minister Shehbaz remarked. He said that besides further reduction in inflation, the policy rate has been brought down to 15% and remittances were on an upward trajectory. "We will continue to strive for the country's development. We will not let the enemies of the country's progress and prosperity succeed in their nefarious designs," he resolved.

questioned. He directed that immediate legal action be taken against the elements involved in the violent mob that marched towards Islamabad. The prime minister also emphasized the need for further improvements in the prosecution system.

"Once the disruptive group dispersed, the stock exchange crossed the 100,000 points mark," the prime minister pointed out. "The country suffered billions in losses due to these attempts to spread disorder." The prime minister held the disruptive group and its masterminds responsible for the economic damage. He called for the immediate identification and punishment of the disruptive elements within the group. "The entire nation including myself pay tribute to the security personnel who sacrificed their lives while performing their duties during this turmoil," he added.

The prime minister also called for

bringing to justice those responsible for inciting public agitation, uncertainty, and unrest during the recent events. The meeting was attended by Federal Ministers Ahad Khan Cheema, Attaullah Tarar, Prime Minister's Advisor Rana Sanaullah, the Attorney General, and other senior officials.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif reiterating the government resolve to transform Pakistan's economic landscape, said that the national security of the country had direct linkages with the economic security. "If we are economically strong, our exports are growing fast, industrial sector is expanding.....then our economic security will automatically strengthen our critical security," the prime minister said while addressing the 26th National Security Workshop of Defence University.

(Continued on Back Page)

No firing and no fatality during operation against mob: Tarar

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Thursday stated categorically that no direct firing was done by the law enforcement agencies during operation to flush out Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf protesters.

Talking to foreign media, along with Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, he said that there was clear policy of the government that no direct firing will be done on protesters. The minister said that there were no fatalities in the operation and both major hospitals of the Capital - Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences and Polyclinic had issued statements that no dead bodies were brought there.

Besides, the Ministry of National Health Services also issued a statement denying PTI's claims that its workers were killed in security forces' firing. The minister stated that a list circulating on social media regarding the death of protesters was declared fake. The minister said that the federal capital was besieged for the past several days by the miscreants belonging to a political party and this was not the first time they had done so.

Attaullah Tarar said that the PTI activists wanted to disrupt peace in Islamabad. He said that the Belarusian President and his delegation was present in the red zone when the PTI protesters besieged the capital. The minister said that the miscreants had modern weapons, tear gas shells, stones and slingshots with them and they were targeting the law enforcement

agencies personnel.

He informed the foreign media that Islamabad High Court had ordered that there would be no protest of any kind but they openly violated the court orders. The miscreants violated the red zone and tried to wreak havoc with the country when the economy was doing well. "We offered them to protest at Sangjani near the capital where they could protest peacefully but they rejected the offer as peaceful protest was not their intention.

He said two days ago, a footage was released in which professionals in the protesters could be seen firing, using weapons, tear gas shells, pellet guns. Tarar said that four Rangers and two police personnel were martyred by miscreant attacks. He asked on whose hands the blood of these martyrs could be found. He said the security forces performed their duty and established peace in the federal capital.

The minister lamented that a false narrative was created on social media claiming that Rangers were martyred by their own people. He told the media that culprit involved in hit and run incident had been identified who belonged to Abbottabad City.

He said there was no rhyme or reason behind the protest, only they wanted to disturb the peace of Islamabad. They had no public demand, except they wanted release of their leader jailed in several cases including corruption, he added. "We arrested 37 Afghan criminals during the PTI protest. Afghanistan is our friendly country. The question arises, what were the Afghan citizens doing in the protest of the political party in

Islamabad? Are they allowed to do so?"

He said that a large-scale operations were conducted from 2013 to 2017, peace was restored to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Sindh metropolis Karachi and incidents of terrorism decreased in entire country. But when the PTI was brought into power in 2018, the Founding Chairman PTI who was the prime minister of the country, brought back the Taliban, he added. The wave of terrorism, he said was going on in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but the chief minister of the province had no interest in restoration of law and order there.

He said that 50 persons were killed in Kurram District of the KP and they were besieging Islamabad. "There is only one person responsible for terrorism in the country who is promoting violence," he maintained. He contended that PTI was the party that always used religion as a tool. Referring to a recent statement of the spouse of Imran Khan, he asked what was purpose of making a statement against Saudi Arabia.

He said their objective was to play with the religious sentiments of the people of the country and exploit religion for their political purposes. He said that the miscreants ransacked media houses and attacked media professionals performing their duties. Replying to the questions of the media, he said that the PTI was suffering from internal differences as many top leaders of the party including Atif Khan, Shehram Tarakai, Asad Qaiser, Hamad Azhar and Sheikh Waqas Akram were not present.

ardous, we must urgently implement a comprehensive anti-smog strategy," he was quoted as saying. Previously, CDA had said that the smog situation in Islamabad was under control but called for collective measures and effective coordination from all relevant stakeholders to improve the air quality in the city.

Discussions also centred on key areas of mutual interest, which included expanding the electric bus service, improving sanitation, providing clean water, as well as upgrading slums and rural areas. Naqvi highlighted the efforts to maintain Islamabad's status as one of the world's most beautiful capitals, noting ongoing reviews of anti-smog machine installations. The minister

expressed his confidence that the collaborative efforts would ensure a cleaner and healthier environment for Islamabad's residents and visitors alike.

Meanwhile, Benhassine reaffirmed the World Bank's commitment to assist Pakistan in achieving its sustainable development goals, including air quality improvement and urban development. "We are ready to work with the CDA to develop an effective anti-smog strategy," he stated, adding that international standard reports would help address the root causes of pollution. The meeting was attended by the federal interior secretary, the CDA chairman, the Islamabad deputy commissioner, and other relevant officials.

The Frontier Post

Earthquake shakes KP
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An earthquake measuring 5.2 magnitude on the International Richter Scale jolted several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Thursday. According to the Met Office, the magnitude of the earthquake was recorded at 5.2 and its epicenter was the bordering area of Afghanistan and Tajikistan with a depth of 212 kilometers.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with participants of 26th National Security Workshop.

Journalist Mattiullah Jan arrested

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Senior Journalist Mattiullah Jan was arrested by the Islamabad on Thursday. According to media reports, the Margalla Hills police registered the FIR against the journalist.

According to the police, Mattiullah Jan was asked by a constable to stop at a picket but he did not stop there. They said he instead hit his car with the constable. Subsequently, the constable who was identified as Mudassir got injured.

The reports suggested that Jan went missing on Wednesday and his family was worried about his whereabouts. Following the claim of Jan's son that his father was "abducted" from Islamabad last night by "unknown individuals", it emerged that the journalist was booked in a first information report (FIR) in the early hours of Thursday.

Earlier on Thursday, rights bodies and the journalism fraternity voiced their concerns on Jan's arrest, following his son's allegation that the anchor was abducted from Islamabad last night. A post on Jan's X account at 5:09am, seemingly made by his son, read: "Matiullah Jan has been abducted from the parking of Pims tonight at around 11pm by unmarked abductors in an unmarked vehicle." Referring to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), the post had also said that journalist Saqib Bashir was also allegedly abducted but was "let go five minutes later".

PTI founder, Bushra Bibi, others booked

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: A terrorism case has been registered against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi, and several other party leaders.

As per details, PTI founder's sister Aleema Khan, CM Ali Amin Gandapur, Omar Ayub, Sheryar Riaz among 75 others named in the case registered at the Naseerabad police station in Rawalpindi.

According to the FIR, Imran Khan allegedly incited protesters to march towards Islamabad on November 22, while Bushra Bibi's social media statement was seen as instigating party workers. The suspects are accused of conspiring to block roads, attacking police officers with sticks, slingshots, stones, and bricks. The case includes charges of terrorism and 15 other sections of the Pakistan Penal Code.

Earlier, Imran Khan was booked in another case at Taxila police station following the death of a police constable and injuries to others during a violent confrontation near the Hakla Interchange. The FIR, lodged on behalf of the police, names PTI founder Imran Khan, Ali Amin Gandapur, Salar Khan Kakar, and Shahid Khattak, among others. The FIR includes charges under 14 sections of law, including anti-terrorism clauses. According to the text, the attackers were armed with tear gas guns, rubber bullet weapons, and other arms.

Sacrifices flays operation against PTI workers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has said that the D-Chowk incident is being highlighted at both national and international forums. He added that this tragic event was also being raised with international human rights organizations. Dr. Saif said that the sacrifices made for true freedom would not go in vain.

He said that PML-N govt had targeted pregnant women with gunfire in model town and now resorted violence against unarmed protesters at D-Chowk. He said that these acts of oppression would be remembered in history. Barrister Saif condemned the Federal Government for depriving the public of their right to protest, labeling it a stain on democracy.

"The state is responsible for protecting the lives and property of its citizens, but this government is instead robbing them of both" he stated Dr. Saif said that the movement for the release of Imran Khan and all political prisoners, as well as the restoration of the constitution and rule of law, would be continue. He said that Imran Khan resides in the hearts of the people, and removing him from their hearts is not only difficult but impossible.

PTI founder sacks Gohar from party chairmanship

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan on Thursday removed Barrister Gohar Ali Khan from the party chairmanship. Speaking after his meeting with Imran Khan, Barrister Ali Zafar confirmed that the PTI founder has nominated former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser for the post of PTI chairman. Barrister Ali Zafar said that the party founder took the decision to give a chance to seasoned leaders to lead the PTI. As part of the major reshuffle, PTI founder Imran Khan nominated Ali Muhammad Khan for the post of Secretary General after Salman Akram Raja resigned from the post. While reports had said that Raja resigned from the post, Barrister Zafar has now confirmed that he was removed from the post by the PTI founder. According to Barrister Zafar, the former prime minister has called Asad Qaiser and Ali Muhammad Khan for a meeting at the Adiala jail. The decision comes after party leaders were severely criticised over their absence from the PTI protest in Islamabad.

Salman Akram Raja resigns from PTI General Secy slot

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Salman Akram Raja on Thursday resigned from the post of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) General, Secretary in the face of growing criticism against party leadership following the Islamabad protest.

According to media reports, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has confirmed receiving Salman Akram Raja's resignation. The party leaders are under severe scrutiny after PTI workers retreated from D-Chowk in Islamabad, without succeeding in ensuring the release of party founder Imran Khan. The former ruling party is in turmoil following the arrest of hundreds of its workers after the authorities launched a grand operation against the PTI protesters in Islamabad.

Child kidnapping: SC bench reviews report in chamber

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court constitutional bench reviewed a report in chamber over kidnapping of a child in Quetta on the Attorney General's request. Abducted Child's father pleaded to the court for recovery of his child "I want my child".

"We all are worried for you, everyone will cooperate," Justice Jamal Mandokhel replied to the parent of the kidnapped child. "The IG Police has briefed the court in cham-

ber. He has briefed us many things that could not be shared with you as it will adversely impact the investigations."

Justice Mandokhel told the father. "This case could not be given more publicity as it will pose threat to the life of the abducted child," the bench elaborated.

Advocate General Baluchistan requested for ending the protest sit-in in Quetta against kidnapping of the child. "We will also sit in the protest if it could resolve the issue," he said. Justice

Musarrat Hilali observed that the sit-in might be staged by the NGOs, it will not help in resolving the problem.

"You don't apply pressure but move to resolve the problem," bench remarked. "More pressure will increase more threat to the life of the abducted child," Justice Mandokhel said. A complete strike was observed across Quetta on Monday as protests intensified over the kidnapping of a 10-year-old boy, Muhammad Musawir, in Quetta.

Ban PTI: Balochistan PA passes resolution

F.P. Report

QUETTA: In a session marked by stark division, the Balochistan Assembly on Thursday approved a resolution, tabled by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), seeking a ban on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) following the recent "violence" in its three-day-long protest that put off abruptly in the wee hours of Wednesday.

Minister for Communications and Works Mir Saleem Ahmad Khosa, along with provincial ministers Mir Sadiq Umrani, Mir Asim Kurd Gelo, Raheela Hamid Khan Durrani, Bakht Mohammad Kakar, and parliamentary secretaries tabled the joint resolution in the assembly on the protests and violent actions of PTI.

The opposition, however, staged a walkout, protesting against the mistreatment of the former ruling party. The resolution,

stated that the PTI, which has been at loggerheads with the government, was responsible for the May 9 events — a reference to the violent protest that broke out last year following PTI founder Imran Khan's arrest and saw attacks on public properties including military institutions in many parts of the country.

"Once again, it [the former ruling party] is carrying out violent actions," it stated, adding that the PTI's "anarchist agenda" has affected the country's system and every sector, including judiciary, media and the economy. The resolution further stated that a provincial chief executive's attempts to open a front against the Centre were tantamount to advancing the anti-state's power agenda.

Furthermore, it said the KP government's attempts to attack the Centre, with state machinery, are proof of the non-political agenda

of a political party. The resolution demands the federal government "ensure a ban on the PTI" after the recent violence in Islamabad.

Speaking on the Balochistan Assembly floor, National Party President Dr Abdul Malik Baloch condemned the resolution, warning the government that such actions could also be taken against the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the PML-N. "We have not learned a lesson from the ban on Jamat-e-Islami and Awami National Party," he said, claiming that those who once criticised Nawaz Sharif have joined the PML-N.

Nawab Aslam Raisani, a veteran nationalist leader, also opposed the resolution, saying that every political party should get a "level-playing field". "Negotiations are the only way out," he said, calling upon the Centre to release Imran Khan.

Lahore again becomes world's most polluted city

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Days after experiencing a bit relief from suffocating atmosphere, residents of Lahore on Thursday breathed in an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 599, making provincial capital the most polluted city in the world once again.

According to weather reports, there are no chances of rain for at least one week from now. The Meteorological Department reports suggested that dry and cold weather would persist in Lahore, with forecast of temperature dropping to as low as 11 degree Celsius and go up to 23 degree Celsius. Moreover, wind speed in Lahore was recorded 5 KPH.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast cold and dry weather for most parts of the country during the next 24 hours. Smog/fog (in patches) is likely to prevail in isolated plain areas of Punjab and upper Sindh during morning/night. According to the synoptic situation, continental air was prevailing over most parts of the county.

During the last 24 hours, cold and dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country. Smoggy/foggy conditions (in patches) prevailed over isolated plain areas of Punjab and upper Sindh. Leh remained the coldest place in the country on Wednesday where temperature fell up to -09 degrees Celsius.

Meanwhile, air pollution caused by fires is linked to more than 1.5 million deaths a year worldwide, the vast majority occurring in developing countries, a major new study said on Thursday. This death toll is expected to rise in the coming years as climate change makes wildfires more frequent and intense, according to the study in The Lancet journal. The international team of researchers looked at existing data on "landscape fires", which include both wildfires that rage through nature and planned fires such as controlled burns on farming land. Around 450,000

deaths a year from heart disease were linked to fire-related air pollution between 2000 and 2019, the researchers said.

A further 220,000 deaths from respiratory disease were attributed to the smoke and particulates spewed into the air by fire. From all causes around the world, a total of 1.53 million annual deaths were associated with air pollution from landscape fires, according to the study. More than 90 percent of these deaths were in low and middle-income countries, it added, with nearly 40 percent in sub-Saharan Africa alone.

The countries with the highest death tolls were China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Indonesia, and Nigeria. A record amount of illegal burning of farm fields in northern India has been partly blamed for noxious smog that has recently been choking the capital New Delhi. The authors of the Lancet study called for "urgent action" to address the huge death toll from landscape fires.

The disparity between rich and poor nations further highlights "climate injustice", in which those who have contributed the least to global warming suffer from it the most, they added. Some of the ways people can avoid smoke from fires -- such as moving away from the area, using air purifiers and masks, or staying indoors -- are not available to people in poorer countries, the researchers pointed out.

So they called for more financial and technological support for people in the hardest-hit countries. The study was released a week after UN climate talks where delegates agreed to a boost in climate funding that developing countries slammed as insufficient. It also came after Ecuador declared a national emergency over forest fires that have razed more than 10,000 hectares in the country's south. The world has also been battered by hurricanes, droughts, floods and other extreme weather events during what is expected to be the hottest year in recorded history.

Meeting of BoDs Karachi Education City held

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A key meeting of the Board of Directors of Karachi Education City was held today under the joint chairmanship of Karachi Education City Board Chairman and senior Pakistan Peoples Party leader Dr. Asim Hussain and Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Sindh on Investment and Public-Private Partnership Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar at the Karachi Education City office, Finance and Trade Center, Karachi.

In the meeting, the board of directors of Karachi Education City gave approval of the construction of infrastructure, roads

and other facilities in Karachi Education City. The board also approved the establishment of a Special Technology Zone on 374 acres within the boundaries of Karachi Education City.

The meeting also approved the establishment of a 45 MW cheap power plant in Karachi Education City by combining solar, wind and thermal power on a business-to-business basis with private investment. In the meeting, the board approved the issuance of a revised site plan to each institution/allottee of Karachi education city.


On this occasion, it was informed in the briefing

that the master plan of the Special Technology Zone will soon be sent to the Special Technology Zone Authority for approval. In the meeting, the consultant also presented a detailed briefing on the supply and distribution of electricity system in Education City along with the development plan of the Special Technology Zone.

The meeting was also attended by Secretary Investment Sindh Raja Khurram Shahzad, Project Director Karachi Education City Abrar Sheikh and other members of the Board of Directors of Karachi Education City including Aga Khan University.



QUETTA: Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti addressing to protestors to end 12 day sit-in against kidnapping of Musawir Khan.



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FINAL ABSENCE NOTICE

The following doctors are absent from duty from the date noted against each. Absence notices were served upon them on their home addresses through registered letters with the directions to resume duty but they failed to comply with the directions. Through this press notice they are now finally directed to report arrival in the Directorate General Health Services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Peshawar within 15-days of the publication of this notice explaining the reasons of their willful absence from duty. In case of failure ex-parte action will be taken against them under the relevant rules which may lead to their removal from service. This notice is issued with the approval of the Competent authority.

S.#	Name of Doctor/ Father's Name/ Designation/ Place of Last Posting	Date of Absence
01	Dr. Waheed Miraj S/o Miraj Muhammad MO BS-17 attached to CD Agra District Charsadda	01-08-2023
02	Dr. Qaiser Farooq S/o Mir Ajam MO BS-17 attached to Health Department	01-01-2017
03	Dr. Husnul Hayat D/o Fazal Hayat MO BS-17 attached to Health Department	31-08-2023
04	Dr. Muhammad Imran S/o Muhammad Hashim Khan MO BS-17 attached to Health Department	25-07-2018

**DIRECTOR GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES
KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA PESHAWAR** **INF(P) 3176/24**

Sharjeel greets investors of stock exchange

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon congratulated the management and investors of the stock exchange on crossing the historic level of 100,000 points of the Pakistan Stock Exchange Index and said that PSX reaching the historic level is a testament to the confidence of investors and the revival of the country's financial markets.

In a statement, Sindh Senior Minister and provincial minister for information, transport and mass transit Sharjeel Inam Memon said that this achievement is not only a victory for the financial sector alone but also a reflection of the growth and stability in every realm of our economy.

He said that the Sindh government of the Pakistan Peoples Party is always committed to promoting economic growth, job creation, and sustainable development, the Sindh government had given priority to the projects of economic reforms and initiatives for the improvement of economy and prosperity of public. Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon further said that the PPP has been working relentlessly to provide an investment-friendly atmosphere through innovative policies and infrastructure projects, all stakeholders should continue to invest actively in Pakistan.

Tax collection of KMC improved

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab called for a new wave of young and dynamic leadership to steer the country towards a brighter future, stating that bold and timely decisions are crucial to achieving meaningful change.

Speaking at the KMC head office during a meeting with a delegation from the 51st Specialized Training Program of the Police Service and the 27th Commander Course, Wahab underscored that a determined youth could reshape the nation's destiny, according to a KMC statement issued today.

Highlighting ongoing efforts to uplift Karachi, the Mayor pointed to significant improvements in the city's infrastructure, particularly the enhancement of streetlights, bridges, and flyovers. "The transformation of Karachi is a priority, and through focused efforts, we are seeing tangible results," he said. He added that the improvement in Karachi Municipal Corporation's (KMC) tax collection, particularly through K-Electric, is projected to generate over Rs3 billion annually.

Wahab outlined the immediate priorities for Karachi, which include providing clean drinking water and overhauling the city's sewage system. He assured the delegation that practical steps were being taken to address these challenges. The rent for KMC's markets was previously between Rs200 and Rs1,000. When the rent was increased, shopkeepers protested, but the collection rose from Rs80 million to Rs255 million.

Several flights called off at Karachi Airport

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Several flights were cancelled at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport due to technical and operational reasons on Thursday.

According to flight schedule, Karachi to Lahore SereneAir flight ER-524 has been called off while Karachi to Islamabad SereneAir flight ER-504 was also suspended. Moreover, Karachi to Islamabad AirSial flight PF-125 has been cancelled while Karachi to Lahore AirSial flight PF-143,145 also cancelled. Further, Karachi to Islamabad AirBlue flight PA-208 has also been cancelled.

‘Awami theatre festival’ enthrall with two plays

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi's 21-day Awami Theatre Festival featured two captivating plays, Mazaaq-e-Khaas and Mustaqbil. Both performances drew large audiences, with Mazaaq-e-Khaas becoming so popular that auditorium doors had to be closed due to overcrowding. Mazaaq-e-Khaas was written by Jamal Majeed and directed by Noman Khan, Cast including Jamal Majeed, Fatima Ali Bhai, Komal Naz, Shahid Nizami, Manan Hameed, and Sabir Qureshi. Mazaaq-e-Khaas is set in the historic Ram Bagh, now known as Aram Bagh.

The play nostalgically recalls the days when intellectuals, poets, artists, and musicians would gather there for evenings filled with creativity and camaraderie. The story revolves around a journalist who visits the now-desolate Aram Bagh, rekindling memories of its glorious past. He encounters iconic characters like Umrao Jan Ada, Anarkali, Gohar Mirza and Shahzada Saleem, portrayed as psychiatric patients who have escaped from a nearby mental hospital and taken refuge in the garden.

Interspersed with poetry and classic songs, the play captivated the audience, who applauded the stellar performances by the cast. The second play, Mustaqbil, written and directed by Asif Sharmila, The



cast, including Ali Khan, Muskan, Sapna Ghazal, Sehr Ghazal, Sameera Anwar, and others, delivered powerful performances. Story revolve societal pressures and family dynamics. The story follows four young women grappling with their future as one of them faces pressure from her father to get married. Amid humorous interactions and absurd solutions like consulting astrologers and placing marriage ads in newspapers, the play highlighted the challenges of balancing societal expectations and personal ambitions. The plot takes a twist when a lawyer-turned-policeman lectures the women on their actions.

He said that you could face various charges, including sections 419 and 420. He said that "I am the SHO of your area, and I will have to arrest you." Just then, the father appears and tells the SHO, "You cannot arrest them; they are my daughters." The girls lower their heads in shame and feel a sense of regret. The play highlights the crucial role of parents play in the upbringing and future of their children. The father reveals that I orchestrated this entire drama to guide you onto the right path.

Inspection visits - A potent instrument to promote good governance

Syed M. Ilyas

IN fulfilment of its mandate, the institution of Wafaqi Mohtasib plays a crucial role in delivering free administrative justice to the public and addressing systemic flaws in the operations of federal government agencies. In January 2022, the Wafaqi Mohtasib emphasized the importance of conducting periodic inspections of these agencies by invoking Articles 9 and 17 of the President's Order No. 1 of 1983, which created the office of the Federal Ombudsman (Wafaqi Mohtasib) in the country.

Special focus was placed on agencies with a high volume of complaints and inadequate compliance with Wafaqi Mohtasib findings, aiming to enhance their efficiency in public service delivery across the country.

As mandated by Article-17 of the President's Order No.1 of 1983, the inspection visits are a very effective tool to promote efficiency and improve service delivery in the Federal Government organizations. These have brought about remarkable improvements in some of the public sector organizations, such as the Passport Office, Excise & Taxation Office, NADRA, BISP, National Savings apart from Government Hospitals, Airports and Railway Stations. These organizations, prior to these visits, have been generating a large number of public complaints but have now shown considerable improvement in their working.

Conducted by the senior officials of the Federal Ombudsman (Wafaqi Mohtasib's office) and its

Regional Offices, these visits have turned out to be of immense value in addressing the public complaints and improving the service delivery operations. The visiting teams not only address short term issues in the organizations concerned but also suggests long term corrective measures to fix the systemic issues and bring about qualitative improvements. The ultimate aim of such visits is to pave the way for good governance by addressing and eliminating mal-administration and plugging the loop holes.

The Wafaqi Mohtasib follows a laid down procedure for conducting inspection visits. Such visits characterize collective efforts to address issues of public concern. Its salient features, inter alia include: a) There has to be a basis for each inspection. It could be a written complaint from the public against the agency concerned or a news item appearing in print/electronic media duly transcribed for initiating action on his own motion by the Wafaqi Mohtasib; b) The agency must be within the domain of the Wafaqi Mohtasib jurisdiction; c) The Wafaqi Mohtasib will constitute an Inspection Team consisting of a Senior Advisor, to be assisted by an Investigation Officer and an official of the Media Wing; d) The Inspection Team will submit a report to the Wafaqi Mohtasib on the basis of the inspection, discussion with the Head of the agency and the general public.

The legal provisions in regard to the Inspection Teams put across the scope, context and the intent of such visits. The Article 17 of the President's Order No.1 of 1983 states: "the Mohtasib may constitute an Inspection

Team for the performance of any of the functions of the Mohtasib. An Inspection Team shall consist of one or more members of the staff and shall be assisted by such other person or persons as the Mohtasib may consider necessary. An Inspection Team shall exercise such of the powers of the Mohtasib as he may specify by order in writing and every report of the Inspection Team shall first be submitted to the Mohtasib with its recommendations for appropriate action". Likewise, Article-9 of the same order authorizes the Mohtasib to initiate on a complaint by any aggrieved person, among others or on his own motion, any investigation into any allegation of mal-administration on the part of any Agency or any of its officers or employees.

During such visits, each inspection team meets the officials of the Agency as well as the general public. Each inspection report identifies issues and problems observed during the visit by the Team. All inspection reports are perused by the Wafaqi Mohtasib, which are forwarded to Head of the Agency concerned. The inspection team also makes recommendations, both short and long term, for improving the service delivery of the Agency concerned.

Pursuant to the above provisions, the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat constituted inspection teams to carry out inspections of the agencies against whom frequent complaints are received, to identify problems and suggest remedial measures. The inspection visits have proved an effective measure to reach out to the general public and help improve the service delivery of those agencies. During

the first ten months of the current year, 79 such inspection visits have been undertaken by the Wafaqi Mohtasib Officers at the level of Head Office and the Regional Offices.

Over the last two and a half years, inspection visits conducted by WMS teams across various agencies nationwide have effectively identified both generic and specific issues within key government agencies. The recommendations put forth by the inspection teams, aimed at enhancing service delivery, have been communicated to the relevant federal ministries and heads of the Agencies for implementation. The response received from the various agencies including NADRA, Passport Offices, One Window Felicitations Desks (OWFDs) at International Airports, Protectorate of Emigration & Overseas Pakistanis, and Utility Store Corporation, has been encouraging.

Similarly, systemic issues identified at BISP and USC have been addressed following the WMS recommendations. As regards the Electricity and Gas distribution companies, some of the ongoing issues such as delays in bill delivery, issuance of demand notices, bill adjustment, excessive billing, and replacement of faulty/tempered meters persist. However, these are being substantially resolved through Khuli Katchery visits undertaken by Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat teams and through regular complaints resolution mechanism of the WMS. In short, the Inspection visits have proved their utility and are being undertaken for providing fast-paced redressal to the public of their persistent complaints.

**GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA
COMMUNICATION & WORKS DEPARTMENT**

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING

(Single stage two envelop E-Bidding System)

The C&W Building Division Mansehra, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites electronic Bids from eligible firms / contractors in accordance with KPPRA procurement rules 2014, amended up-to 10/05/2022 on **Single Stage Two Envelope Procedure** for the following work(s).

S.No.	Name of Work	Required PEC Category	Estimate Cost	Bid Security i/c Stamp Duty (Rs. (M)	Tender Fee @ 0.03%	Period of Completion	Last date and time of submission of E-Bids	Last date and time of opening of E-Bids	Date & time of Opening of Financial Bids
01	ADP No. 489/240234- Construction of Missing Infrastructure and Improvement/ Rehabilitation work at Govt. Mental & General Hospital Dadar Mansehra	Relevant Category	96.871 (M)	1.978 (M)	29062/-	As Per Work Order	19/12/2024 at 12:00 PM	19/12/2024 at 12:30 PM	After Approval of Technical Bid from Competent Authority
02	ADP No. 233/200028- Up- Gradation of 100 High Schools to Higher Secondary Level (B&G) on need basis in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa SH:- Up- Gradation of GHS No.2 Mansehra to Higher Secondary Level District Mansehra.	Relevant Category	33.839 (M)	0.717 (M)	10152/-	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-

01. Bid Solicitation Documents and Instructions to Bidders can be obtained from the office on any working day or downloaded from C&W website (www.cwd.gkp.pk) & KPPRA website (www.kppra.gov.pk) before the submission date / time.

02. The bidders should submit their E-bids as per KPPRA Notification No. SOR(14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22 dated 10/05/2022.

03. A copy of the technical in the required format is mandatory and to be uploaded as a part of E-bid before submitting Financial Bid.

04. Original Copies of Call Deposit for Bid security and Tender Fee should be enclosed in the Technical Proposal and shall reach to the office before closing date/time.

05. Legible Scanned copy of bid security shall be submitted electronically along with the bid on E-bidding system.

06. An Affidavit in the technical proposal stating that a bid security amounting to 2 percent without indicating the figure in the letter has been placed in the financial proposal.

07. All bidders are required to be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority under Finance Act, 2013 Act No. XXI of 2013.

08. Bidding documents are available in the office of the undersigned and can be obtained on any working day during office hours before the closing date i.e. 19/12/2024.

09. The Financial Bid will be opened on after approval of technical bid for competent authority.

10. Venue of Bid opening is office of the Executive Engineer C&W Building Division Mansehra.

**Executive Engineer,
C&W Building Division Mansehra**

INF(P) 3185/24



PESHAWAR: Muzammil Aslam, Advisor to CM, presenting a shield of Aghan Consul General Hafiz Muhib Ullah Shakir in his office.

Health Dept, UKHSA collaborate on disease surveillance training

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Health Department, in collaboration with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), successfully launched a two-day training session on disease surveillance for data focal persons and public health coordinators.

At the request of the KP Health Department and under the visionary leadership of the Director General Health Services, with guidance from the Program Manager of the Integrated Disease Surveillance and

Response (IDSR) program, UKHSA facilitated this comprehensive training initiative. The training is part of UKHSA's ongoing efforts to strengthen Pakistan's public health system and builds on KP's achievements as a pioneer in implementing the IDSR system.

The combined efforts of the Directorate General Health Services and the National Institute of Health (NIH) have been instrumental in achieving significant milestones in public health surveillance.

The program aims to equip health department

staff with critical skills to interpret disease surveillance data accurately, enabling them to detect potential outbreaks early and respond swiftly. By enhancing decision-making and promoting timely interventions, this initiative seeks to prevent outbreaks and safeguard public health amidst the growing threat of communicable diseases. The KP Health Department, NIH, and UKHSA remain steadfast in their commitment to protecting public health through timely and effective responses to health challenges.

VC inaugurates ICS Girls Section

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Vice Chancellor Islamia College University Peshawar Professor Dr. Ali Muhammad Yousafzai inaugurated Islamia Collegiate School (ICS) Girls Section, on Wednesday. The ceremony was attended by Muhammad Daud Zaheer, Registrar, as the guest of honor.

The event marked a significant milestone in the history of Islamia Collegiate School, as it expanded its educational services to cater to the needs of female students. The Girls Section, which commenced classes on May 8, 2024, aims to provide a conducive learning environment for students to excel academically and personally. During the ceremony, the students of the Girls Section presented an impressive array of sketches and tableaux related to Iqbal Day, showcasing their creativity and talent. The Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Ali Muhammad Yousafzai praised the students for their outstanding performance and commended the ceremony in charge, Shumaila Ambareen Butt, for her tireless efforts in organizing the event.

In his address, the Vice Chancellor emphasized the importance of education in shaping the future of individuals and society as a whole. He expressed his commitment to providing quality education to students, ensuring that they receive the best possible learning experience. He also made a promise to the students that they would work together to make the Islamia Collegiate School Girls Section the best school in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Principal Sikandar Khan and Unit Head Rifat Naz thanked all the guests for attending the ceremony and appreciating the efforts of the students and staff.

PHC orders to expedite profiling of 36,000 kanals Waqf Land

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued directives to the authorities to expedite the profiling of 36,000 Kanals of Waqf land in Mardan's Kalu Shah area. The court also instructed the authorities to ensure that the rights of small landholders are protected and that they are not subjected to undue harassment, on Wednesday.

During the hearing, Additional Deputy Commissioner Mardan informed the PHC that the profiling of 10,000 Kanals of land had been completed, while the survey of 26,000 Kanals is underway. The court was also informed that the survey would determine the agricultural, commercial, and non-cultivated areas of the land. The court was

assured that the lease agreement process would be initiated after the completion of the profiling and survey.

The counsel Amin-ur-Rehman Yousafzai advocate informed the court that 140 small landholders were being harassed by the administration, and that the authorities were exploiting them. The lawyer requested the court to direct the authorities to protect the rights of the small landholders and to provide them with necessary facilities.

The Administrator of Auqaf, Yousaf Ali, assured the court that all matters were being handled in accordance with the law, and that no one would be subjected to undue harassment. The Administrator also informed the court that the authorities were taking steps to provide necessary facilities to the

27 judicial officers stranded in Parachinar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Almost 27 judicial officers and staff including two judicial officers have been stranded in Parachinar for over a week. Despite repeated requests to registrar Peshawar High Court and Advocate General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Office but no concrete steps have been taken to rescue them. This is claimed by President Sadah Bar Association Naimat Ullah Khan and added that he has been in contact with the Peshawar High Court, the Advocate General's Office and the Peshawar High Court Bar Association, but so far, no tangible measures have been taken to rescue the stranded individuals. According to Naimat Ullah Khan, the situation in Parachinar has been tense for over a week, and the stranded judicial officers and staff are facing numerous difficulties.

small landholders.

PHC's divisional comprising of Justice S.M. Atique Shah and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah directed the authorities to complete the profiling and sur-

vey of the Waqf land within the stipulated timeframe. The court also directed the authorities to initiate the lease agreement process after the completion of the profiling and survey.

Police intensify crackdowns on anti-social elements

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In an effort to maintain law and order, Capital City Police have intensified targeted search and strike operations against anti-social elements in various parts of the city.

Acting on the directives of SP Cantt Aitzaz Arif, a team led by SHO Pishtakhara Police Station Umar Afridi conducted successful raids across the city, resulting in the arrest of several suspects allegedly involved in illegal activities.

During these operations, police apprehended seven suspected persons identified as Aizaz, Muhammad Anwar, Shakeel, Muhammad Adil, Ijaz, Nadeem, and Muhammad Irfan. A significant cache of



illegal weapons was recovered from their possession, including three Kalashnikovs, three rifles, nine pistols, multiple magazines, and a large quantity

of ammunition. The arrested suspects are facing charges related to illegal possession of weapons, aerial firing, and other criminal offenses.

FIRs have been registered against them, and further investigations are ongoing to determine their involvement in other criminal networks.

Bilal appointed Chairman Peshawar Chamber's law, order standing committee

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Senior trader leader, Ghulam Bilal Javid, has been appointed as the Chairman of the Peshawar Chamber's Law and Order Standing Committee. Ghulam Bilal Javid, who is also a founding member of the Peshawar Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries, has expressed deep concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in the city and the increasing threats faced by the business community.

In a high-level meeting held following his appointment, Ghulam Bilal Javid highlighted the traders' concerns regarding the rise in crimes, extortion calls, and kidnappings in Peshawar. He stated that the current situation has made doing business in Peshawar increasingly difficult, with the business community operating under growing insecurity and fear daily. He pledged to bring

these issues to the attention of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and invite the Inspector General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the chamber to seek immediate solutions for the traders' problems.



Ghulam Bilal Javid further announced that he would hold regular monthly meetings with senior police officers, including the SSP Operations, SP City, and SP Cantt, to devise joint strategies against crime. He emphasized that improving law and order in Peshawar

and ensuring the safety of the business community are his top priorities. He also stressed the importance of maintaining strong ties with the police to protect traders and address their concerns effectively.

Additionally, he declared his intention to invite district administration officials to the chamber to collaborate with them and the police in creating a safer business environment in Peshawar. Ghulam Bilal Javid remarked that the business community is the backbone of Peshawar's economy, and it is imperative for the administration and police to take immediate steps to resolve their issues.

In conclusion, he expressed his gratitude to Peshawar Chamber's leader and former provincial minister Malik Mehr Elahi and the Chamber President Shakeel Ahmed Saraf for entrusting him with this critical responsibility.

KPCTA to organize 12th Indus River Cross Jeep Race on Dec. 1

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority in collaboration with Frontier 4x4 Club and Land Rover Club, will organize the 12th Indus River Cross Jeep Race on December 1st, 2024 at the River Indus at Hund, Swabi.

Over one hundred 4x4 jeeps from various cities, including Lahore, Islamabad, Abbottabad and Peshawar are expected to participate in the race, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

Additionally, the Vintage and Classic Car Show will

be held on Saturday, November 30th, at Peshawar Services Club, featuring over 50 cars, including models from 1935 to 1980.

For the jeep race, a 5-kilometer track would be prepared, consisting of swift river currents and rocky terrain along the Indus River. The race will start at 10:00 AM and conclude at 1:00 PM, featuring three categories which includes Category A Vehicles with engine capacity 0 to 2500cc, Category B Vehicles with engine capacity 2500cc and above while Category C is Open category.

ry.

The Vintage and Classic Car Show will attract car enthusiasts from Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad and Peshawar, who will participate with their antique vehicles. The event is being held in collaboration with the Classic Land Rover group and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority.

The 15th Annual Vintage and Classic Car Show will be hosted at the Peshawar Services Club. After the show in Peshawar, the car rally will proceed via Faisalabad, Rahim Yar Khan, Moro, and the Thar

Desert, ultimately reaching Karachi. The car rally will also visit Bala Hissar Fort and then travel to Hund, Swabi, where it will join the 4x4 Jeep Race.

The car show will display classic vehicles, including Mercedes, Jaguar Ford, Chevrolet, Mini, VW, Land Rover, 4x4 jeeps, motorcycles and other vintage cars. Enthusiasts from across the country will showcase their collections at the event.

The traditional Khattak dance performances and live Rabab music sessions will also be arranged during the show.

Learner to leader: BISP sets a global standard

Qurat ul Ain Fatima

THE Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) stands as a powerful testament to Pakistan's commitment to social justice and social protection. The very idea of social safety programme was conceived by the ex-Prime Minister of Pakistan Mohtarma Shaheed Benazir Bhutto during her time in exile, the idea aimed to provide economic relief to the country's most vulnerable population, particularly women, who often bore the brunt of socio-economic inequities. After her unfortunate assassination, Peoples Party led Federal Government launched BISP in 2008 and her vision was transformed into reality under the leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari. Today, BISP through quarterly cash grant supports 9.6 million households, a number set to increase to 10 million by June 2025, becoming Pakistan's largest and most influential social protection program.

This ambitious program, designed to offer direct financial assistance to the poorest families through Benazir Kafalat programme, has been particularly transformative for women, positioning them

as heads of their households in a country where women have historically been sidelined in economic, social, and political decision-making.

From providing cash transfers and promoting maternal and child health through programs like Benazir Nashonuma, to investing in education with the Benazir Taleemi Wazaif initiative, and now implementing a skill development program to ensure poverty graduation through global employability of beneficiaries & their families, BISP continues to break barriers, offering financial inclusion and social empowerment to millions across Pakistan.

A Journey of Learning and Leading

Once a learner, BISP now stands as a leader in global social protection, setting an example for developing countries to follow. For years, BISP has looked beyond its borders to draw lessons from international models of social protection, adapting and refining its own initiatives. But in a remarkable turn of events, developing countries from across the globe are now visiting Pakistan to study BISP's practices, which have gained recognition worldwide for their success in empowering marginalized populations. Recently in October, 2024, a 21-member Ugandan delegation, led by Ms. Lucy Nakoye Mbonye, Secretary of Public Service, paid four-day study visit to the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). While briefing the delegates, Dr. Tahir Noor, Additional Secretary BISP attributed BISP's success to its scientific, and objective targeting, technology based payment mechanisms, the trust of international development partners, and independent third-party monitoring. Ms. Coco Ushiyama, Country Director of the World Food Program, also commended BISP's evidence-based database and its role in providing timely assistance during natural disasters.

This shift represents a significant milestone not only for BISP but also for Pakistan's growing influence in the global development sector. At the South-South Cooperation Forum held in Islamabad on November 14, 2024, Pakistan's success story was showcased as a model for social protection systems across the globe. Representatives from West African nations, including Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Senegal, gathered in Islamabad to learn firsthand from Pakistan's pioneering work in social welfare. Delegates were particularly

impressed by BISP's ability to integrate women into the economic mainstream, a critical step toward achieving long-term social and economic stability.

"Today, we are not just learning from others; we are teaching others," said Secretary BISP Amer Ali Ahmad during his address at the event. He proudly highlighted BISP's transformation over the years from a fledgling initiative in 2008 to a globally recognized model of inclusive social protection.

The program's emphasis on empowering women through direct cash transfers, health and nutrition programs, and educational incentives has not only supported millions of underprivileged but has also set a new standard for how social welfare can contribute in generating socioeconomic activities in less developed areas as major part of BISP Rs. 598 billion budget is pumped into local economy through these quarterly cash grants to more than 9.6 million families across the country.

BISP's Global Impact: A Beacon for Social Protection The South-South Cooperation forum, which brought together global development partners such as the World Food Programme, World Bank, UNICEF, KfW, GIZ and the Asian Development

Bank (ADB), was a recognition of the profound impact BISP has had, not just within Pakistan but across the world. The participating countries, each grappling with their own poverty and development challenges, came to Pakistan seeking solutions that could be adapted and implemented in their respective contexts.

The delegation from Mali, led by Mr. Redouwane Mohamed Ali, Minister of Food Security, praised Pakistan for its robust social safety net, particularly BISP's ability to deliver aid efficiently through its innovative payment mechanisms, such as biometric verification, mobile banking, and dynamic data registry mechanism.

BISP's cutting-edge approach to cash transfers has streamlined the process, combating corruption and ensuring that the right individuals benefit from the program.

BISP has advanced its digital payment systems by introducing biometric-enabled transactions in collaboration with six banks, improving security, transparency, and access for beneficiaries. Additionally, a pilot savings scheme offers a 40% quarterly bonus to encourage a culture of saving amongst these vulnerable segments of society. The future plan

of BISP to phase out POS agents will empower women to independently access their social security funds, enhancing their financial autonomy.

Similarly, Mr. Amedee Bamouni, Secretary of the National Council for Social Protection of Burkina Faso, commended BISP's dynamic registry centers and national socio-economic database, which track the financial status of beneficiaries, ensuring that aid reaches the most deserving families. He emphasized how BISP's transparent systems and use of technology could serve as a valuable blueprint for social protection programs in Burkina Faso and other countries facing similar challenges.

In addition to financial transfers, BISP's focus on maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) was another key area of interest for the visiting delegates. The Benazir Nashonuma Program, which provides cash incentives linked to health and nutrition outcomes, has helped combat malnutrition and stunting among new born children and has improved health of mothers, particularly in rural areas. BISP has allocated PKR 42 billion (approx. USD 144 million) to the Program, benefiting 2.6 million pregnant and lactating women, contributing to better maternal

and infant health outcomes. This program's success, supported by the World Food Programme (WFP), has demonstrated how integrating health and nutrition with cash transfers can lead to long-term improvements in the health of entire communities.

A Vision for the Future: Expanding Global Cooperation

As Pakistan continues to advance its social protection agenda, the importance of global collaboration cannot be overstated. The South-South Cooperation forum marks the beginning of a new chapter in Pakistan's social welfare journey, one that involves sharing lessons learned with other developing nations while also learning from their unique challenges and solutions.

The exchange of knowledge between Pakistan and West African countries promises to deepen the understanding of how social protection systems can be tailored to the needs of local populations, addressing challenges like poverty, malnutrition, and gender inequality. Through mutual cooperation, countries can build stronger, more resilient social safety nets that lift people out of poverty and empower them to contribute to their countries' economic development.

As Senator Rubina Khalid, Chairperson of BISP, aptly put it during the forum: "The success of BISP is not only a significant achievement for Pakistan, but it has also brought in international recognition as a model of effective social protection. It is a moment of immense pride for our nation to witness our social protection program being studied and admired by countries worldwide. I am delighted to see the vision of Benazir Bhutto Shaheed transforming into a tangible reality, now celebrated on the global stage. This is a testament to how visionary leadership can shape the priorities of a nation. BISP has become a flagship program and a case study for many countries striving to establish their own social protection systems."

The Recognition of BISP as a model for social protection is a testament to Pakistan's ability to create meaningful change at both the national and international levels. BISP is not just shaping Pakistan's future but also contributing to UNDP global goals of No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health, Gender Equality, Decent Work and Economic Growth & Reduced Inequalities for a more inclusive Pakistan.

Writer is Director Media, Communication & Outreach



In brief

People's movement banned F.P. Report

KHAR: In the wake of rising incidents of thefts and firings, a Jirga of area elders has banned movement of people after 09:00 p.m. in district Bajaur. The Jirga held on Thursday announced that anyone who wants to go outside his house after 09:00 p.m. will inform the Jirga members, otherwise he himself will be responsible for any harm to him. Chief of the Jirga, Gul Karim Khan requested the District Police Officer not to register any FIR of a person who went out of his home after 09:00 p.m. without prior information to the authorized person. He said the decision was taken to contain rising incidents of thefts and firings in the district.

Citizens to get quality services F.P. Report

D I KHAN: The district administration is taking tangible measures to provide quality services to citizens under the Chief Minister's 'Awami Agenda' program. As part of these efforts, a team of the district's Livestock department led by Assistant Commissioner Headquarters Faseeh Ishaq Abbasi inspected the milk shops in different localities including opposite Laghari-Gate, Daraban road, Aara road and Dinpur road in order to ensure availability of pure milk for citizens. According to the administration, the department collected samples from the shops and analyzed the milk quality. During the inspection process, several shops were fined for violating quality standards. The shops including Al-Iqbal Milk Shop at Laghari Gate, Muhammad Asif Milk Shop at Dinpur Chungi, Hafeezullah Milk Shop on Dinpur road, Nasrullah Milk Shop on Dinpur road and Hassan Milk Shop on Aara road were found mixing water into the milk. The inspection team imposed fines on two shopkeepers with higher levels of adulteration while others were issued warnings. Assistant Commissioner Faseeh Ishaq Abbasi told the media that water and chemical adulteration in milk will not be tolerated under any circumstances, as it is a matter of human lives.

Two killed, 14 injured in mishap

SARGODHA (INP): A tragic bus accident occurred in Sargodha on Wednesday, resulting in the deaths of at least two people on the spot while other 14 critical injured. According to details, the incident took place on Faisalabad Road in the Mitha Masoom area of Sargodha when a bus traveling from Faisalabad to Bannu overturned due to excessive speeding, killing two people on the spot and injuring 14 others, a private news channel reported. Police and rescue teams quickly responded to the accident and transported the deceased and injured to the DHQ Hospital. Rescue sources reported that several of the injured are in critical condition.

Life-term awarded

FAISALABAD (APP): Additional Sessions Judge Muhammad Awaiz awarded life imprisonment to an accused involved in a murder case of Nishatabad police station. According to the prosecution, Muhammad Shehbaz Arain of Chak No. 215-RB, along with his accomplice Abdul Majeed alias Fauji, had shot dead Abid Ali over a property dispute in Chak No. 49-JB Munda Pind on May 10, 2021.

Two labourer killed in dot fall at Swat emerald mine

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Two young men from the village of Toliak in Union Council Kuz Kana, Shangla district, tragically lost their lives in an accident at an emerald mine in Fizagat, Swat.

The incident occurred due to a "dot fall," a term used for rockslides within the mine. The deceased have been identified as Muhammad, son of Sher Afzal, and Hassan Zada, son of Sheber Mian. After a rescue operation, their bodies were transported to their native village in Toliak for burial. The funeral was attended by hundreds of mourners, who bid farewell to the young men with tearful eyes.

Shangla is a district plagued by poverty, forcing many of its residents to work in mines across the country. Unfortunately, due to a lack of safety measures in mining operations, accidents are frequent, leading to loss of precious lives.

This incident is a grim reminder of the dangers faced by laborers in the mining sector.

Restoration works on Shrine of Sufi poet Hafiz Alpuri continued: The restoration and preservation work on the shrine of the renowned Pashto poet and Sufi saint, Hafiz Baba Alpuri, is in progress under the directives of Federal Minister Engineer Ameer Muqam.

The project is being carried out by the Federal Ministry of Culture and Heritage. The restoration work began during the caretaker government when it was inaugurated by Engineer Ameer Muqam, who was then the Federal Minister for Culture and Heritage. One of the key accomplishments so far is the construction of a retaining wall to protect the shrine from the waters of the Alpurai River.

Currently, the installation of tiles and marble

inside the shrine is ongoing. The local community has expressed their gratitude to Engineer Ameer Muqam for his efforts in preserving the legacy of the great poet. It is worth mentioning that the shrine was initially constructed in 2007-08 by the current MPA and Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Abdulallah, who received significant appreciation for his efforts at the time.

Girl drowns to death: In a tragic incident in the village of Ali Khel Kolalai, located 6 kilometers from Aloch, the headquarters of Subdivision Pura, a young girl, Shaima Bibi, daughter of Akbar Khan, lost her life after falling into a canal near her home.

Despite desperate attempts to rescue her, the girl was swept away by the current. She was eventually retrieved by locals at a considerable distance but had already passed away. The deceased was laid to rest in her ancestral graveyard.

Shariah Law key for redressal of grievances

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Pirzada Muhammad Amin Pir of Maniki Sharif has said that the founders of Pakistan were betrayed, and the country's problems can only be solved by implementing Shariah law. He made these remarks while addressing a Nifaz-e-Shariat Conference (the implementation of Shariah law), held at the Astana Alia Maniki Sharif, on Thursday.

Pirzada Muhammad Amin Pir said that Quid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had promised to implement Shariah law in Pakistan, but this promise was not fulfilled. He said that the country's problems, including corruption, lawlessness, and economic

instability, can only be solved by implementing Shariah law.

He criticized the government for not taking concrete steps to implement Shariah law, despite repeated demands from the public. He said that the government is instead trying to appease Western powers by passing laws that are contrary to Islamic principles.

Pirzada Muhammad Amin Pir demanded that the government immediately implement Shariah law in the country. He also demanded that the government take actions against those who are trying to undermine Islamic values and principles.

The conference was attended by dozens of scholars and religious leaders, including Pirzada Nabi

Amin, Chairman of the Wafaq ul Madaris, Dr. Mufti Karim Khan, and Sheikh ul Quran Fazal Munan Qadri. The conference condemned the illegal operation and mistreatment of the district administration against the Astana Alia Maniki Sharif. The conference also demanded that the government take immediate action against those responsible for the operation and mistreatment.

The conference resolved that if the government does not take concrete steps to implement Shariah law, the public will be forced to launch a movement to demand the implementation of Shariah law. The conference also resolved to support the movement for the implementation of Shariah law.

Police' martyrs children to get free education

F.P. Report

BANNU: The management of two private schools has expressed their willingness to provide free education to the children of police martyrs in Bannu district, on Thursday.

In this connection, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between police and the management of private schools on Thursday. The MoU signing ceremony was held at the district police offices where DPO Ziauddin Ahmed and own-

ers of the APEX Grammar School and the School of Knowledge signed the agreement documents.

Under the agreement, the management of both private schools will not charge admission and tuition fees from the kids of martyred police officials. The district police officer said that the agreement had been signed with the private schools under the police welfare initiative on the special instructions of Regional Police Officer Imran Shahid.

"Now the children of

martyred cops will have a golden opportunity to get quality education in the high esteem educational institutes", he maintained. Zia said that the police department would take care of the children and families of martyred police officials and all resources would be utilized for their welfare and betterment.

He said that along with remission of admission and tuition fee, the private schools would also fulfill other educational needs of the children of martyred policemen.

Seminar on climate change organized

F.P. Report

HATTIAN BALA: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) State Branch, in collaboration with the University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (UJK), hosted a seminar titled "Climate Change and the Role of Youth in Addressing Its Impacts" at the UAJK Jhelum Valley Campus, Hattian. The event aimed to underscore the urgent need for youth-led climate action and to foster community resilience in AJK.

Over 200 students from various university faculties actively participated in the seminar, reflecting a strong commitment to addressing the challenges posed by climate change. Commissioner Muzaffarabad Division, Masood Ur Rehman, graced the event as the Chief Guest. Other notable attendees included Director Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Dr. Shafique Abbasi, Deputy Commissioner Jhelum Valley Ishaq Gillani, Director Operations State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) Saeed Ur Rehman Qureshi, Director UAJK Imtiaz Awan, Superintendent of Police Mirza Zahid, and Assistant

Commissioner Jhelum Valley.

In his address, Commissioner Masood Ur Rehman lauded PRCS AJK's pivotal role in disaster management and humanitarian efforts, particularly its initiatives to engage and empower youth. Highlighting the urgency of climate change, he said, "Climate change is not just an environmental issue; it impacts our economy, health, and future generations. The youth hold the power to drive change. I commend PRCS AJK for empowering young minds to take on this responsibility."

The Secretary of PRCS AJK reinforced the organization's commitment to climate action, emphasizing that youth are key drivers of change. She added, "PRCS AJK has always prioritized community resilience and disaster preparedness. Today's seminar underscores our belief in youth as catalysts for a sustainable future." She also acknowledged the collaborative efforts of UAJK in organizing the event and highlighted the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between PRCS AJK and UAJK on climate action.

Adding academic depth to the seminar, Dr. Shafique Abbasi, Director of EPA, provided a detailed session

on the environmental challenges of climate change. Saeed Ur Rehman Qureshi, Director Operations SDMA, emphasized the importance of youth-led initiatives and strategic collaborations in building climate resilience. "Building resilience against climate change requires a multi-sectoral approach. Youth-led initiatives, combined with strategic planning, can significantly reduce vulnerabilities," he said.

UAJK Director Imtiaz Awan welcomed the attendees in his opening remarks, reiterating the university's commitment to organizing collaborative events with PRCS AJK to address pressing environmental and societal challenges.

The seminar was also attended by key PRCS staff, including Program and Disaster Management Naveed Awan, Program Coordinator Yasir Josh, Spokesperson Adnan Qureshi, HR Manager Mokhtar Qureshi, and Youth and Volunteers Officer Tahira Kazmi. The event concluded with a renewed commitment from all participants to prioritize youth engagement and collaborative efforts in combating climate change and strengthening community resilience.



QUETTA: Chairman of Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Mehmood Khan Achakzai addressing a press conference.

Funeral prayer of PTI worker offered F.P. Report

MARDAN: The funeral prayer of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf worker named Sadar Ali offered while laid to rest at his ancestral graveyard in Babeni area of Mardan district.

The deceased Sadar Ali was a hot-headed worker of Tehreek-e-Insaf and a great admirer of PTI founding chairman. On November 24 he went out to protest the final call of PTI founder, which turned out to be the last protest of his life. His funeral prayers were attended by the members of the National and Provincial Assembly and local workers and activists.

Transgender killed in his apartment: Unknown person shot and killed a transgender in Par Hoti area of Mardan district. According to the police report, 35-year-old eunuch Salman alias Anjum was present at his apartment in Par Hoti and he was shot and killed. Rescue 1122 staff shifted the body to DHQ Hospital for post-mortem. According to the police, the deceased belonged to Takht Bhai and was staying in a balakhana of Inam Market Par Hoti.

SHC adjourns hearing F.P. Report

LARKANA: Sindh High Court (PHC) divisional bench comprising of Justice Muhammad Saleem Jesar and Justice Arbab Ali adjourned hearing non-availability of jobs under the disabled quota, on Thursday.

The petitioner's lawyer Wajid Ali advocate informed the court that the Deputy Commissioner of Larkana is not appearing in the court. His official lawyer has appeared alone this time. The report of the number of vacant posts of special person has not been submitted in the court yet, while the petitioner Saddam Hussain Chandio told the court that the interview of disabled quota is on 28 November 2023 were taken under the orders of the Supreme Court, but till today we have not been told how many orders and to whom the merit list has not been made public.

The petitioner's lawyer, Wajid Ali told the court that the Sindh High Court Circle Sukkur has also given a decision in favor of the disabled quota, to carry out. The last time was given after which the court will hear the case on the next date 11/12/2024.

Robber killed

FAISALABAD (INP): A robber was killed while his accomplice managed to escape in Thikriwala police limits.

A police spokesman said on Thursday that two robbers intercepted a villager near Motorway Bridge of Chak No 63-JB Mehta, however, the man produced resistance. During the incident, one robber reportedly received serious injuries due to bullets fired by his own accomplice whereas the man remained safe. On information, the police reached the spot and recovered weapons, a mobile phone and other items from the spot and started investigation for identification of the robber and arrest of the other accused, he added.

BISP Dir beneficiaries decry lack of facilities

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Dozens of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) beneficiaries have complained about lack of facilities at the Timergara and Rabat campsites established for them by private banks. While sitting under the open sky, veiled women from different parts of the district told local journalists that they did not have washroom, waiting room and drinking water facilities at the BISP Timergara and Rabat campsites.

They said the campsites were established to make tranche payment more easily. The beneficiaries said the BISP had released their three months' payments to be made only through specific campsites. They pointed out that earlier they received their payments from mobile phone outlets easier. The women from different areas of the Lower Dir district said that they had come there to receive Rs 10,500 while some of them returned empty handed without getting their amount due to rush.

The beneficiaries



demanding of the bank authorities to provide them with basic facilities like drinking water, seating chairs, shade and washroom. They also demanded the BISP authorities to increase the number of campsites so that they could get their payments easily.

Some of the women said that due to their finger print issue, they had to wait for months for their payment. One of the BISP staffers told Dawn on contact that about 52000 beneficiaries from the Lower Dir district had been registered for which a total of seven campsites had been specified. The official said that each beneficiary had to get her payment after three months. He said the beneficiaries got the payment from the specified retailers.

Taking notice of public complaints, the additional deputy commissioner Muhammad Bashir Khan on Wednesday visited the BISP Timergara campsite and checked the facilities at the distribution point. The ADC directed the bank manager to provide needful facilities to the visiting BISP beneficiaries.

Talking to the beneficiaries the official said the bank staff would remain present for the whole of the day to facilitate them. He said that there would be no deduction from the amount as it was allocated for the beneficiaries. He asked the beneficiaries to get a computerized receipt after getting their payment. The ADC said the beneficiaries could contact the nearby BISP office in case of any grievance.

DPO honour cops for exemplary performance

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: District Police Officer (DPO) Lower Dir has honored police officers and personnel with commendation certificates and awards for their exemplary performance in combating crime, timely actions, and vehicle recoveries, on Thursday.

DPO Saleem Abbas Kalachi appreciated the services of officers and personnel who demonstrated exceptional performance, praising their dedication and hard work. The recipients of commendation certificates include Inspector Ayub Khan, Muhammad Shoaib Khan, Muhammad Sadiq, Hazrat Umar, Raj Wali, Shehzad Khan, Sohrab Khan, and Waqas Ahmed.

On this occasion, the DPO stated that the purpose of awarding certificates and prizes is to motivate police personnel and further enhance the quality of their work.

AWKUM Timergara held Business expo: Abdul Wali Khan University Timergara Campus hosted a two-day Youth Business Expo under the Department of Management Sciences, in collaboration with the District Administration and the Youth Department of Lower Dir.

The Business Expo featured various stalls that attracted thousands of students. During the closing ceremony, Additional Deputy Commissioner Lower Dir, Bashir Khan; Youth Officer Malik Tariq Shehzad; Head of Management Sciences Dr. Muhammad Khan and Dr. Minhaj u din addressed the participants. They emphasized the importance of focusing on education, avoiding the negative use of social media, and excelling in modern education, science, and technology.

The speakers stressed that students should not view education solely as a means to secure jobs, as the government cannot provide employment to everyone. Instead, those who do not secure government jobs after completing their education should consider starting private businesses.

At the end of the event, Additional Deputy Commissioner Bashir Khan and District Youth Officer Malik Tariq Shehzad distributed shields and cash prizes among students and stallholders. They also expressed gratitude to the organizing committee for successfully arranging such an excellent program.

Ornamental plants provided to municipal administrations

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Over 500 ornamental and flower plants were distributed among the Lakki Marwat and Ghaznikhel tehsil municipal bodies under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister's public service agenda to carry out plantation activities along roadsides and in the urban and rural areas.

The municipal authorities received seedlings from deputy commissioner Zeeshan Abdullah at a ceremony held at the District Headquarters Complex Tajazai on Thursday. Assistant Commissioner Yasir Nazir, SDFO Naqibullah Khan, tehsil officer regulations Rafiullah Khan and Sanitary Inspector Khalid Khan were also present.

The forest department had arranged the plants for the civic bodies on the

request of district administration. The deputy commissioner asked the officials of municipal administrations to sow seedlings along roadsides and on conspicuous places in their respective areas.

DC said that the tree plantation activities would add to the beautification of roads besides providing the citizens with a clean, green and healthy environment. He said that more plants would be provided to the municipal bodies, educational institutions and other government departments.

He said that his administration would establish green belts in Lakki city and other major towns of the district. He said that increasing the area of forest was inevitable to overcome environmental hazards, global warming and climate change issues. He asked the citizens to protect plants so they could become healthy trees.

Shopkeeper booked

SIALKOT (INP): Saddar Daska police team booked a shopkeeper for selling agricultural pesticides without license at his shop.

Police said here on Thursday that the team along with Deputy Director (DD) Pest Warning and Quality Control Dr. Maqsood Ahmed raided in Raja Ghumnah area and held Muhammad Ismail, owner of Gohar Traders who was selling pesticides without license. The team also recovered a large quantity of agricultural pesticides worth Rs. 550,000 from his possession. On the report of the Deputy Director Pest Warning, police registered case and started investigation.



Nuclear attack unlikely despite Putin's warnings: US

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON (Reuters): The US decision to allow Ukraine to fire American weapons deeper into Russia has not increased the risk of a nuclear attack, which is unlikely, despite Russian President Vladimir Putin's increasingly bellicose statements, five sources familiar with US intelligence told Reuters.

But Russia is likely to expand a campaign of sabotage against European targets to increase pressure on the West over its support for Kyiv, said two senior officials, a lawmaker and two congressional aides briefed on the matter. A series of intelligence assessments over the past seven months have concluded nuclear escalation was unlikely to result from a decision to loosen restrictions on Ukraine's use of US weapons. That view has not changed following President Joe Biden's changed US stance this month on weapons, said the sources, who were granted anonymity to speak freely about sensitive intelligence.

"The assessments were consistent: The ATACMs weren't going to change Russia's nuclear calculus," said one congressional aide briefed on the intelligence, referring to American missiles with a range of up to 190 miles (306 km). Russia's launch of a new ballistic missile last week, which analysts say was meant as a warning to Washington and its European allies, has not changed that conclusion.

One of the five US officials said while Washington assessed that Russia would not seek to escalate with its nuclear forces, it would try to match what it views as US escalation. The official said fielding the new missile was part of that effort. US officials said the intelligence has

helped guide an often divisive debate over recent months inside Biden's administration about whether Washington loosening restrictions on Ukraine's use of American weapons was worth the risk of angering Putin. Officials initially resisted such a move, citing escalation concerns and uncertainty over how Putin would respond. Some of those officials, including in the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department, feared lethal retaliation on US military and diplomatic personnel and attacks on NATO allies. Others were specifically worried about nuclear escalation. Biden changed his mind because of North Korea's entry into the war before the US presidential election, US officials have said.

Some officials now believe the escalation concerns, including the nuclear fears, were overblown but stress that the overall situation in Ukraine remains dangerous and that nuclear escalation is not out of the question. Russia's ability to find other covert ways of retaliating against the West remains a worry. "Russia's hybrid response is a concern," said Angela Stent, director of Eurasian, Russian and East European studies at Georgetown University, referring to Russia's sabotage in Europe. "The chance of escalation was never not there. The concern now is greater." The White House and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence declined to comment.

The Kremlin did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the intelligence assessments. Since August, when Ukraine launched a surprise incursion into Russia's Kursk region, Moscow and Kyiv have been locked in a cycle

of escalating moves and counter-moves. Russia has enlisted help from North Korea, which sent between 11,000 and 12,000 soldiers to help its war effort, according to the United States. The same day as Ukraine's first strike under the relaxed US policy, Russia changed its nuclear doctrine, lowering the threshold for a nuclear strike.

Fear of nuclear escalation has been a factor in US officials' thinking since Russia invaded Ukraine in early 2022. CIA Director William Burns has said there was a real risk in late 2022 that Russia could use nuclear weapons against Ukraine. Even so, the White House moved forward with Ukraine aid, sending billions of dollars' worth of military assistance. The concerns faded for some officials as Putin did not act on his threats but remained central to how many in the administration weighed decisions on how the US should support Kyiv. In May, the White House allowed Ukraine to use American missiles in limited circumstances to strike across the border but not deep inside Russia, citing risk of escalation by Moscow, marginal tactical benefit and a limited supply of ATACMs.

One of the intelligence assessments from early summer, drawn up at the White House's request, explained that strikes across the border from the Ukrainian city Kharkiv would have limited impact because 90% of Russian aircraft had been moved back from the border - out of distance of the short-range missiles. But the assessments also noted while Putin often threatens to use nuclear weapons, Moscow is unlikely to take such a step in part because they do not provide a clear military benefit.

Many dead, missing as rains trigger floods in SL

COLOMBO (AP): Three children returning from school are among at least five people who have died as heavy rains triggered floods and landslides in Sri Lanka, authorities said. Five others are missing. Sri Lanka has experienced heavy downpours and strong winds over the past two days that have flooded homes, fields and roads and forced authorities to suspend train services in tea-growing mountain areas.

In the worst incident, eight people, including six children who were returning from school, were reported missing when the farm tractor they were traveling on was swept away by floods in the eastern region of the country, police said. The bodies of three children were recovered. Eleven children had travelled on the tractor at the time of the accident and five were initially rescued. Another three students and two adults, including the driver, remain unaccounted for. Local television channel Derana showed navy and army troops assisted by air force helicopters searching for the missing persons.

Separately, a woman died when a brick wall collapsed on her in the mountainous region of Badulla in the central part of the country, while another person died in floods. Eight people were injured in various other weather-related incidents, the Disaster Management Center said. Over 5,000 people had been evacuated and nearly 800 homes had been damaged. The Meteorology Department attributed the severe weather to a deep depression in the Bay of Bengal which is likely to move closer to Sri Lanka and intensify into a cyclonic storm on Thursday. Sri Lanka has been grappling with severe weather since May, mostly caused by heavy monsoon rains. In June, 16 people died due to floods and mudslides.

Russia says it will respond if US places missiles in Japan

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia said that if the United States stationed missiles in Japan, this would threaten Russian security and prompt Moscow to retaliate. Japan's Kyodo news agency reported that Japan and the US aim to compile a joint military plan for a possible Taiwan emergency that includes deploying missiles.

Cited unnamed US and Japanese sources as saying that under the plan, the US would deploy missile units to the Nansei Islands of Japan's southwestern Kagoshima and Okinawa prefectures, and to the Philippines.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused Japan of escalating the situation around Taiwan to justify the expansion of military ties with Washington. "We have repeatedly warned the Japanese side that if, as a result of such cooperation, American medium-range missiles appear on its territory, this will pose a real threat to the security of our country and we will be forced to take the necessary, adequate steps to strengthen our own defense capability," she said. Zakharova said Tokyo could get an idea of what such steps would entail by reading Russia's updated nuclear doctrine, published last week, which expanded the list of scenarios under which it would consider using nuclear weapons.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Russia would consider deploying short- and intermediate-range missiles in Asia if the United States deployed such missiles to the continent. Asked about that statement, Zakharova declined to discuss where Russia might site such weapons, but noted that half its territory is in Asia so any Russian missiles potentially deployed east of the Urals would be in that region. She said Moscow had sent a clear signal to the United States and its "satellites" that Russia would respond decisively and in symmetrical fashion to the placing of land-based medium and shorter-range missiles in various parts of the world.

Nowhere else on Earth are so many children fleeing war

LONDON (BBC): Mahmoud is a cheeky teenager who beams the biggest of smiles even though he lost his front teeth in the rough and tumble of kids' play. He is a Sudanese orphan abandoned twice, and displaced twice in his country's grievous war - one of nearly five million Sudanese children who have lost almost everything as they are pushed from one place to the next in what is now the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Nowhere else on Earth are so many children on the run, so many people living with such acute hunger. Famine has already been declared in one area - many others subsist on the brink of starvation not knowing where their next meal will come from.

"It's an invisible crisis," emphasises the UN's new humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher. "Twenty-five million Sudanese, more than half the country, need help now," he adds. In a time of all too many unprecedented crises, where devastating wars in places like Gaza and Ukraine dominate the world's aid and attention, Mr Fletcher chose Sudan for his first field mission to highlight its plight.

"This crisis is not invisible to the UN, to our humanitarians on the front line risking and losing their lives to help the Sudanese people," he told the BBC, as we travelled with him on his week-long trip. Most of the people on his team working on the ground are also Sudanese who have lost their homes, their old lives, in this brutal struggle for power between the army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Mr Fletcher's first field visit took him to Mahmoud's Maygoma orphanage in Kassala in eastern Sudan, now home to nearly 100 children in a crumbling three-storey school-turned-shelter. They lived with their carers in the capital, Khartoum, until the army and RSF turned their guns on each other in April 2023, trapping the orphanage as they dragged their country into a vortex of horrific violence, systematic looting and shocking abuse.

When fighting spread to the orphans' new shelter in Wad Madani, in central Sudan, those who survived fled to Kassala. When I asked 13-year-old Mahmoud to make a wish, he immediately broke into a big gap-toothed grin. "I want to be a state governor so I can be in charge and rebuild destroyed homes," he replied. For 11 million Sudanese driven from one refuge to the next, returning to what is left of their homes and rebuilding their lives would be the biggest gift of all. For now, even find-



ing food to survive is a daily battle.

And for aid agencies, including the UN, getting it to them is a titanic task. After Mr Fletcher's four days of high-level meetings in Port Sudan, army chief Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan announced on the X social media site that he had given the UN permission to establish more supply hubs and to use three more regional airports to deliver assistance. Some of the permissions had been granted before but some marked a step forward. The new announcement also came as the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) secured a green light to reach stricken communities behind lines controlled by the RSF, including the Zamzam camp in Darfur housing about half a million people where famine was recently confirmed.

"We've been pushing for months to get to these communities," says Alex Marianelli, who heads WFP's operations in Port Sudan. Behind us in a WFP warehouse, Sudanese labourers sing as they load trucks with boxes of food heading for the worst of the worst areas. Mr Marianelli reflects that he has never worked in such a difficult and dangerous environment. Within the aid community, some criticise the UN, saying that its hands have been tied by recognising Gen Burhan as the de facto ruler of Sudan. "Gen Burhan and his authorities control those checkpoints and the system of permits and access," Mr Fletcher says in response.

"If we want to go into those areas we need to deal with them." He hopes the rival RSF will also put the people first. "I'll go anywhere, talk to anyone, to get this aid through, and to save lives," Mr Fletcher adds. In Sudan's merciless war, all warring

parties have been accused of using starvation as a weapon of war. So too sexual violence, which the UN describes as "an epidemic" in Sudan. The UN visit coincided with the "16 days of activism" marked globally as a campaign to stop gender-based violence. In Port Sudan, the event in a displaced camp, the first to be set up when war flared, was especially poignant. "We have to do better, we must do better," vowed Mr Fletcher, who cast aside his prepared speech when he stood under a canopy facing rows of Sudanese women and children, clapping and ululating. I asked some of the women listening what they made of his visit. "We really need help but the major job should be from the Sudanese themselves," reflects Romissa, who works for a local aid group and recounts her own harrowing journey from Khartoum at the start of the war.

"This is the time for the Sudanese people to stand together." The Sudanese have been trying to do a lot with a little. In a simple two-room shelter, a safe house called Shamaa, or "Candle", brings some light to the lives of abused single women and orphaned children. Its founder, Nour Hussein al-Sewaty, known as Mama Nour, also started life in the Maygoma orphanage. She also had to flee Khartoum to protect those in her care. One woman now sheltering with her was raped before the war, then abducted and raped again. Even the formidable Mama Nour is now at breaking-point. "We are so exhausted. We need help," she declares. "We want to smell the fresh air. We want to feel there are still people in the world who care about us, the people of Sudan."

Displaced Lebanese head for homes as fragile truce appears to hold

BEIRUT (BBC): Early in the morning they grabbed what they could - bags with clothes, blankets, and mattresses - and headed south. Families who had been forced to flee because of the war did not wait to see if the ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah would hold.

Just hours after it came into effect they were driving back home on the main road from Beirut. Some waved the yellow and green flag of Hezbollah, others carried posters with images of the group's former leader Hassan Nasrallah, killed in an Israeli air strike two months ago. For many this was a moment of celebration. "What happened is very good. This is a victory for the resistance," said Abu Ali, referring to the ceasefire that had been brokered by the US and France. "May God have mercy on our martyrs. The

resistance is a source of honour and pride for us. Without its existence, there would be no homeland, no south, nothing." His plan was to return to the village Houla, right next to the border. But Israeli troops were still there, he said. "We don't know whether our house is still standing or has been destroyed," Ali said. "But we'll go there." The 60-day ceasefire will see the gradual withdrawal of the Israeli military, and of Hezbollah fighters and weapons, from Lebanon's south. The Lebanese army said it was already strengthening its presence there, as part of the deployment of an additional 5,000 soldiers under the deal. Both Israel and Hezbollah have said they are ready to respond to any violations. The ceasefire is the main hope to bring an end to over a year of conflict, that intensified in September with wide-

spread Israeli air strikes, assassinations of top Hezbollah officials and a ground invasion. Israel's stated goal was to move the group away from the border and stop the attacks on its northern communities. In Lebanon, more than one million people were displaced, mostly from Shia Muslim areas in the south, the eastern Bekka Valley and Dahieh in Beirut - which are essentially controlled by Hezbollah, the powerful militia and political party supported by Iran. They started to return despite warnings from Israeli and Lebanese authorities that it was not yet safe to do so. "It doesn't matter if the house is still intact or not, the important thing is that we are returning, thanks to the blood of our martyr, Nasrallah," said Fatma Balhas, who was travelling to the town of Seddique.

Hezbollah-allied media also said this was a sign the group had been victorious in the war. Near Sidon, the first big city on the coast south of Beirut, cars drove on the opposite carriageway, as a traffic jam formed just outside a military checkpoint. Soldiers handed out leaflets telling people to not touch unexploded ordnance. "Don't get close, don't touch it, report it immediately". As night fell the truce appeared to be holding, with UN chief Antonio Guterres describing it as the "first ray of hope for peace amid the darkness of the past months". The war has devastated this country, and recovery will be long and difficult. And what will happen with Hezbollah is not clear. The group has been diminished, but it still enjoys significant support. For Lebanon, it means this crisis is not over.

Hell and high water: Gaza waits for a ceasefire of its own

GAZA: Families in the rain-soaked devastation of Gaza describe watching the news of a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon with feelings of relief, hope and, for some, the sense of having been entirely abandoned.

A general frustration has settled on the central city of Deir el-Balah, where people are exhausted from nearly 14 months of relentless Israeli assault. Several people who spoke to Al Jazeera said that while they were pleased for their "brothers in Lebanon for reaching a truce", they are waiting for their own truce.

The people in Gaza, they said, have endured hundreds of times more than what they can bear. Maysaa Khalil, displaced from Gaza City's Zeitoun neighbourhood to Khan Younis in southern Gaza a year ago, said that when she heard the news from her husband, she immediately asked: "What about us?" "Why not stop both wars together so long as the same party launched them: Israel?" she asked.

"We are happy for Lebanon, of course," she added, "but we feel that we have been forgotten." Meanwhile, Hamed, originally from Beit Hanoun in the north, said he was optimistic.

"I think the beginning stages [of a ceasefire in Gaza] might start in the next three, maybe four, days," he said from the crude shelter of a tent in a camp the United Nations runs for some of the two million of Gaza's displaced people in Deir el-Balah. His friend Fadi echoed his upbeat mood: "[Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu has his victory. He has a ceasefire with Hezbollah. The next step will be Gaza." "He can negotiate more easily now," he said of the stuttering peace talks in Cairo and Doha that have run almost for the duration of the war. "I'm not sure we'll see any progress in the next few days, but perhaps in weeks." Hussein, who works for an aid agency and is originally from a village in Gaza's north, was

more measured. "I don't know," he said. "We never guessed what the war was going to be like. We never guessed how bad it might be. I don't think we're ready to guess when it might end." "It's true that many are feeling hope now that a ceasefire in Gaza might be possible. However, others are feeling entirely abandoned," he said of the halt in Hezbollah operations launched in support of Gaza. "Some are feeling entirely alone, as if the world has forgotten them," he said as conditions in the blockaded enclave continue to deteriorate.

Overnight, as the finishing touches were being put on the ceasefire, Israeli strikes on a school and neighbourhoods in Gaza killed at least 15 people and injured many more. "Throughout last night, the sounds of Israeli strikes on the central region and various areas in Gaza did not stop. This means that Israel is still continuing its war in Gaza," Mohammed Ismail, one of the thousands dis-

placed from Gaza's north to Deir el-Balah, said. He added that he was afraid the announcement of a ceasefire in Lebanon might signal further escalation in Gaza. "The reality for Gaza is completely different," he said. "Israel still wants to implement more plans, and there does not seem to be a real political and international will to stop the war, especially from the United States."

As temperatures drop, the rain has begun to fall on Gaza, drenching the cloth tents of the displaced crowded into ill-equipped camps. Other people who have been forced from their homes are living in schools turned into shelters, many of which are operated by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). "You can't find plastic," Hussein said, explaining that Israel prevented its entry into Gaza, claiming it could be used for military purposes. Hussein couldn't imagine what military application plastic sheeting may have. — Ajazeera

Brazil's top court takes on regulation of social media

BRASILIA (AFP): Brazil's Supreme Court started examining four cases that turn on how far social media should be regulated, and what responsibilities platforms have in cracking down on illegal content.

The judicial review comes a month after the same court forced Elon Musk's X platform to obey rulings aimed at battling online disinformation. That issue has taken on heat in recent days in Brazil, with federal police accusing far-right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro and allied officials of using social media disinformation as part of a 2022 "coup" plot against Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, then the country's president-elect.

The alleged plot involved using online posts to undermine public trust in the electoral system to justify Bolsonaro holding onto the presidency after Lula defeated him at the polls. Bolsonaro says he is innocent. The Supreme Court's deliberations in the cases are not expected to be con-

cluded until sometime next year. One key point it is looking at is whether social media platforms can be fined for illegal content posted by users. Another is whether the platforms should themselves be required to monitor and remove any illegal content without a prior court order to do so. The court's rulings will become precedents that will have to be applied generally to all social media platforms operating in Brazil. Brazil -- many of whose 216 million inhabitants are heavy users of WhatsApp and Facebook -- does not have legislation in that area. Global social media networks, however, already have to abide by laws in the EU against illegal online content, under the bloc's Digital Services Act (DSA), which could guide them in terms of Brazilian compliance.

One of the Brazilian Supreme Court's judges, Alexandre de Moraes, in August ordered Musk's X be blocked across the country for failing to comply

with a series of court orders against online disinformation. On October 9, the platform was allowed to resume activities after paying around \$5 million in fines and deactivating the accounts of several Bolsonaro supporters accused of spreading disinformation and online hate speech. The court's presiding judge, Luis Roberto Barroso, told AFP that "digital platforms... open paths to disinformation, hate, deliberate lies and conspiracy theories." He added: "In the whole democratic world there are debates about protecting free speech without permitting everyone to fall into a pit of incivility." He pointed to the European Union's DSA as a form of regulation "that seeks a point of ideal equilibrium".

Brazil, in his opinion, should carve out its own regulation "with a minimum of government intervention where it comes to freedom of thought, while preventing increased criminality and inciting violence."

Trump claims a win on immigration

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP): President-elect Donald Trump declared a win on stopping illegal immigration through Mexico after talking with that country's leader. But Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum suggested Mexico was already doing its part and had no interest in closing its borders.

The two spoke just days after Trump threatened to impose sweeping new tariffs on Canada and Mexico as part of his effort to crack down on illegal immigration and drugs. Trump said Sheinbaum "agreed to stop Migration through Mexico." Sheinbaum declined separately on social media that she told Trump that Mexico is already "taking care of" migrant caravans, calling it an "excellent conversation." "We reiterate that Mexico's position is not to close borders but to build bridges between governments and between peoples," Sheinbaum added.

While the state of the proposed tariffs remained unclear, Trump said in a post on his Truth Social account that this was "effectively closing our Southern Border." He called it a "very productive conversation." The exchange between the two leaders appeared to confirm for Trump the value of threatening to disrupt trade with import taxes. His initial social media post moved financial markets and gave him a response he was quick to describe as a win. Even if the proposed tariffs fail to materialize, Trump can tell supporters that the mere possibility of them is an effective policy tool and continue to rely on tariff threats.

Sheinbaum wrote on social media that the leaders "discussed Mexico's strategy on migration issues, and I told him the caravans are not reaching the northern (US) border, because Mexico is taking care of them." "We also talked about reinforcing cooperation on security

issues, within the framework of our sovereignty, and the campaign we are carrying out to prevent fentanyl consumption," she said. Illegal migration across the Mexico border is down in part because the Biden administration secured some stepped-up cooperation from Mexico - the sort Trump seems to be celebrating.

Arrivals at the US-Mexico border have dropped 40% from an all-time high in December. US officials mostly credit Mexican vigilance around rail yards and highway checkpoints. Driven by mounting pressure from the US to block migrants going north, in the past few years Mexican authorities have turned to rounding them up around the country and sending them to southern Mexico, in a strategy seen by experts as an attempt to wear migrants out until they give up. Neither side clarified the status of the tariffs.

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Lebanon deal should prompt all parties to pursue immediate ceasefire

ONE day after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the Israeli Security Cabinet had approved a two-month deal to end the fighting in Lebanon, a ceasefire came into effect on Wednesday, marking a significant step forward for efforts to end the hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah and fueling hopes that a deal can be reached to end the conflict in Gaza.

According to reports, although Hezbollah is not an official signatory given its designation as a terrorist organization by the United States, the group has agreed to move its fighters north of the Litani River — approximately 40 kilometers from the de facto Israel-Lebanon border. Israeli forces meanwhile are to gradually withdraw from southern Lebanon. A five-country monitoring panel, led by the United States, is to oversee the implementation of the agreement, with 5,000 Lebanese troops deployed to ensure compliance.

China, which has been closely following the situation in Lebanon, has welcomed the deal and has called on all parties to do their utmost to honor it.

Urging the relevant parties to abide by UN Security Council Resolution 1701 that calls for a full cessation of all attacks on Israel by Hezbollah and Israeli military operations in Lebanon, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning also called for greater efforts to be made to promote an immediate and lasting ceasefire in Gaza, as China believes that the failure to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza is the root cause of the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East.

This is a pertinent prompt as the latest development has also renewed international hopes for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, where millions of Palestinians have been trapped in an appalling humanitarian crisis for more than a year.

Now that Tel Aviv has eliminated almost all the top echelons of both Hezbollah and Hamas, it is high time relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions to end the war in Gaza were fully implemented as soon as possible.

In his remarks to a UN meeting held on Tuesday to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out that the question of Palestine is at the heart of the Middle East issue and concerns international fairness and justice.

The top priority now should be to promote the full and effective implementation of UN Security Council resolutions by parties to the conflict, and the realization of an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in Gaza, so as to create conditions for alleviating the humanitarian crisis.

Indeed, the conflict in Gaza must be brought to an end. To date, the Palestinian death toll in Gaza has reportedly surpassed 44,000, with millions more displaced and living in hellish conditions.

The conflict in Gaza has not only spilled over to Lebanon but also to other parts of the region, involving more regional forces. Influential parties should shoulder their due responsibilities and do more to realize a ceasefire in Gaza.

The United States, in particular, should end its unconditional support of Israel, which has emboldened and enabled Tel Aviv to launch one military offensive after another against any it deems to be an enemy.

In light of this, China has urged the US to discard its political calculations and stop selectively ignoring international and humanitarian law. With the US having stubbornly stood on the opposite side of international calls for a ceasefire and the conscience of humanity, China hopes that the deal for a ceasefire in Lebanon will prompt it to shoulder its responsibilities as a major country, and play a constructive role in restoring peace and stability in the Middle East by working to promote an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

The vicious circle of violence must end, and the people of Gaza, Palestine and the broader Middle East deserve a concerted international effort to establish lasting peace.

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Reclaiming our dignity: The urgent need for character building

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

THE recent news that pilgrims going for Umrah and Hajj are now required to submit affidavits declaring they will not engage in begging upon their arrival in Saudi Arabia is both alarming and deeply humbling. This development reflects not only the actions of a minority but the larger perception of us as a nation on the world stage. It raises critical questions: How did we arrive at this point? What does this say about our collective character, and what are the broader implications for a nation that proudly claims to be a nuclear power?

The issue of begging, particularly by those who do so professionally and not out of genuine need, is not new. For decades, organized begging networks have operated openly, exploiting human sympathy and tarnishing the image of societies they represent. When these networks cross international borders, they bring shame not only to themselves but also to their nations. Unfortunately, Pakistan, despite its rich history and resilience, has become associated with such behavior. This has led to restrictions not only in Saudi Arabia but also discussions in other Gulf states and the Middle East regarding curbing the entry of individuals perceived to be beggars.

In the Quran and Sunnah, begging is addressed with clarity and wisdom. Islam encourages the dignity of labor and self-reliance while providing mechanisms like zakat, sadaqah, and waqf to support those genuinely in need. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the importance of earning one's livelihood, declaring that it is better for a person to gather firewood and sell it than to beg without need. He also warned against making begging a habitual practice, stating that those who do so without necessity would

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poverty of character. Character building as a nation is now a matter of survival, not choice. The solution begins at home, with families instilling values of hard work, self-respect, and empathy in children. Schools and religious institutions must play their part in emphasizing moral education alongside academics. Our leaders, too, must lead by example, demonstrating integrity and accountability in governance. A culture of self-reliance and pride in lawful earning must replace the culture of shortcuts and dependency that currently prevails. Furthermore, structural reforms are essential to address the root causes of professional begging. Poverty alleviation programs must be strengthened, and public welfare systems expanded to ensure that those genuinely in need are supported without resorting to begging.

It is not just about economic poverty but a deeper, more troubling poverty of character. Character building as a nation is now a matter of survival, not choice. The solution begins at home, with families instilling values of hard work, self-respect, and empathy in children. Schools and religious institutions must play their part in emphasizing moral education alongside academics. Our leaders, too, must lead by example, demonstrating integrity and accountability in governance. A culture of self-reliance and pride in lawful earning must replace the culture of shortcuts and dependency that currently prevails. Furthermore, structural reforms are essential to address the root causes of professional begging. Poverty alleviation programs must be strengthened, and public welfare systems expanded to ensure that those genuinely in need are supported without resorting to begging.

face disgrace in the Hereafter. Thus, the Islamic ethos is clear; while the community has a duty to support the truly needy, professional begging is neither honorable nor acceptable.

The current situation serves as a mirror to our collective shortcomings. Despite being a nuclear power with immense potential, we are plagued by issues of poverty, lack of education, and a weak moral compass that allows such practices to thrive. A nation with one of the world's largest youth populations, abundant natural resources, and a strategic geopolitical position should not be known for its begging syndicates. Yet, this is the reality we face. It is not just about economic poverty but a deeper, more troubling

children. Schools and religious institutions must play their part in emphasizing moral education alongside academics. Our leaders, too, must lead by example, demonstrating integrity and accountability in governance. A culture of self-reliance and pride in lawful earning must replace the culture of shortcuts and dependency that currently prevails.

Furthermore, structural reforms are essential to address the root causes of professional begging. Poverty alleviation programs must be strengthened, and public welfare systems expanded to ensure that those genuinely in need are supported without resorting to begging. At the same time, strict laws must be enacted and enforced

against organized begging networks. This will require political will, societal support, and collaboration between government and non-governmental organizations.

On the international front, the need to rebuild our image is urgent. As a nation, we must strive to project our strengths; our talent, resilience, and contributions to global peace and progress. Pakistan's status as a nuclear power must translate into leadership in science, technology, and humanitarian efforts. This requires investment in education, innovation, and diplomacy to demonstrate that we are a nation of potential and dignity.

The affidavit requirement for pilgrims is a wake-up call. It is a moment of collective reflection on who we are and what we stand for. Let it not be a source of shame alone, but a catalyst for change. As individuals and as a nation, we must align our actions with the values of honesty, self-respect, and compassion that our faith and culture uphold. Only then can we begin to shed the stigma of professional begging and reclaim our rightful place in the world.

Our faith teaches us that Allah helps those who help themselves. The time has come to rise above our circumstances, address our internal weaknesses, and work tirelessly to build a Pakistan that commands respect rather than pity.

This journey begins with character building at every level, for without character, even the mightiest powers crumble. Let us heed this lesson and embark on the path of reform, for the sake of our dignity and our future.

Hence, at a time of high volatility in the Levant, this could prove to be a new opportunity for North Korea to reestablish its messaging and outreach in the region to end its isolation. Exactly like it did in the 1970s. If we review the ideological positioning of North Korea at the time, the main message that resonated was its solidarity with oppressed people. This also implies a messaging push on the theme of anti-imperialism, as well as another theme that is recurrent and important for North Korea: self-reliance and the base of what is known as the Juche ideology.

In the 1960s, this was pushed through books and publications based on the translations of Kim Il Sung's works. This literature was disseminated via leftist groups in Lebanon and the broader Middle East. Today, TikTok and Instagram will probably do the job. Moreover, these themes resonate strongly with the Middle East's bourgeois youth, even more than those living or studying abroad. We also now live in a time when people reject great power competition.

Hence, with conflicts in the region echoing the 1970s, are we about to witness a renewed communication policy from North Korea? Stranger things have happened.

Inspection visits A potent instrument to promote good governance

Syed M. Ilyas

IN fulfilment of its mandate, the institution of Wafaqi Mohtasib plays a crucial role in delivering free administrative justice to the public and addressing systemic flaws in the operations of federal government agencies. In January 2022, the Wafaqi Mohtasib emphasized the importance of conducting periodic inspections of these agencies by invoking Articles 9 and 17 of the President's Order No. 1 of 1983, which created the office of the Federal Ombudsman (Wafaqi Mohtasib) in the country. Special focus was placed on agencies with a high volume of complaints and inadequate compliance with Wafaqi Mohtasib findings, aiming to enhance their efficiency in public service delivery across the country.

As mandated by Article-17 of the President's Order No.1 of 1983, the inspection visits are a very effective tool to promote efficiency and improve service delivery in the Federal Government organizations.

These have brought about remarkable improvements in some of the public sector organizations, such as the Passport Office, Excise & Taxation Office, NADRA, BISP, National Savings apart from Government Hospitals, Airports and Railway Stations. These organizations, prior to these visits, have been generating a large number of public complaints but have now shown considerable improvement in their working.

Conducted by the senior officials of the Federal Ombudsman (Wafaqi Mohtasib's office) and its Regional Offices, these visits have turned out to be of immense value in addressing the public complaints and improving the service delivery operations.

The visiting teams not only address short term issues in the organizations concerned but also suggests long term corrective measures to fix the systemic issues and bring about qualitative improvements.

The ultimate aim of such visits is to pave the way for good governance by addressing and eliminating mal-administration and plugging the loop holes.

The Wafaqi Mohtasib follows a laid down procedure for conducting inspection visits. Such visits characterize collective efforts to address issues of public concern. Its salient features, inter alia include: a) There has to be a basis for each inspection.

It could be a written complaint from the public against the agency concerned or a news item appearing in print/electronic media duly transcribed for initiating action on his own motion by the Wafaqi Mohtasib; b) The agency must be within the domain of the Wafaqi Mohtasib jurisdiction; c) The Wafaqi Mohtasib will constitute an Inspection Team consisting of a Senior Advisor, to be assisted by an Investigation Officer and an official of the Media Wing; d) The Inspection Team will submit a report to the Wafaqi Mohtasib on the basis of the inspection, discussion with the Head of the agency and the general public.

The legal provisions in regard to the Inspection Teams put across the scope, context and the intent of such visits. The Article 17 of the President's Order No.1 of 1983 states: "the Mohtasib may constitute an Inspection Team for the performance of any of the functions of the Mohtasib.

An Inspection Team shall consist of one or more members of the staff and shall be assisted by such other person or persons as the Mohtasib may consider necessary. An Inspection Team shall exercise such of the

powers of the Mohtasib as he may specify by order in writing and every report of the Inspection Team shall first be submitted to the Mohtasib with its recommendations for appropriate action".

Likewise, Article-9 of the same order authorizes the Mohtasib to initiate on a complaint by any aggrieved person, among others or on his own motion, any investigation into any allegation of mal-administration on the part of any Agency or any of its officers or employees.

During such visits, each inspection team meets the officials of the Agency as well as the general public. Each inspection report identifies issues and problems observed during the visit by the Team.

All inspection reports are perused by the Wafaqi Mohtasib, which are forwarded to Head of the Agency concerned. The inspection team also makes recommendations, both short and long term, for improving the service delivery of the Agency concerned.

Pursuant to the above provisions, the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat constituted inspection teams to carry out inspections of the agencies against whom frequent complaints are received, to identify problems and suggest remedial measures. The inspection visits have proved an effective measure to reach out to the general public and help improve the service delivery of those agencies.

During the first ten months of the current year, 79 such inspection visits have been undertaken by the Wafaqi Mohtasib Officers at the level of Head Office and the Regional Offices.

Over the last two and a half years, inspection visits conducted by WMS teams across various agencies nationwide have effectively identified both generic and specific issues within key government agencies.

The recommendations put forth by the inspection teams, aimed at enhancing service delivery, have been communicated to the relevant federal ministries and heads of the Agencies for implementation.

The response received from the various agencies including NADRA, Passport Offices, One Window Felicitation Desks (OWFDs) at International Airports, Protectorate of Emigration & Overseas Pakistanis, and Utility Store Corporation, has been encouraging.

Similarly, systemic issues identified at BISP and USC have been addressed following the WMS recommendations. As regards the Electricity and Gas distribution companies, some of the ongoing issues such as delays in bill delivery, issuance of demand notices, bill adjustment, excessive billing, and replacement of faulty/tempered meters persist.

However, these are being substantially resolved through Khuli Katchery visits undertaken by Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat teams and through regular complaints resolution mechanism of the WMS. In short, the Inspection visits have proved their utility and are being undertaken for providing fast-paced redressal to the public of their persistent complaints.

However, it is important to clarify that contrary to the general perception, inspection visits are by no means "intrusions" or "raids" but an effective instrument entailing joint efforts to improve service delivery of the public sector agency, overcome its institutional weaknesses and ultimately pave the way for good governance.

These must be taken in the same spirit and context. The past record amply testifies to their utility and potential for improvement.

Will North Korean soft power return to the Middle East?

Khaled Abou Zahr

IN the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was not unusual to see headlines praising North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Il Sung in Lebanese newspapers. Indeed, Levantine media at the time even named him "the leader loved by 100 million." It was obviously mainly left-leaning or socialist media outlets that would publish articles praising the achievements of the North Korean leader, while always focusing on the theme of resistance.

North Korea had positioned itself as a pillar of the nonaligned movement. It was a supporter of the Palestine Liberation Organization and other causes. Pyongyang viewed these groups as allies in the international struggle against imperialism. It developed a real soft power strategy during the broader Cold War era, exporting its revolutionary ideology. The recurrent themes were anticolonialism, anti-imperialism and support for socialist movements across the Middle East. This was very clear in Lebanon, which was the epicenter of the Palestinian struggle at the time.

One also needs to remember that North Korea did not only push its ideological messages, it also provided military training, arms and financial aid to Palestinian militants. Moreover, during the Lebanese Civil War, Pyongyang extended military support and expertise to communist and leftist factions. The Lebanese Communist Party was one of the beneficiaries of this support. It is worth noting that this group is now completely pro-Hezbollah.

This period was also different for North Korea. I will not delve into the Korean wars, but Pyongyang was able to balance between Russia and China and, in a way, gain its voice. This balance empowered its capacity to send its ideological message to the Middle East.

Following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, this was no longer the case. North Korea became increasingly dependent on Beijing. A quick look at North Korea's imports highlights this. It has maintained a certain degree of freedom, but this is much more limited than during the Cold War. Moreover, its political influence and focus on the Middle East also faded away.

In the 1980s, North Korea's outreach to the region was mostly in the form of covert dealings, rather than its earlier very clear anti-imperialist messaging within the Middle East. It is also worth noting that Pyongyang had some arrangements with Muammar Qaddafi. This was consistent with its goal of seeking partners to

circumvent international sanctions and to support its struggling economy. In the same way, it also keeps good relations with Syria and, to this day, it has strong ties with Algeria, which continues to celebrate Kim's historic 1975 visit.

Is North Korea now about to engage ideologically in the Middle East once again? Last month's news of North Korean soldiers assisting Russia in its war against Ukraine could be a sign of change. The mutual visits and expanding bonds of friendship between President Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un are potentially changing the equation relating to Pyongyang's reliance on China. With growing exchanges and resources from Moscow, North Korea will probably be able to rebalance or mitigate the influence of Beijing. It is also clear that China is uneasy with the latest development as it makes it more difficult to maintain its neutral stance in the war in Ukraine.

Despite these tensions, there is a more unified front between China and Russia than there was in the 1970s. This is partly because the Nixon Doctrine is now void. The former US president's opening to China successfully divided the two communist countries. Today, China, Russia and North Korea have a dynamic relationship, but are looking to the West in the same way.

Hence, at a time of high volatility in the Levant, this could prove to be a new opportunity for North Korea to reestablish its messaging and outreach in the region to end its isolation. Exactly like it did in the 1970s. If we review the ideological positioning of North Korea at the time, the main message that resonated was its solidarity with oppressed people. This also implies a messaging push on the theme of anti-imperialism, as well as another theme that is recurrent and important for North Korea: self-reliance and the base of what is known as the Juche ideology.

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Don't be naive about the ceasefire in Lebanon. It may mean more horror and death in Gaza

Joe Biden is making the most of the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon that he helped to broker. "It reminds us that peace is possible," he declared in the White House Rose Garden, where US presidents habitually preen rather than prune. Yet Biden's flowery self-congratulation jars at this fragile moment. It sounds like cruel mockery to the beleaguered people of Gaza.

With the truce holding for a second day – despite some apparent breaches – Lebanon has been spared more death and wanton destruction, for now. Many people are celebrating and heading home to the south despite Israeli warnings. But Biden's belief that the accord will hasten a Gaza ceasefire, spike the guns of Iran and its proxies, and open the way to the wider regional settlement he has long sought finds scant justification in fact.

It's a fact, for example, that Benjamin Netanyahu has not suddenly turned dovish peacemaker. Having unjustifiably ordered a large-scale ground invasion in Lebanon last month, preceded by aerial bombing and sabotage attacks in Beirut, Israel's hawkish prime minister is quitting while he's ahead. Operation Northern Arrows is being presented to the public as a success, unlike the 2006 war. Hezbollah's military power has undoubtedly been seriously degraded.

Yet the reasons why Netanyahu has refused for more than a year to accept a similar ceasefire in Gaza are intrinsically unchanged. The war there suits him politically and personally. Unlike in Lebanon, he continues to seek "total victory". Concessions to Hamas, such as releasing Palestinian prisoners, would sink his hard-right coalition. The war keeps at bay an official investigation into the security failures surrounding the 7 October 2023 Hamas atrocities – and likewise, court proceedings against Netanyahu for alleged bribery and corruption.

Whatever Biden may hope to achieve in the dog days of his presidency, Netanyahu has no incentive to end Gaza's agony before his ideological ally, Donald Trump, swaggers into office on 20 January. Only then will he maybe act – and that's a big maybe. The Lebanon ceasefire means cohorts of Israel's overstretched army, once rested and rearmed, may concentrate in even greater force in Gaza. It brings closer the forced depopulation and de facto annexation of northern areas of the territory urged by Israel's far-right extremists.

Biden's sudden Rose Garden conversion into an advocate for Palestinian rights – "the people of Gaza have been through hell," he said – leaves an especially bad taste. As more than 44,000

Simon Tisdall

Palestinians in Gaza, mostly civilians, died and innumerable others – young and old – were injured and traumatised, Biden refused to fully condemn Netanyahu's illegal actions, impose credible sanctions or cancel weapons deliveries to curb Israeli excesses.

It's also a sobering fact that, under this agreement, Netanyahu can restart the war any time he chooses. Israeli troops have 60 days to withdraw. That timeline may stretch out. If Israel decides Hezbollah's forces are not staying put behind Lebanon's Litani River demarcation line, 18 miles north of the Israel-Lebanon boundary, or are rearming, then boom! The whole horror show resumes. If Netanyahu decides, arbitrarily, that a touch more war would be politically useful, he can have it, thanks to a flimsy deal that may be blown away in a moment.

Almost forgotten, again, and not least by Netanyahu, are the 100 or so unaccounted-for Israeli hostages taken on 7 October. Hamas may be weakened by Hezbollah's defeat. But there are no imminent or credible signs that the terrorist group, though more badly mauled than even its Lebanese ally, is minded to surrender its remaining "bargaining chips". It is sticking to its demand for a full withdrawal by Israel.

In point of fact, as

Biden noted, there is presently no bargaining at all. He has reportedly made a ceasefire and hostage release deal that leaves Hamas "without power" in Gaza a top priority for the remainder of his term. He hopes that Egypt, Qatar and Turkey will help him out. He has failed in this repeatedly. The chances of success now are slim to nonexistent. Biden's long-nurtured dream of a wider Middle East settlement looks as remote as ever. The plan revolves around the normalisation of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, on the model of the Abraham accords negotiated by Trump. This, it is thought, would help marginalise Iran while binding the Saudis more closely to the west (and keeping China at bay). Yet the fundamental snag facing this scheme is that it depends on substantive progress towards a two-state solution – in short, a sovereign Palestinian state.

Since 7 October, attitudes on both sides of the Arab-Israeli divide have hardened. The Saudis absolutely insist on Palestinian self-determination. Netanyahu and his far-right crew absolutely insist on thwarting it by any means. This will not change simply because the guns have fallen silent in Lebanon, nor because Biden, at last knockings, wants to bequeath a peace president's legacy.

Not least because of business interests in the

Gulf, Trump is also expected to pursue Saudi normalisation. But he lacks skill and focus. He will want an easy win, or he will lose interest. Like Netanyahu, he demonstrates open contempt for Palestinian rights. As a result, any more ambitious peacemaking effort looks bound to fail.

Another fact: if the Americans cannot bring about a lasting, comprehensive Middle East peace, no one can. In the coming vacuum, Hezbollah, battered but unbowed, will surreptitiously begin to rearm, assisted as in the past by Iran. Its nose bloodied badly by Israel, the Tehran regime, too, will look for ways to reassert its regional standing and boost proxies such as Yemen's Houthis before the next bout.

One ever-more probable Iranian option, with growing, illicit support from Russia, is to move to develop, rather than just talk about developing, nuclear weapons – especially after its offer this month of a new nuclear pact was rebuffed by the west. It's too much to hope that Trump will deal sensibly or even sanely with the reality of an Iranian bomb or all the other super-complex Middle East challenges. His capricious incapacity will exacerbate the chronic instability and paralysis that besets a region; a place where fleeting, fragile ceasefires merely mask the true terror of war without end.

Netanyahu dreams of a greater Israel, but his own world has just shrunk

Moncef Khane

On November 21, the Pre-Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) announced it had issued warrants for the arrest of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and Hamas military wing commander Mohammed Diab Ibrahim al-Masri, aka Deif, who Israel says was killed in action.

It took six months for the Pre-Trial Chamber to make a decision on Prosecutor Karim Khan's application for arrest warrants, and it took him no less than eight months after October 7, 2023, to file the petitions for these warrants. Before that, it took Khan's predecessor, Fatou Bensouda, almost seven years to initiate an investigation into alleged Israeli war crimes in Palestine since 2014. Given the degree and scale of war crimes in Gaza before and after October 7, 2023, the sluggishness of the ICC is hard to understand or accept.

The Pre-Trial Chamber has indicated that it had

..... Judging by the space afforded to this charge in the ICC's press release, humanitarian aid issues seem to be the principal charges against Netanyahu and Gallant. But considering the death toll – which may be as high as 186,000 – and the sheer devastation of Gaza's overall infrastructure and specifically medical facilities and schools, it is troubling that "the Chamber found that the material provided by the Prosecution only allowed it to make findings on two incidents that qualified as attacks that were intentionally directed against civilians". Just two incidents? By contrast, the Pre-Trial Chamber was also able to conclude that Deif, the elusive Hamas commander, was "responsible for the crimes against humanity of murder; extermination; torture; and rape and other form of sexual violence; as well as the war crimes of murder, cruel treatment, torture; taking hostages; outrages upon personal dignity; and rape and other form of sexual violence". It is worth noting that the evidence provided by the prosecution allowed for such a list of crimes to be identified, and one in particular, "extermination" defined under Article 7.2.b. of the Rome Statute as "includ[ing] the intentional infliction of conditions of life, inter alia the deprivation of access to food and medicine, calculated to bring about the destruction of part of a population".

"reasonable grounds to believe that Mr Netanyahu and Mr Gallant bear criminal responsibility for the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare".

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It is striking that "exter-

ism the international warrants for the two Israeli leaders carry.

However, while justice will not be served soon enough to stop Israel's genocidal aggression, a major threshold has been crossed: a powerful signal has been sent to all past and future perpetrators of crimes against Palestinians under occupation: from the Israeli president who declared that there were no innocent Palestinians in Gaza, to reckless cabinet ministers cheerleading a genocide; to generals ordering the bombing of women, infants, hospitals and schools, to TikTok-savvy privates gleefully executing war crimes.

The message is that the warrants are a harbinger of the end of impunity for Israel's international crimes. Not because the ICC will prosecute such crimes, which are simply too numerous for an under-resourced court.

But rather because the ICC's historic decision will provide a new impetus for the prosecutions of war crimes under universal jurisdiction and obligations erga omnes.

These are obligations owed to the international community to prosecute individuals suspected of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and torture even if the prosecuting jurisdiction has no direct nexus with the imputed crimes.

In this regard, it is worth recalling a landmark case in which universal jurisdiction was invoked. A quarter century after committing horrific crimes in the wake of the 1973 CIA-backed coup d'etat in Chile, General Augusto Pinochet was

arrested at a London hospital by Scotland Yard after Spanish Judge Baltasar Garzon had issued an international warrant for his arrest.

Following a 503-day-long legal battle, which ended with Home Secretary Jack Straw overruling on "humanitarian grounds" a British court's decision to grant Spain's extradition request, Pinochet, 83, was released from detention and flown back to Chile. Garzon's trailblazing move was nonetheless a milestone in international criminal law as it successfully tested the applicability of the principle of universal jurisdiction with respect to gross violations of human rights.

Similarly, former US President George W Bush called off a visit to Switzerland in 2011. Officially it was because of planned protests further to his admission that he had authorised the use of water-boarding against foreign detainees. But a "Pinochet moment" loomed large in the trip cancellation. Amnesty International warned Swiss authorities that "an investigation [into

Bush's alleged crimes] would be mandatory under Switzerland's international obligations if President Bush entered the country".

Senior Israeli officials, such as former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and of Justice Tzipi Livni, and former Vice Prime Minister Moshe Ya'alon cancelled trips to the UK, Switzerland or Belgium for fear of arrest in connection with alleged war crimes.

These examples, as well as past and active cases prosecuted in various courts under the principle of universal jurisdiction, suggest that this relatively new concept in international criminal law is making headway.

Ironically, although the roots of "universal jurisdiction" are to be found in connection with piracy on the high seas, it is Israel which first invoked that principle in the modern era for its kidnapping from Argentina and subsequent trial in 1961 of the infamous senior Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann.

Now that a warrant of arrest for their longest-serving prime minister has been issued, boarding a plane from Tel Aviv will become a hazardous proposition for Israelis suspected of war crimes, if they realise that they might be arrested upon arrival.

As far as Netanyahu himself is concerned, his plane can still take off but it remains to be seen where it can land, and the airspace of which countries it can use. He may daydream of a "Greater Israel" and a beach house on the Gaza shore, but his own world has shrunk significantly, now that he is a fugitive.

Response to US moves should be calm

In the aftermath of the presidential election in the United States, China must continue to play its important and unique role on the global stage, albeit with greater vigor. Widening opening-up, engaging in cooperation with other countries and regions, increasing outward and inward foreign investment, increasing trade following World Trade Organization rules, intensifying technology transfer, and expanding people-to-people exchanges are positive and pragmatic responses to growing global challenges.

As the situation evolves, countries around the world should wisely use every opportunity to improve international relations. One such opportunity arose in Kazan, Russia, during the BRICS Summit in October. Other occasions were the meeting of 21 economies of APEC in Lima, Peru, and the G20 summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Committed to sustainable development and win-win globalization, China has used these forums for partnership dialogues and multicountry negotiations in a bid to resolve conflicts of interest.

However, in the context of growing anti-China sentiments and practices — especially by, but not limited to the US — China should shift its economic focus from the West to the Global South. Key in this context will be the further deepening of relations with Brazil, and especially with India, which is already a country with a larger population and developing at a

faster pace than China.

Having lost access to parts of the markets of the US and some other developed economies, China must pay more attention to trade with the Global South.

To help boost these economies, an increasing share of exports, as well as foreign direct investment and the accompanying technology transfer, should be directed there. This reorientation has been underway for several years, but now that the US is becoming more embroiled in a trade war by stepping up protectionism, China must take additional measures to maintain its high growth rate. Continuing the Belt and Road Initiative alone is not enough; more must be done on the world stage.

The most important aspect of international affairs is US-China relations. Unfortunately, before they start to improve, they will get worse. With Donald Trump winning the presidential election and the Republicans gaining a majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, tensions, and not only the economic ones, will rise. The new US administration's policies are likely to further disrupt global supply chains, and additional turbulence in the processes of globalization will occur.

The White House will impose punitive tariffs on imports from China. This will slightly fuel inflation in the US, but by acting as a de facto sales tax, it will increase the fiscal revenues

GRZEGORZ W. KOLODKO

for the US budget a little bit, which is in a dire situation with a deficit approaching 7 percent of GDP. The prohibitively high customs barriers in the short term will help US businesses remain competitive, but eventually they could blunt their competitiveness due to the lack of pressure from foreign manufacturers. On the Chinese side, it will further encourage companies to look for alternative foreign markets to increase exports.

Despite Washington's ill-advised protectionism, Beijing should not hastily impose retaliatory tariffs on US products. Instead, it should take the matter to the World Trade Organization. China, along with the other countries in the Global South, should do even more to ensure that international trade is based on rules collectively established by all WTO member states, rather than unilaterally imposed by wealthy Western states driven by nationalism and populism. Beijing's response with regards to expanding protectionism should be deceleration and further economic deregulation in favor of strengthening direct cooperation between businesses and research and development institutions in both countries.

Given the remarkably high import tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles and some other products, already imposed by the outgoing Joe Biden administration and now being further increased, the green transformation in the US

may slow down.

China should expedite the green transition by continuing its anti-warming climate course, as emphasized at the just-concluded COP29, the UN Climate Change Conference in Baku, Azerbaijan. The ongoing debate should support the process of combating global warming to the greatest extent possible. Unfortunately, in this respect we cannot count on the US under Trump's leadership.

It also takes a negative view of the otherwise useful progress that China has made in recent years in the field of technological development, consistently following the path outlined in the "Made in China 2025" program.

According to a study by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in 2023, out of the 44 most important technologies, from the point of view of a modern economy's functioning and the prospects of its development, China is ahead of the US in as many as 37 (no other country, including Japan, the Republic of Korea and the most technologically advanced European states, is in one of the first two places in any category). The US establishment desire to slow down China's progress in this field is not only irrational from the point of view of development of the world economy but will also harm the US economy, reducing the competitive pressure for the fastest possible technological progress in their own industries.

Following the recent BRICS summit, which dis-

cussed, among other things, alternative, non-US dollar-based international financial arrangements, China should accelerate the conceptual work and practical implementation of an alternative global monetary system to ensure that part of the international trade is increasingly settled not in the US dollar, but in other currencies, primarily the renminbi. The scale of international currency reserves held in the renminbi will also gradually increase from the current 2 percent at the expense of the decline in the US dollar from the current 54.8 percent.

China may also soon need to reform its foreign exchange rate system. The Chinese currency is still pegged to the US dollar, allowing for daily fluctuations within the band of +/- 2 percent. This sometimes entails odd changes, such as the strengthening of the renminbi's exchange rate against other currencies, as it happened after Trump's election victory, which temporarily strengthened the dollar.

China should therefore consider abandoning such currency regime and introduce a controlled floating exchange rate. Given China's structural export surplus in foreign trade, such a change would result in a strengthening of the renminbi and, consequently, a slight reduction in exports to the US due to its lower profitability. This would contain the US trade deficit, which would reduce to some extent the anti-China fever.

— China Daily

Lebanon awaits the political consequences of peace

Nadim Shehadi

In his book "The Economic Consequences of the Peace," John Maynard Keynes warned that the terms of the Treaty of Versailles that ended the First World War could lead to another war for the next generation. Similarly, the latest war in Lebanon is, to a large extent, a consequence of the imperfect resolution of the last one and ending it should not pave the way to the next.

Life in wartime Lebanon consists of being glued to TV news and social media, with endless phone conversations trying to figure out when and how it will end and what will happen later. I am full of admiration for news anchors and the way they grill politicians.

At the center of today's debate is UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which was agreed more than 18 years ago, in August

2006, as a short-term measure to stop the hostilities in Israel's last war with Hezbollah.

The main issue was pointed out to me by a former European diplomat with 20-plus years of experience in the region. He warned against the manner in which 1701 was being renegotiated and the problems of its implementation. In 2006, it was the Lebanese government that conducted the negotiations and it has to be brought back into the process. This needs to avoid being turned into a West Bank and Gaza situation.

What did not happen and should be emphasized is already included in Paragraph 8 of UNSC Resolution 1701, which called for a permanent, long-term solution based on the Taif Agreement. The 2006 war ended with a cessation of hostilities under certain conditions, which included

the withdrawal of Hezbollah's combatants and its arms from a zone up to the Litani river, with the UN Interim Force in Lebanon in charge of its application. The fact that we are here again today is an indication of its failure. Going back to it may be a case of making the same mistake twice, but with the grave addition that this time the state is absent from the equation. By making Hezbollah the interlocutor, the repercussions could be far worse than last time.

The Taif Agreement that ended the civil war in 1990 called for the dissolution of all militias and armed groups. Hezbollah was excluded at the time on the basis that it was a resistance force and not a militia. A formula should be reached internally to allow it to comply with the agreement.

There is a chain of agreements and resolutions. Applying Taif would also

fulfill the requirements of a sequence of UN resolutions on Lebanon: UNSC Resolution 1559 of 2004 basically called for the application of Taif; Resolution 1680 of May 17, 2006, called for the application of 1559; and 1701 of August that same year called for the application of both 1559 and 1680. They all point to the armistice agreement of 1949, which delineated the Israeli-Lebanese borders and which was broken by Lebanon in 1969 when it gave the Palestine Liberation Organization the right to attack Israel from southern Lebanon. At the time, this was done to maintain the peace internally, but instead it sowed the seeds of external conflict.

In fact, the chain goes back further, as the main points of the May 17, 1983, agreement between Israel

and the Lebanese government, following the Israeli invasion of 1982, were incorporated into the Taif Agreement. Again, this points to the armistice agreement of 1949, the withdrawal of all foreign troops and the armed groups that at that time were Palestinian. The recently published memoirs of Dr. Elie Salem, Lebanon's foreign minister at the time, recounted that story. After the agreement was accepted by the majority of Lebanon's MPs and politicians, Israel introduced additional interpretations and conditions that sabotaged the agreement and allowed Syria to veto its application.

The principal task now is to navigate both internal and external conflicts at the same time to stabilize the border with Israel and prevent the situation resulting in a civil war. There is a risk of inter-

nal conflict after Israel's withdrawal due to indications that Hezbollah is trying to blame its failure on the rest of the Lebanese, whom it accuses of collaborating with Israel or of supporting its attack. The aftermath of the cessation of hostilities should be managed to prevent an internal conflict.

The danger lies in the "security arrangements" also mentioned in Paragraph 8 of Resolution 1701, in which UNIFIL was charged with ensuring that no buildup of arms was allowed between the Litani river and the Israel-Lebanon border. But UNIFIL was given only observer powers and it is unlikely to be given the powers of enforcement, like the UN and NATO presence

in Kosovo, as this would require another UN Security Council resolution. Also, without a "permanent" solution, UNIFIL is no longer interim and is not sustain-

able.

Going back to the analogy with Palestine, the Palestinian Authority and Israel cooperate and coordinate according to the Oslo Accords and, since 2007, they have agreed to focus on security coordination above all due to the alleged widespread threat from Hamas. This is where the PA was accused of having an agreement so that Israel could protect it from Hamas in the West Bank. The PA was discredited because when it acts it looks like it is doing Israel's job, while when it does not act then Israel intervenes and the PA looks like it is collaborating against its own people. Could this happen to Lebanon too?

The implementation of Resolution 1701 could pit the Lebanese army against Hezbollah, which it is not equipped for. Unlike other armies in the region, the Lebanese army cannot fight

internal battles to suppress one party or another. At best, its doctrine is that of separating the parties and acting as a mediator. It will be accused of doing that for Israel, acting as a buffer to protect it. If it does intervene to stop Hezbollah rearming, it will be accused of acting on behalf of Israel, almost like the PA. Hamas controlled Gaza in the same way as Hezbollah controlled southern Lebanon.

We still do not know the full terms of this week's agreement, but if it is setting up the Lebanese army to fail, with a temporary ceasefire as a test, then the next war could involve more than just Hezbollah. Ultimately, the solution should be an internal one in Lebanon, rebuilding the state that was paralyzed and incapacitated as a consequence of ignoring the long-term clause of 1701 since the last war.

— Arab News

He urged the government to focus on improving the ease of doing business, addressing infrastructure challenges, and prioritizing human capital development to build a competitive and resilient economy.

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Ghulam maiden ton, bowlers help Pakistan seal series

B U L A W A Y O (ESPNcricinfo): Kamran Ghulam's maiden ODI hundred and a clinical bowling performance saw Pakistan ease to a 99-run win in Bulawayo. The victory sees Pakistan seal the series 2-1, their second consecutive come-from-behind ODI series win after similar success in Australia earlier this month.

Pakistan posted 303 after a steady start from the openers, with Abdullah Shafique scoring his fifth half-century, while sloppiness at the death from Zimbabwe helped Pakistan plunder 69 from the final five overs. In response, there was limited substantive resistance aside from a Craig Ervine half-century, and with no one else able to push on, Pakistan continued to strengthen their position until the target became unassailable, with the innings wrapped up in 40.1 overs.

While rain had been forecast for today, the skies were clear when Pakistan won the toss and opted to bat. While they didn't quite motor along at the lightning pace they had set on Tuesday, Saim Ayub and Shafique got Pakistan off to a brisk start, bringing up the 50-partnership inside 11 overs. But Ayub fell soon after miscuing his trademark shot as he picked Faisal Akram up over deep backward square leg, straight to Clive Madande on the boundary.

Ghulam was uncertain early on, nearly chipping one straight back to Sean

Williams off his eighth ball. When Williams dragged one down the following over, though, Ghulam walloped it over deep mid-wicket for six, and that seemed to free him up. Alongside Shafique, he helped Pakistan tick over at a steady, if unspectacular rate, and the 100 came up in 22 overs. Sikandar Raza broke that stand soon after, though, trapping Shafique in front as he miscued his sweep, right after he got to his half-century.

Rizwan and Ghulam combined to put together the largest partnership of the innings, but even as conditions for batting flattened out, the anticipated uptick in the scoring rate did not follow. Rizwan, in particular, coasted at a strike rate of just over 50 off his first 25 balls, leaving Ghulam to push through the gears. He took a liking to Brian Bennett, forcing him out of the attack after taking 27 off his two overs. Zimbabwe reigned the visitors back again with Williams and Akram before Raza got his side the breakthrough. Rizwan had lofted him for six over long-on off a miscue, and when he tried it again off the next delivery, Dion Myers had a simple catch.

Ghulam, by now, was powering along to three figures. Akram was dispatched for successive boundaries before a long hop from Raza was put away to midwicket to bring up the ton. Zimbabwe were finally threatening to accelerate but Richard Ngarava

removed Ghulam straight after in an attempt to peg them back again.

It was the 46th over that the wheels finally came off for Zimbabwe. The Akram over saw six wides, a no-ball, two fours and a six as 23 came off it, and Pakistan suddenly eyed 300. Even Blessing Muzarabani wasn't spared, taken for 24 in his final two overs as Pakistan eked over the 300 mark, taking all the momentum with them to the break.

Pakistan needed to wait till just the third over to strike, doing so twice in Ayub's over. Joylord Gumbie and Myers each holed out in an attempt to keep the run rate up, and it was an approach Zimbabwe persisted with even as wickets fell at regular intervals.

Tadiwanashe Marumani didn't last long but was belligerent as long as he did, and was unfortunate to be given out leg before off Abrar Ahmed with the ball likely going down leg. Sean Williams picked up the run-scoring baton briefly, taking the attack to Agha Salman and Abrar after the end of the first powerplay, while Ervine slapped Haris Rauf for a pair of boundaries in what emerged as a menacing partnership for Pakistan.

But, like every Zimbabwean partnership, it ended much too soon to allow them to build any real pressure. Williams was done by extra pace from Haris as he chopped on, and it would mark the start

of a Zimbabwean slide.

The biggest scare Pakistan got was from suddenly converging clouds before the 20th over had been bowled, but on the pitch, wickets were beginning to fall in clusters. Zimbabwe were still picking up boundaries just about every over, with Ervine bringing up his half-century with a miscued sweep off Faisal Akram.

But the end was nigh for him. He was relieved when Tayyab Tahir shelled the simplest chance at mid-wicket, but Aamer Jamal would not be denied, inducing him into dragging on a short delivery later in the over. He backed it up by dismissing Raza in his following over, Zimbabwe looked to be at the receiving end of a huge defeat.

Those blushes were spared somewhat by an entertaining onslaught from Bennett, who took on the spinners with great successive in an exciting cameo that kept the Bulawayo faithful engaged. It wouldn't last, though, and when he miscued off Abrar Ahmed following a 27-ball 37, any realistic hopes the hosts harboured were gone.

Clive Madande and Ngarava soldiered on for a bit, and ensured Zimbabwe crossed 200 and kept the defeat to two figures. But Pakistan would not be denied an emphatic win, Faisal Akram and Rauf removing the last two off consecutive balls either side of the 40th over to make victory official.



BULAWAYO: Kamran Ghulam celebrating his maiden ton in third ODI against Zimbabwe.

Final call on CT25 Fresh venue one of three options, as ICC Board meets on Friday

LAHORE (ESPNcricinfo): The ICC board will congregate on Friday in the hopes of ending the saga of where and how the 2025 Champions Trophy will be played, with less than three months to the scheduled start of the event. They will consider three options:

A hybrid option, where the majority of matches are played in Pakistan but those involving India are played outside Pakistan.

The tournament is played entirely outside of Pakistan, with the option of the PCB retaining hosting rights.

The entire event is played in Pakistan but without India.

The last of those options is almost a non-starter, given the negative financial and commercial impact it will have on the tournament. The chances of the first - a hybrid model - were reduced on Thursday after a PCB official told ESPNcricinfo they had informed the ICC once again that it was off the table. "The PCB has asked the ICC to give a reasonable or acceptable proposal to Pakistan before the ICC Board meeting tomorrow," the official said.

Twelve hours earlier, in the early hours of Thursday morning in Pakistan, the chances of a hybrid model seemed to have increased slightly, at least going by the words of Mohsin Naqvi, the PCB chairman. Asked specifically about it multiple times, Naqvi said only that he would take whatever decision the ICC board makes to the Pakistan government.

That was slightly different to the previous public and emphatic rejections of a hybrid model being considered. Nevertheless, Naqvi

doubled down on the prospect of Pakistan no longer being willing or able to play in India which, given India is hosting a Women's World Cup next year, an Asia Cup in 2025, a Men's T20 World Cup in 2026 and a Champions Trophy in 2029, is going to be a recurring problem.

That, in fact, might be one of the conditions under which the PCB accepts any hybrid model for now: that the ICC then considers the same option for tournaments in India where Pakistan is - as of now - unlikely to be given permission to travel by its government.

Naqvi did not say whether Pakistan will play India in this tournament, as they are drawn to by dint of being in the same group. A hybrid model, or an entire relocation, means they will be scheduled to play at a neutral venue; the game not taking place would also mean a significant commercial hit to the tournament.

"Whatever we do, we will make sure the best outcome for Pakistan is achieved," Naqvi said multiple times. "But I repeat, and I am sure you know what I mean, it's not possible that Pakistan play in India, and they don't come here."

Naqvi said the PCB would not be motivated by the pursuit of any financial settlement, quashing informal chatter that the PCB might try and negotiate a hefty hosting fee in return for a hybrid model, promising "that we'll not just sell our rights out just for more money. This will never happen. But we'll do whatever is best for Pakistan." In any event, two countries for ven-

ues would require a revised tournament budget.

The meeting will be a virtual one and will likely come down to a vote only if a consensus isn't reached within the board. But the pressure will be on to reach a resolution swiftly, as time runs out before the tournament and preparations for it begin. An alternate or additional venue will have to be chosen depending on what option the board chooses, and a schedule for the event has to be finalised and released.

Additionally, the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore and the National Stadium in Karachi - two of the Pakistan venues - are undergoing significant renovation and upgradation work, in a race against time to be ready for the tournament. The PCB has assured the ICC board that the venues will be ready for the tournament by the end of this year.

Pakistan won hosting rights to the Champions Trophy in November 2021 and, if it goes to plan, it will be the first ICC event they have hosted since the 1996 World Cup. But its status was thrown into disarray when the BCCI informed the ICC earlier this month that its team had not been given permission by the Indian government to travel to Pakistan.

That was hardly a surprise, given no India team has toured Pakistan since 2008, with the Mumbai attacks later that year throwing relations between the two countries into a downward spiral. Pakistan have visited India three times since then, for a bilateral series in 2012-13, the 2016 T20 World Cup and, most recently, the 2023 ODI World Cup.

Swiatek accepts one-month doping suspension

LONDON (BBC): World number two and five-time Grand Slam champion Iga Swiatek has accepted a one-month suspension after testing positive for a banned substance.

The 23-year-old reigning French Open champion tested positive for a heart medication, trimetazidine (TMZ), in an out-of-competition sample in August 2024, when she was world number one.

The International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) accepted that it was caused by contamination of the regulated non-prescription medication melatonin, manufactured and sold in Poland, which Swiatek took for jet lag and sleep issues.

Swiatek's level of fault was therefore considered to be at the lowest end of the range for 'No Significant Fault or Negligence'.

"In the last two-and-a-half months I was subject to strict ITIA proceedings, which confirmed my innocence," she said on Instagram.

"The only positive doping test in my career, showing unbelievably low level of a banned substance I've never heard about before, put everything I've worked so hard for my entire life into question.

"Both me and my team had to deal with tremendous stress and anxiety. Now everything has been carefully explained, and with a clean slate I can go back to what I love most."

Swiatek was provisionally suspended from 12 September before successfully appealing, missing three tournaments.

The Polish player appealed the provisional suspension on 22 September, notifying an independent tribunal that the source of the positive test had been identified as a contaminated medicine manufactured in her home country.

After testing confirmed Swiatek's account, the ITIA offered her a one-month suspension which she accepted on Wednesday.

Because her provisional suspension was lifted on 4 October, Swiatek's period of ineligibility will end on 4 December 2024.

The Pole was also forced to forfeit the prize money from her run to the Cincinnati Open semi-finals, the tournament that directly followed the test.

"I admit this situation hit me hard because all my life I strived to have a career that could be an example for generations to come," said Swiatek.

"I have a sense this situation could undermine the image I've been building for years, which is why I hope you will understand I had no control over it and could do nothing to prevent this unfortunate turn of events.

"Without my supporters I am not sure I would have been able to find the strength to carry on and keep fighting. Now I have fought the toughest battle in my life, and I hope you will stay with me and keep supporting me."

Steady Bashir helps put positive spin on England's day

LONDON (Cricinfo): "I think I know what you're going to do..." said Craig McMillan at the toss presentation after Ben Stokes' tails-never-fails approach had come good. We all did.

What we did not know at the time, and certainly did not expect, was that after choosing to bowl first on a typically green Hagley Oval surface, England would only end day one of this first Test on an even keel with New Zealand because of the lone frontline spinner on either side.

Their seamers certainly did not bowl that badly. And truth be told, Shoaib Bashir did not bowl that well. But with 4 for 69 - wryly declared as "nice" by the ground announcer as the offspinner led his team off the field on day one - he had already justified his inclusion in the XI.

That was never actually in doubt. Since Stokes took over as captain, every England side has featured a frontline spinner, even when they have not had much to do. He views them like mobile phones - functional, versatile, lost without one - and, as far as Bashir is concerned, he has no intention of trading in for another model as we approach the 12-month

mark of the 21-year-old's Test career.

There is a lot to be said for that level of trust, which has been a hallmark of Stokes' leadership - at times to a fault. But while the Kiwis might be the friendliest people on the planet, their pitches could not be less welcoming to spinners. Even their own; Ajaz Patel, one of the heroes of the historic India series win, has played 18 of his 21 Tests away from home, and is yet to take a wicket in New Zealand.

Thankfully for Bashir, Rachin Ravindra improved Kiwi-spinner relations by slapping a full toss to mid-wicket for his first. Tom Blundell's skewed backfoot punch to point was similarly generous, though a bit of extra bounce did catch the keeper-batter unawares.

Removing Nathan Smith - caught around the corner at leg slip - was a neatly concocted third. When Matt Henry heaved down the ground into the hands of Ben Duckett at long-on, Bashir became only the second spinner to take four wickets here, after Shakib Al Hasan in 2017. He now has the opportunity to become the first to bag five on this ground.

Whether he achieves that or not does not make the life and times of Bashir any less remarkable. He has bowled more overs than anyone else in Test cricket this year - 457.3 in 22 innings since his debut on the tour of India in February - while simultaneously not being regarded as the best English spinner at his country.

The 45 dismissals at 36.06 rank broadly as a success considering he was essentially plucked from social media. A chastening tour of Pakistan, with just nine wickets at 49.55, portrays a more accurate picture of a raw spinner in the embryonic stages of his career as a professional, not just a Test cricketer.

"I'm learning on the job, I'm not perfect," Bashir said after play. Further self-awareness came when reviewing the 20 overs he did not expect to bowl: "I bowled plenty of bad balls out there and I was still kept on."

That just shows how much faith they [Stokes and Brendon McCullum] have in me. That brings the best out of me, and I just really enjoy playing under them."

Though Bashir has bowled better, the was some encouraging in-game problem solving. A nod to

unquantifiable nuggets gathered during his 13 caps to date.

Almost immediately after he was brought on from the Portis Hills End for the 30th over, just after lunch, a strong breeze picked up from the other side of the ground. He refused to be blown off course. "The wind took away my line a little bit. I knew I had to be stronger in my bowling action."

Then there was his back-and-forth with Kane Williamson, the latest in a string of stars he has found himself up against. A succession of drag downs allowed Williamson to smear the leg side boundary for a brace of fours to take him to his half-century. But as Bashir grew into his spell, things became less one-sided.

It was to Williamson - on 65 - that Bashir bowled his best delivery: flighted outside off, dragging the right-hander across and out of his crease, beating the edge, with Ollie Pope removing the bails sharply. Alas, Williamson's right foot was sharper.

"When I saw him out the crease I was licking my lips," Bashir said. "All of a sudden he slides back... it happens."

Something special brewing at Slot's remarkable Liverpool

LONDON (BBC): Arne Slot can now add banishing memories of some of the most painful episodes in Liverpool's recent history to his list of achievements in the stunning start to his Anfield tenure.

Real Madrid were predecessor Jurgen Klopp's nemesis among his many successes, agonisingly losing Champions League finals to the Spanish giants in 2018 and 2022, as well as falling to them on two other occasions in the past seven seasons.

Slot shifted the previously immovable Real Madrid object in superb fashion, ending a sequence of six losses and two draws against the 15-time winners in what was the biggest statement of intent since this understated Dutch coach succeeded Klopp.

Real Madrid's superstar fan Rafael Nadal, deciding to spend some time following retirement from tennis

watching his heroes at Anfield, knows a formidable opponent when he sees one. Even he will have appreciated the quality of Liverpool's performance through his pain at such a comprehensive defeat.

Klopp left Slot an outstanding squad to work with but, with his more measured but still thrillingly potent approach, a remarkable record of 17 wins, one defeat and one draw is a remarkable testimony to the way he has gone about his work.

With every game, every win, the sense that something special is brewing at Liverpool under Slot - the antithesis of his animated, fist-pumping, iconic predecessor - grows.

Slot's style may be more low-key but that statistic alone illustrates how Liverpool's fans have hardly been able to see the join since he replaced Klopp.

What was billed as an impossible task to replace

the beloved, not to mention very successful Klopp, is being made to look like a walk in the park.

The Kop serenaded Slot and his players with "Liverpool, Liverpool top of the league" as the seconds ticked down to the final whistle. You can take your pick of which league they were singing about.

Liverpool's 2-0 win, not a scoreline that flatters them, made it five wins from five in the Champions League to put them top of the new format's table.

And, as an addition, Liverpool are eight points clear at the Premier League summit, with the chance to go 11 points ahead of struggling champions Manchester City with victory at Anfield on Sunday.

Liverpool put the years of suffering at Real's hands behind them to run Carlo Ancelotti's side ragged. They shook the

success-soaked Spaniards until they rattled, with Kylian Mbappe and Jude Bellingham reduced to watching the night pass them by.

Slot's team had a fierce, driven hunger that was simply too much for Real Madrid.

How sweet this must have tasted for star turns such as Mohamed Salah, who blasted a penalty wide, and Virgil van Dijk after so many setbacks against this particular team.

Rio Ferdinand told TNT: "Liverpool have thrown the gauntlet down to all the other teams in Europe. They are the in-form team. This Liverpool team look starving. They look starving and Slot is sending them out there like Rottweilers on the pitch hunting teams down."

"I said before the game, Arne Slot will have wanted to see what his team could produce against a team of

this magnitude and they produced."

No-one epitomised that hunger more than 21-year-old right-back Conor Bradley, who delivered the sort of display that suggested Liverpool may have a perfect replacement in waiting should Trent Alexander-Arnold, as has been speculated, take the road to the Bernabeu in the summer.

Bradley has excelled before but this was his best display yet given the occasion and calibre of opposition. It is to be hoped a late injury does not prove serious.

The Northern Ireland defender found himself confronted by Mbappe starting on his flank. To say he gave the great forward a tough time is an understatement.

Mbappe endured a nightmare evening, even missing a second-half penalty which would have undeservedly brought Real

level - but one moment of their personal battle stands out above all others.

The forward was bearing down on the Kop with danger in the air in the 31st minute until he was halted in his tracks by a thundering, totally legal challenge from Bradley, which cleaned out the ball and Mbappe.

Liverpool's fans rose to their feet in celebration of the tackle, Bradley's name echoing around Anfield as Mbappe struggled to regain his dignity.

It was not the only time Bradley was praised in song, linking with Alexis Mac Allister for the goal that finally gave Liverpool what they deserved after 52 minutes. He was even a goal threat himself with a header that brought the best out of Real keeper Thibaut Courtois.

When he limped off three minutes from time, replaced by Joe Gomez, Liverpool's fans were out

of their seats once more in a standing ovation.

Alexander-Arnold will have watched in admiration from the substitutes' bench. Liverpool would not want to lose such a stellar local talent, but Bradley's presence suggests the blow can be softened if that comes to pass.

Liverpool can now turn their attentions to Manchester City, currently suffering a serious downturn. Slot's team could not be in ruder health, with the head coach calmly steering them.

City have not found much joy at Anfield in the past, even in the Pep Guardiola glory era. In their current state they will not be relishing the prospect of facing this rampant side.

In nine visits to Anfield as City manager, Guardiola has only won once, a 4-1 win behind closed doors during lockdown in February 2021. He has suf-

fered five defeats and drawn three times.

The omens are not good for Guardiola and his players, who have found Anfield an unforgiving place even at their best.

Even Slot admitted to a measure of surprise at his record so far, saying: "I didn't have a schedule in terms of points I wanted. You want to implement the playing style as soon as possible. That is not difficult because it wasn't that different to Jurgen's."

"It is great that not only the starters, but the players coming on are doing as we expect. If before the start of the season I had counted points for this point in the season, I wouldn't have counted as much we have now."

On this growing body of evidence, City may fear they will be walking into a perfect Liverpool storm at Anfield as the Slot machine continues to find fresh gears.



In brief

Syedaal lauds efforts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan on Thursday commended Islamic Relief for its vital role in providing aid during natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and droughts in Pakistan. During a meeting at the Parliament House with a delegation from Islamic Relief led by UK Councillor Shahin Ashraf, the Acting Chairman highlighted the organization's significant contributions in Balochistan. He acknowledged the assistance provided to remote areas of Balochistan during difficult times. "The establishment of relief centers in various regions is commendable," he said, adding, "Offering aid during challenging circumstances is a remarkable service to humanity." The acting Chairman assured the delegation of his full support for their ongoing relief initiatives and applauded their unwavering commitment to humanitarian work. The delegation expressed gratitude for the Chairman's support and reaffirmed their dedication to launching new projects in Balochistan and other underprivileged areas.

NPA delegation visits Safe City

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Mid-Career Management Course delegation from National Police Academy (NPA) Islamabad visited Safe City Islamabad, on Thursday. A police spokesperson told APP that, the delegation visits the command-and-control center, the data hub unit, modern technology-equipped cameras, and the police operations center hall. They were fully briefed about the procedures and advantages of this project. Furthermore, the delegation was informed that Safe City Islamabad is playing a significant role in various departments through modern techniques, including the Police Operations Center, Emergency Control Center, Data Hub Unit, Dispatch Control Center, E-Challan System, and the "Pucar-15" helpline. The delegation was also apprised of the functionality and benefits of the Safe City cameras in the city. The modern cameras of Safe City are playing a crucial role in ensuring the safety of the city and preventing crimes and safeguarding the lives and property of citizens. Face recognition cameras have been installed at the entry and exit points of the city which are playing an important role in identifying suspicious elements, he maintained. The delegation also acknowledged the modern technical system of the Islamabad Police and its benefits.

94100 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 94,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 46,600 cusecs. Water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1497.62 feet and was 99.62 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 22,900 cusecs and 49,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1159.15 feet, which was 109.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 5,600 cusecs and 27,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 53,400, 45,400, 38,400 and 5,800 cusecs respectively. From River Kabul, a total of 11,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

BEOE cancelled 807 licences of OEPs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE), an attached department of Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) have canceled 807 licences of Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs) due to the public complaints.

An official source told APP here on Thursday, he said that 5104 OEPs were registered with BEOE 2760 valid, 832 surrendered, 9 invalid and 668 expired.

He said that BEOE was working very efficiently to provide maximum relief and support to the citizen of the country.

He said that the main function of this department is to control and regulate emigration under the Emigration Ordinance, 1979, and promote the Emigration of Pakistani Citizens.

It is also the responsibility to look after the emigrants' interests and welfare and advise the Federal Government on emigration

policies and procedures.

Monitoring and supervision of Overseas Employment Promoters through 7 Protectorates of Emigrants Offices and Processing of Overseas Employment Promoters (OEP) Licences, he added.

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

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with foreign countries for export of manpower and management of State Life Emigrants Insurance Fund (SLEIF) were the main functions of this department.

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

He said there were only 2739 Overseas Employment Promoters (OEP) licenses that were valid as more than 8 licenses had been pronounced invalid.

Out of the invalid OEPs, the licenses of some 680 were canceled on various grounds while 807 expired and the rest had surrendered.

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

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

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

Pakistan needs a cornea donation campaign: AST

ISLAMABAD (APP): Al-Shifa Trust (AST) on Thursday advocated for a state-backed cornea donation campaign to decrease reliance on imports as more than 300,000 individuals were currently on transplant waiting lists.

Talking to the media, AST President Maj Gen (Retired) Rehmat Khan stated that bridging the imbalance requires an awareness campaign, enabling local donations to assist needy individuals in becoming productive citizens.

He said those awaiting transplants could be reintegrated as productive members of society if we can have enough local donations.

Rehmat informed that the limited supply of corneal tissue could be attributed to several factors, including insufficient awareness, reluctance to

donate, demographic and systemic influences such as age, gender, education, cultural considerations, and the availability of surgeons and operating facilities.

Despite nearly 185,000 corneal transplants, approximately 12.7 million individuals remain on the waiting list for transplants. He added that estimates suggested that only 1 in 70 individuals requiring a transplant have access to one.

He stated that Al-Shifa Trust Hospital could conduct nearly 800 corneal transplants annually as a significant deficit between the supply and demand of corneal tissue impairs its capacity to serve more people.

Gen Rehmat Khan stated that many individuals were awaiting transplants in Pakistan and a lack of inclination in local populations prompted cornea imports.

He informed that

corneal tissue supply chain management could be inconsistent, mainly when certain cornea-exporting nations restrict donations to satisfy local transplant needs.

Therefore, he said, it is essential to take the initiative locally to transform the lives of individuals awaiting vision restoration.

The cornea was among the simplest tissues to transplant, as it does not necessitate matching between donor and recipient, adding it operates without blood, extracting oxygen directly from the atmosphere.

He informed that AST has a state-of-the-art eye bank at Rawalpindi Eye Hospital and expert doctors for collecting eye donations.

Corneal grafting from an older adult to a younger recipient is a feasible procedure.

ISSI's annual flagship event next week

— to focus on 'Pakistan and Evolving Global Order'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI)'s annual flagship dialogue forum, the "Islamabad Conclave", is set to take place on 3-4 December 2024. This would be the 4th edition of 'Islamabad Conclave', with this year's thematic focus on "Pakistan and the Evolving Global Order."

The Islamabad Conclave embodies a track 1.5 initiative designed to bring together high tiers of Pakistani leadership as well as distinguished practitioners, scholars, academics, and area specialists from Pakistan and abroad.

The event serves as a forum to evaluate developments at the global and regional levels; assess their general and specific

impact on Pakistan; and propose responses and innovative solutions for Pakistan to the emerging challenges and opportunities, said a press release.

Cognizant of the complex geo-political, security, and geo-economic dynamics, the Conclave's overall theme this year is further divided into five sub-themes, namely: (i) Major Power Competition: Emerging Realities; (ii) Evolving Strategic Environment: Impact on Order, Institutions, and Norms; (iii) Space for Middle Powers and the 'Global South'; (iv) Transforming Regional Dynamics and Architecture: Pakistan's Posture; and (v) Future of Multilateralism.

After the inaugural plenary, the five sub-themes

would be explored in separate working sessions. These meticulously crafted sessions envisage participation of eminent speakers with rich and diverse backgrounds and experiences, thus fostering comprehensive dialogue and strategic insights. The concluding plenary would aim to synthesize the plethora of ideas and perspectives shared throughout the event.

Over the past four years, the Islamabad Conclave has emerged as a vital component of the annual, think-tanks-based track 1.5 policy dialogues in Pakistan. Earlier, the 3rd edition of Islamabad Conclave in 2023 generated insightful discourse and policy prescriptions on the theme of "Pakistan in a Changing World."

Jaggery with dry nuts emerges as top winter treat

ISLAMABAD (APP): A sharp drop in temperatures has triggered a massive surge in demand for 'jaggery', a traditional Punjabi sweetener, across Punjab and other parts of the country, where to cope with the overwhelming orders, local farmers, workers and traders are putting in extra hours with jaggery paired with dry nuts proving to be a clear winter favorite.

A report aired by a private news channel said in Punjab's rural areas, jaggery is being prepared with dry nuts, a traditional combination that is believed to have numerous health benefits.

Workers at local jaggery units are busy boiling sugarcane juice, adding dry nuts and shaping the mix-

ture into blocks, said a citizen of Layya.

"We have been working day and night to meet the demand," said a worker at a jaggery unit in Ali Pur.

"Jaggery is a traditional product that is in high demand during winters. We are happy to be a part of this process," said another worker.

Citizens are also thrilled about the availability of jaggery during winters. "Jaggery is a natural sweetener that is rich in iron and other minerals," said a local resident of Rawalpindi.

"It's a healthier alternative to refined sugar and is perfect for winters when we need something to warm us up," he added.

Doctors also recommend jaggery for its

numerous health benefits. "Jaggery is a natural remedy for many diseases, including cold, cough, diabetic and respiratory problems," said Dr. Umair a local physician.

"It is also rich in antioxidants and has anti-inflammatory properties, he said, adding, making it a great addition to our diet during winters."

According to traders of Punjab the demand for jaggery has increased by at least 20% this year compared to last year.

As the demand for jaggery continues to rise, local farmers are also benefiting from the surge in demand. "We are getting a good price for our sugarcane crop, which is a big relief for us," said a farmer in Layya.



ISLAMABAD: Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadadam condoles with Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Raiz Hussain Pirzada on passing of his brother.

Funeral prayer of constable offered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The funeral prayer of Islamabad Police Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) special squad officer Constable Safdar Hussain Shah, who embraced martyrdom in the line of duty, was offered at Police Lines Headquarters on Thursday.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, senior police officers and a large number of police officers offered the funeral prayer, a public relation officer told APP.

A smartly turned-out contingent of the police personnel presented a guard of honour. IGP Rizvi and senior police officers draped the coffins with flower wreaths and recited fatiha. Police officers shouldered the coffins and later the body was sent to his respective native town.

IGP Rizvi condoled with the family of the deceased and said that Islamabad Police stands with the bereaved family and will take care of them in every possible way.

IGP also issued orders to the senior police officers to provide full support to the family of the deceased, saying that every officer of the police force is a valuable asset for me, their families will be taken care of in every way.

Moderate rain likely from today

ISLAMABAD (APP): After the prolonged dry spell, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has indicated chances of moderate rain in upper parts of the country and Balochistan from November 28 till December 02 which would help improve air quality in the smog-affected areas.

According to an advisory issued by PMD, a westerly wave was likely to affect western parts of the country from November 28 (night).

Under the influence of this weather system, moderate rain-wind/thunderstorm with snowfall over the hills is expected in Quetta, Pishin, Qilla Saifullah, Zhob, Shirani, Musa Khel, Barkhan, Ziarat, Loralai, Dera Ghazi Khan on November 28 (night)/ November 29 and December 02.

Moderate rain-wind/thunderstorm with snowfall over the hills is likely in Gwadar, Kech, Panjgur, Awaran, Kalat, Khuzdar and Lasbella on November 28 (night) and November 29.

Light to moderate rain-wind/thunderstorm with snowfall over the mountains is expected in Waziristan, Kurram, Mohmand, Khyber, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Malakand, Buner, Shangla, Manshera, Abbottabad, Kohistan, Astore, Ghizer, Gilgit, Hunza, Skardu, Neelum Valley, Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot, Kotli, Haveli and Bagh from November 29 (evening/night) to December 02 with occasional gaps.

Light rain/drizzle is also expected in Pothohar region, Murree, Galliat, Islamabad, Mianwali, Bhakkar and Layyah on November 29 (evening/night) and December 02.

About the possible impacts and advices, air quality conditions in Punjab are likely to improve. Foggy conditions are likely to develop over the plains of Punjab in coming days.

The farmers have been advised to manage their activities keeping in view the weather forecast.

CDA unveils ambitious plans for hotels, luxury housing

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has announced an ambitious plan to auction premium commercial plots for the development of 5-star hotels and launch residential plots in the scenic Sector C-14.

The initiative, unveiled during a meeting chaired by CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa, on Thursday aims to attract significant investments from both local and overseas Pakistanis.

The meeting, attended by CDA board members and senior officers, highlighted two prime plots earmarked for international bidding, specifically targeting overseas Pakistanis and global investors.

The bidding for these luxury hotel plots is set to conclude on 17 December 2024, and officials emphasised investor-friendly terms to maximise participation.

The CDA has introduced flexible payment plans, streamlined conditions, and various incentives to encourage investment.

Chairman Randhawa endorsed these measures, describing them as pivotal to transforming Islamabad into a global hub for tourism, business, and modern urban living.

"We are committed to positioning Islamabad as a beacon of luxury and progress, offering unparalleled opportunities for investors. Engaging overseas Pakistanis is key to this vision, and we will col-

laborate with embassies and missions abroad to highlight these lucrative opportunities," Randhawa said.

The initiative also includes the launch of residential plots in Sector C-14, nestled at the foothills of the Margalla Hills. Designed for a premium lifestyle, this sector is tailored to cater to both local and overseas Pakistanis, with preference given to investments made in foreign currencies such as the US dollar.

With these strategic moves, the CDA is setting the stage for Islamabad to emerge as a premier destination for high-end developments, offering unique opportunities for investors worldwide.

PWD demands additional Rs135 million for repair work of govt flats in G-8

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Public Works Department (PWD) has demanded an additional Rs 135 million to complete the repair and renovation of government flats and blocks in Sector G-8, Islamabad.

The PWD has partially completed repair and renovation works in G-8, the project will only be finalized once the required funds are made available, an official in the department told APP.

The remaining works are expected to be completed

within six months after the funds are received.

He said the scope of the repairs includes internal and external painting of all flats, replacement of worn-out shutters, bathroom repairs with all necessary accessories, replacement of glass panes, and roof treatment.

To a question, the official said that the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) is actively conducting operations against unauthorized commercial use of residential buildings

in Sectors G-13 and G-14 of Islamabad.

The official said the authority has already issued notices to property owners engaging in illegal commercial activities within residential areas.

According to the Islamabad Capital Territory Building Control Regulation 2020, the FGEHA has committed to taking legal action against property owners involved in the unlawful commercial use of residential buildings in these sectors, he added.

Railways offer 50% concession for disable persons in trains fare

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is offering a 50 percent concession in rail fares to facilitate disabled persons traveling in all express and passenger trains, except the Green Line.

"The concession is granted upon the presentation of the Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) bearing the disability logo," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said that a 50 percent discount is also offered to the attendant accompanying visually impaired persons. About the facilities at Railway Stations and Reservation Offices, he said that wheelchairs are available at all major stations to assist disabled passengers.

Additionally, the official

said that exclusive reservation and booking counters have been designated for disabled persons at reservation offices. The free-of-cost access to executive washrooms and restrooms has been provided at a few major stations for special persons.

The official said that the facility of executive washrooms at 12 major stations is also being developed and will have free access for disabled passengers.

To a question, the official said that Khushal Khan Khattak Express was discontinued in March 2020 owing to COVID-19, as train operation was suspended.

He said that Pakistan Railways is operating 98 trains on a daily basis with 1,180 serviceable coaches.

The department owns 1,680 passenger coaches on books out of which 72 percent of coaches have surpassed their useful life.

The official said the overage coaches require extra resources, and maintenance costs to keep them fit for operation. At present, 2 Up and 2 Down trains are running between Peshawar and Karachi, he added.

He said that two passenger trains Bolan Mail and Monjodaro Express are operating on the Larkana section to cater to the transportation needs of the area while the restoration of Khushal Khan Khattak will be examined once the availability of coaches is improved along with consideration of the operating cost and commercial viability.

ANF recovers over 63 kg drugs in nine operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover over 63 kg drugs worth Rs 10 million and arrested nine accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Thursday.

He informed that 3.6 kg hashish hidden in secret cavities of a car intercepted near Kohinoor Mills Rawalpindi was recovered and arrested an accused.

3 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of

an accused arrested near a petrol pump in Fateh Chowk, Hyderabad.

2.4 kg hashish was recovered from a drug dealer netted near Pirwadhai Mor G.T. Road Rawalpindi.

900 grams hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused rounded up near a college on the Expressway Islamabad. 51 grams weed was recovered from two accused held near a university in Bahria Town Islamabad.

The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs

to students of educational institutions.

In another operation, 1.2 kg ice was recovered from a suspect rounded up near Haji Camp Peshawar.

10 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects apprehended on Saryab Road, Quetta.

32 kg hashish hidden near the coastal line in Gwadar was recovered and in another operation, 5 kg heroin and 5 kg ice were recovered from a warehouse near D-Block Chowk, Gwadar.

IEA envoy present credential

KABUL (Ariana News): UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan received the credentials of Badruddin Haqqani, ambassador of IEA. Haqqani was among several newly appointed ambassadors who presented their credentials to UAE president. During the reception, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed welcomed the ambassadors and wished them success in strengthening the ties between the UAE and their respective countries.

Over 68m afn allocated

KABUL (BNA): The Education Directorate of Maidan Wardak province has announced the successful implementation of 41 education projects during the ongoing 1403 solar year, costing over 68 million Afghanis. The projects include the renovation of 22 schools and religious seminaries funded by the Ministry of Education's budget. Additionally, 12 permanent structures and 7 water and sanitation projects were completed with financial support from UNICEF.

Karzai calls for dialogue 23 years after Bonn Conference

KABUL (Khaama Press): Twenty-three years after the historic Bonn Conference, the German city hosted a closed-door meeting on Afghanistan. The meeting was attended by former Afghan President Hamid Karzai and several political figures.

According to a source, the event, titled "Afghanistan at the Crossroads: 23 Years After the Bonn Conference," was organized by the Academy of International Affairs North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany.

In addition to Hamid Karzai, former foreign ministers Zalmai Rasoul and Rangin Dadfar Spanta, former Afghan Ambassador to Germany Hamid Siddiqi, and former Afghan Consul General in Germany, Syed Lutfullah Sadat, participated in the meeting. The Mayor of Bonn and several Afghan expatriates residing in Germany also attended the event.

During his speech, Hamid Karzai referred to the absence of all political

factions at the Bonn Conference as a "historic mistake," which, according to him, prevented the fulfillment of the Afghan people's aspirations.

Karzai's remark referred to the exclusion of the Taliban from the Bonn Conference. He is among the politicians who believe that if the Taliban had attended, the 20-year war and the group's eventual resurgence could have been avoided.

Today, the same mistakes made at the Bonn Conference are being repeated by the Taliban regime, which is forming an exclusive government without the inclusion of women, other ethnic groups, or political parties.

He further emphasized the historical and friendly relations between Afghanistan and Germany, stating that Germany could once again host talks between Afghans.

Karzai also reiterated the importance of a national dialogue among the Afghan people, asserting that the

initiative for dialogue and reconciliation must come from the Afghan people themselves.

Karzai said that during his presidency, he referred to the Taliban as "brothers" and still considers opposition figures to the Taliban as "brothers."

At the historic Bonn Conference in 2001, held at the Petersburg Hotel, the foundations were laid for the formation of a new Afghanistan government, the convening of an emergency Loya Jirga, the holding of presidential elections, the drafting of a constitution, and the inclusion of women and ethnic groups in the structure of the new government.

The Bonn Conference remains a pivotal moment in Afghanistan's history, but its legacy is contentious.

The ongoing discussions, such as those held in Bonn recently, underline the importance of dialogue in seeking a lasting resolution for Afghanistan's future.

Haqqani discusses returnee challenges

KABUL (BNA): Acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Khalil-ur-Rahman Haqqani, held an introductory meeting with Mi Hyung Park, the Chief of Mission for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Afghanistan, at his office.

According to a statement from the Ministry, discussions focused on addressing the challenges faced by returnees, streamlining humanitarian assistance, expediting winter aid, and enhancing coordination between the two sides.

Minister Haqqani congratulated Mi Hyung Park on her new assignment and highlighted the urgent needs of the increasing number of returnees, including shelter, education, healthcare, and economic support. He urged IOM to fulfill its responsibilities by prioritizing fundamental solutions for these issues rather than focusing solely on emergency aid.

In response, Mi Hyung Park emphasized that the IOM operates in numerous countries worldwide but finds the Afghan government's attention to refugees encouraging.

She assured the Ministry of IOM's continued efforts to improve and enhance its activities, acknowledging that collaboration with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation is crucial for achieving success.

UNAMA convenes meeting

KABUL (Ariana News): The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) convened an inaugural meeting of the Working Group on Counter Narcotics on Thursday, as a follow-up to the third Meeting of Special Envoys held in Doha, Qatar.

The establishment of the thematic working group follows the recommendations of the independent assessment submitted to the Security Council to pursue a more coherent, coordinated and structured engagement process with Afghanistan's de facto authorities, for the benefit of the Afghan people, UNAMA said in a statement.

"Counter-narcotics is an issue of critical importance for Afghanistan, impacting both rural communities and regional peace and stability," Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNAMA, said after the online meeting.

The UN recently reported that opium production increased by 30 percent this year in Afghanistan. Islamic Emirate, however, rejected the report.

MOI rejects UN report

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Interior of Afghanistan has strongly refuted a recent United Nations report alleging an increase in drug cultivation and production across the country.

In an official statement shared on its X account, the ministry dismissed the claims as baseless, reiterating the Islamic Emirate's commitment to eradicating drug production. The statement highlighted:

"Drugs are a destructive and prohibited phenomenon under Islamic law. Guided by the decree of the leadership, the Islamic Emirate has placed combating this issue at the forefront of its agenda. Recent assessments indicate a marked reduction in drug cultivation and production over the past year, in stark contrast to previous years."

The ministry also criticized the international community's inaction, emphasizing the lack of meaningful support for Afghanistan's efforts. "Despite expectations for assistance in eradicating this menace and providing alternative livelihoods for farmers, no tangible cooperation has been extended by countries or organizations," the statement added.

Afghanistan invites Turkey for a joint trade exhibition

ISTANBUL (TOLONews): Nooruddin Azizi, acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, spoke at the opening of the Istanbul Halal Expo in Turkey, emphasizing the importance of improving trade relations with Turkey and other countries.

The acting minister highlighted that Afghanistan's participation in this event aims to create new opportunities for economic and trade cooperation between Afghanistan, Turkey, and the region, introduce Afghanistan's halal products, goods, and services to global markets, and attract foreign investment to Afghanistan.

Azizi stated that the Islamic Emirate seeks to strengthen economic and effective trade relations with neighboring, regional, and global countries through Islamic economics and halal trade.

These efforts aim to enhance the agricultural sector, develop infrastructure, support domestic industries, maintain financial stability, and encourage local and foreign investments in Afghanistan.

Nooruddin Azizi, acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, said: "The goal of Afghanistan's delegation is to participate in this



event is to create new opportunities for economic and trade cooperation between Afghanistan, Turkey, and the region, introduce Afghanistan's halal products, goods, and services to global markets, and attract foreign investment, especially from our friendly and brotherly nation of Turkey."

Azizi also invited Turkey's high-ranking officials and private sector representatives to visit Afghanistan and organize a joint exhibition in the country.

Nooruddin Azizi stated: "The Islamic Emirate of

Afghanistan strives to increase its trade volume with the Republic of Turkey. Therefore, we extend an official invitation to Turkey's high-level delegation to visit Afghanistan alongside the private sector and participate in a major exhibition showcasing their domestic products."

Several Afghan businessmen also highlighted the importance of Afghanistan's private sector participation in the Istanbul Halal Expo for expanding and strengthening trade relations with

Turkey. Noor Ahmad Nouri, president of the Carpet Producers and Exporters Association, said: "This exhibition, visited by ministers and traders from 120 countries, is highly significant for Afghanistan's carpet sector."

The Istanbul Halal Expo, running from November 27 to 30, features more than 30 Afghan traders showcasing Afghanistan's products, including carpets, precious and semi-precious stones, dried fruits, and banking services, across eight booths.

Persimmon yield increases across 16 provinces, says Ministry

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation reports an increase in persimmon orchards and a growing interest among farmers in this crop.

According to the ministry, currently, 1,328 hectares of land across 16 provinces are dedicated to persimmon orchards, producing more than 12,000 metric tons of persimmons annually.

Misbahuddin Mustaeen, spokesperson for the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, stated: "Persimmons is one of the fruits that has recently been promoted in the country. Farmers are increasingly interested in establishing persimmon orchards. Thanks to the Ministry of

Agriculture, the number of orchards and their productivity is increasing day by day."

Sayed Hafizullah, technical advisor to the Directorate of Agriculture and Irrigation in Kunar, told TOLONews: "Overall, I can say that this year, in Kunar province, our estimate for persimmon production is about 5,200 tons, which has now been introduced to the market."

Siddiqullah, a resident of Khas district in Kunar province, expressed satisfaction with the increase in persimmon production compared to previous years, saying: "Last year, 84 trees produced 1,700 cartons. This year, the production has increased to around 2,500 cartons. Each

carton is sold for 450 afghani, and the market is favorable."

Hazrat Wali, another farmer in the province, said: "In the future, we hope to see improvements in market accessibility for our orchards and fruits. Cold storage facilities should be established, and high-quality chemical fertilizers should be provided for us."

In addition to Kunar, a large number of residents from other provinces have also started cultivating persimmons, yielding promising results.

Sadiq, a farmer from Khost, said: "When the weather is either too hot or too cold, the persimmons ripen. You can see them on the trees and around. When

it gets cold, they ripen due to the cold. We need cold storage facilities. The fruits should be harvested while unripe and then stored in cold storage, which would increase their shelf life and provide better market opportunities."

These farmers demand the establishment of standard cold storage facilities, distribution of chemical fertilizers, and measures to prevent plant diseases.

Mohammadullah, another farmer from the province, stated: "Our request to the government is to provide proper pesticides and ensure suitable markets for farmers."

According to information from the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, most persimmon production comes from orchards in Kapisa, Laghman, Nangarhar, Kunar, Khost, Kunduz, and Badakhshan provinces, contributing to greater fruit diversity in the markets.

Progress on pipeline project discussed

HERAT (BNA): Herat Governor Sheikh Mawlawi Islam Jar and Baganch Abdullahayev, the General Director of the TAPI project in Afghanistan, discussed the commencement of transporting technical equipment and initiating practical work on the TAPI pipeline project in a recent meeting.

According to Bakhtar Agency Agency, the Turkmen delegation shared a list of technical equipment with Herat officials, confirming that the equipment would soon be transported to Herat. Additionally, they announced the completion of a 153-kilometer survey for the pipeline route and indicated that a team of Turkmen engineers and technicians would visit the site next week.

The TAPI project's General Director requested local authorities facilitate the transport of equipment and establish temporary camps to support the project's progress.

Governor Islam Jar welcomed the establishment of a joint border facility at the "Aslim Cheshma" area for equipment and pipeline transfer. He emphasized the importance of accelerating the project and assured the Turkmen delegation of the local administration's full cooperation and robust security measures to safeguard the project's operations.

Iran emphasizes dignity in migrant returns

KABUL (TOLONews): The spokesperson for the Iranian government stated that the return of migrants must be carried out while preserving their dignity and respect for human rights.

Fateme Mohajerani also emphasized that no person's dignity should be insulted. She said: "The return of migrants must be conducted with dignity and respect for human rights. No human dignity should be violated. At the same time, safeguarding national interests remains the government's top priority."

Zakya, who was recently deported from Iran with her family after two years of hardships, shared her struggles: "When my husband was deported, I had no choice but to take my children and turn myself in at the camp. Then we returned to Afghanistan."

Qandi Gul, another deported migrant, said: "We are six people. We had just arrived, but now we've been deported and brought here. We have no house, no livelihood, nothing."

Ehsanullah Ahmadzai, a migrant rights activist, told TOLONews: "In this matter, UNHCR should create a joint mechanism for Afghanistan and Pakistan to ensure that migrants who have permission to stay in these countries until a specified date receive the same rights that migrants in European countries are provided."

Meanwhile, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in a recent report, stated that between September 15, 2023, and November 15, 2024, a total of 770,964 Afghan migrants were deported from Pakistan.

The report also mentioned that 12,468 Afghan migrants were deported from Pakistan between November 1 and November 15 of the current year, reflecting a two percent increase.

A section of the IOM

report reads: "From 15 September 2023, 770,964 individuals have returned to Afghanistan. Thirty-six percent (280,073 individuals) of this total have returned since 1 January 2024."

The spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan stated that efforts are underway to provide more facilities for returning migrants.

Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, said: "Migrants returning to Afghanistan will receive services from the Islamic Emirate. A separate commission has been established for this purpose, which is currently operating with 12 active committees, especially at the country's borders. Migrants returning to the country are provided with assistance."

Previously, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation reported the deportation of 150,000 Afghan migrants from Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey.

Telecommunications antennas generate afn 223m

KABUL (BNA): The Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock announced that Afghanistan generates an annual revenue of approximately Afn 223 million from telecommunication antennas.

This statement was made during a meeting chaired by Mullah Aghajan Akhund Haji Salim, with representatives from the Ministry of Communications and

Information Technology, ATRA and the Ministry of Finance. The meeting aimed to assess the status of telecommunication antennas across the country and finalize contracts for their regulation.

In line with directives issued by His Excellency Amir-ul-Mu'mineen of IEA, all telecommunication antennas owned by the Islamic Emirate are to be

identified, their debts determined, and their contracts regulated. The meeting emphasized the need to expedite this process and follow up on outstanding debts.

According to Ministry of Agriculture, so far, contracts have been finalized for 838 antennas, but the ownership of 674 others remains undetermined. Despite the significant revenue generated annually,

Budget approved for construction of hospitals



KABUL (TOLONews): Noor Jalal Jalali, acting Minister of Public Health, announced the approval of a budget for building 318 hospitals in districts by the leadership of the Islamic Emirate.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony for the diagnostic centers of the Infectious Diseases Hospital and the Afghanistan Hospital in Kabul, Jalali stated that currently, only 92 districts have hospitals.

The acting minister added: "Out of approximately 400 districts in Afghanistan, we have hospitals in 92 districts, while all other areas lack them. The Amir al-Mu'minin, out of his compassion and kindness, approved a mid-year budget for the construction of 318 hospitals in districts."

The construction project for the diagnostic centers of the Infectious Diseases Hospital and the Afghanistan Hospital, initiated in collaboration with JICA and the World Health Organization (WHO), has

been launched in Kabul with a budget of 100 million Afghanis.

Sharafat Zaman, spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Health, stated that these two projects involve the construction of two buildings, which will be completed and inaugurated within the next three months.

Meanwhile, the Director of Therapeutic Medicine at the Ministry of Public Health announced the standardization of hospitals in the capital, adding that soon, MRI systems will be activated in some hospitals using the ministry's budget.

Wahdat Alkoza, Director of Therapeutic Medicine, said: "As we all know, we currently do not have a single MRI machine within the framework of the Ministry of Public Health across Afghanistan. This year, we will witness the installation of two MRI machines."

Meanwhile, the Director of the National and Specialized Infectious

Diseases Hospital highlighted the need for standardized intensive care units (ICUs) and pointed out shortages of some equipment and medicines.

Spin Gul Subhani Zadran, Director of the Infectious Diseases Hospital, stated: "One of our major problems is the lack of standardized intensive care units."

Additionally, the WHO announced that since 2021, it has trained 800 healthcare workers in Afghanistan, over 300 of whom are women.

The WHO wrote on X: "Since Dec 2021, WHO's Basic Emergency Care course has trained 800 first contact health workers in Afghanistan, including 333 women, improving survival rates for acute illness and injury."

The acting minister highlighted that significant efforts have been made in recent years to provide basic health services. However, the lack of tertiary services has led many patients to seek treatment abroad.

PTI's final protest call at Islamabad failed: Muqam

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs, Engr Amir Muqam here Thursday said that Pakistan Tahrik e Insaf's leadership final protest call for release of PTI founder at Islamabad was miserably failed and was proved a miss-call.

Addressing a press conference here, Engr Amir Muqam said that people of KP have kept distance from the protest call due to an irrational demands especially about release of the PTI founder. He said that PTI founder was an accused and would have to face courts that would decide his fate.

He said that PTI second demand about revoking of the 26th constitutional amendment was totally an irrational. Engr Amir Muqam said the said amendment was passed by the Parliament that reflected people will. Engr Amir Muqam said the third demand of PTI to bring its leaders to the Parliament and ousted others was totally childish.

Engr Amir Muqam claimed that Pakistan had suffered huge loss due to agitation of PTI that kept life at Islamabad paralyzed for three days. Expressing condolences over the losses and injuries of security personnel during PTI protest, he said the Government and security forces leadership showed maximum restraint that averted bloodshed in the Federal Capital. He said the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were left alone at D Chowk Islamabad by the PTI.

Despite using of KP Government machinery, he said that PTI could not bring out even 9000 workers against 9lac claims. He claimed that Afghan refugees were brought after PTI workers rejected the call. He said that even PTI lawmakers disassociated themselves from the protest.

Engr Amir Muqam said that PTI founder children were enjoying perks and privileges at London while innocents youth were being used in agitation in winter. He said that PTI failed to deliver in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa despite third term in office and masses problems were increased manifolds. Engr Amir Muqam accused the PTI for negative policies, saying Pakistan and PTI could not go together because PTI policies were mostly anti state and was against the country's interest. He said that people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa could not be deceived more through hallow slogans, adding the faces of CM KP and Bushra Bibi were fully exposed before masses and their protest call were rejected by people.

He said that stock exchange were fallen to 4000 points due to PTI protest and it was earlier increased upto 5000 points. He said that PTI leadership were seemed unnerfed after seeing significant improvement in economy and economic indicators. He said that like PTI 126 dharna, the recent agitation call was badly failed.

He hinted to register FIR against the accused involved in the killing of security personnel in D Chowk protest. He said PTI Government has failed to restore law and order in Kurram. He said that APC on Kurram situation would be held on December 5 and hoped that all political parties would participate. He said that PMLN was the only party that could address people problems of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and his team were working day and night to address the people problems. He urged officials in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa not to accept the illegal demands of PTI rulers. He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was our province and will work together to make it developed and economically strong.

Pakistan, Russia sign historic agreement

MOSCOW (APP): Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and Chairman State Duma on Thursday signed a historic Agreement to extend parliamentary cooperation between State Duma of the Russian Federation and the National Assembly of Pakistan in Moscow.

According to a news release received here the Agreement was signed by Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and his counterpart Vyacheslav Volodin, Chairman of the Russian State Duma. The Agreement aims enhance ties between the two legislative bodies and establish permanent cooperation mechanisms through parliamentary committees, commissions and parliamentary Friendship groups.

In his opening remarks, Ayaz Sadiq said that with Mr. Volodin he has long ties of friendship and while with some members of the Russian delegation he had been in close contacts for more than a decade. He also thanked Mr. Volodin for accepting invitation to visit Pakistan.

The Speaker expressed gratitude to Mr. Volodin for his support to the initiative of Pakistan to convene Speakers' Conference. The sides agreed to hold its fourth Session in Moscow in 2025. In this connection, NA Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq also emphasized for enhancing trade and business ties between both nations.

Israel withdrawal from Lebanon continue

BEIRUT: Israel has temporarily excluded areas in southern Lebanon from the ceasefire agreement approved by the two countries, which came into effect early on Wednesday, as its military continues its withdrawal. According to a map released by the Israeli military, a line of exclusion currently extends from Shebaa through Habbariyeh, Arnoun, Yohmor, Qantara, Shaqra, Baraashit, Yater, and Mansouri. Operations continue in and south of these areas.

Israeli military spokesperson Avichay Adraee warned that anyone crossing this line "risks danger" due to the "incomplete withdrawal of the Israeli army, which will take 60 days." Israeli artillery targeted the town of Shebaa and struck the town square in Taybeh, as well as the towns of Kfarkela, Markaba, injuring two people. Three were wounded in Wazzani, Kfarchoubaa, Rmeish, Halta, and Al-Ain. Additionally, two houses in Khaim were destroyed.

In another incident, Israeli warplanes raided the Sidon area on Thursday afternoon, specifically the vicinity of the town of Al-Bissariyeh, after the Israeli military claimed that it had "detected a threat in the form of a warehouse containing medium-range missiles for Hezbollah." Displaced Lebanese citizens attempted to return to their properties despite warnings from the Lebanese Armed Forces not to. Soldiers stationed in Maroun Al-Ras opened fire on residents trying to reach their homes on the outskirts of Bint Jbeil.

The municipality of Khiam urged residents to "wait for a statement from the relevant authorities permitting entry into the town," emphasizing that this depends on "the Lebanese army's entry procedures following the enemy's withdrawal from certain streets and positions it is still stationed at." The Lebanese military requested residents of Taybeh to evacuate after Israel targeted their gatherings in the town square and the Al-Ain area with three rounds of drone-fired missiles.

It was also recorded that an Israeli interceptor missile was fired toward Lebanon. The military explained that the suspicious target "may have been a bird or a small Israeli drone that was mistakenly identified as a Hezbollah drone." Israel later announced "a complete ban on movement or travel south of the Litani River from Thursday at 5 p.m. until Friday at 7 a.m." — Arab News



MOSCOW: Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and Chairman Russian State Duma, Vyacheslav Voldodin signing agreement on cooperation.

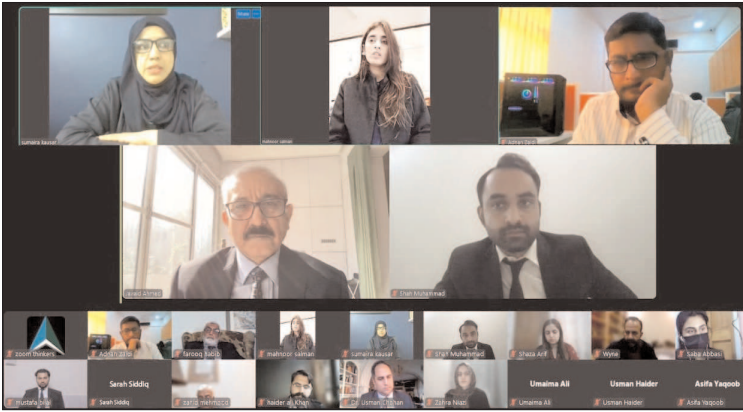
Expansion of digital education CASS webinar calls for public-private partnerships

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, conducted a webinar on 'Bridging the Global Digital Divide: Access, Equity and Empowerment.' The session included speakers Dr Sumaira Kausar, Director Centre of Excellence of AI, Bahria University, Islamabad; Ms Mahnoor Salman, Senior AI Engineer & Co-founder, Atomcamp; and Mr Adnan Zaidi, CEO, Proxima AI. Shah Muhammad, Research Assistant at CASS moderated the proceedings and President CASS Air Marshal Javid Ahmed (Retd) delivered the concluding remarks.

Speaking on the topic of 'Emerging Technologies and Academic R&D,' Dr Sumaira Kausar highlighted the global disparities in adopting and commercializing emerging technologies, largely driven by geographical gaps. She noted that most digital infrastructure is concentrated in a few advanced economies, leaving many low-income countries in the early stages of AI adoption readiness. Dr Kausar explained the six stages of AI adoption, from awareness to sustainability, placing Pakistan in the exploration and experimentation phase.

She emphasised that emerging technologies, including AI and quantum computing, will shape future global superpowers, urging Pakistan to prioritise these areas to close the digital divide. She called for promoting AI literacy, reskilling the workforce, and establishing ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks to accelerate adoption. 'Education and accessibility are essential for quantum inclusion,' she said, stressing the



need for strong government commitment to drive technological progress.

On the subject of 'Digital Literacy and Tech Ecosystems,' Ms Mahnoor Salman emphasised the need for global cooperation to address the technological divide, advocating for technology transfer and the ethical use of AI. She highlighted the importance of Pakistan's participation in global forums like the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to align national policies with global best practices.

Ms Salman called for a holistic approach to promoting digital literacy in Pakistan and the role of Public-Private Partnerships in expanding financial access. She also stressed the need for policies to empower freelancers through skills development and vocational training tailored to market demands.

Adnan Zaidi, speaking on 'Big Tech and Corporate R&D,' highlighted how global tech giants can now influence national policies through lobbying, information control, government partnerships, and economic power. He warned that smaller

nations face challenges like economic dependency, regulatory struggles, and threats to digital sovereignty. He also talked about the risks of digital colonialism, including data exploitation, cultural erosion, and inequitable access. To mitigate these, he recommended promoting local innovation, developing robust regulatory frameworks and focus on education, entrepreneurship and international collaboration as key priorities.

Air Marshal Javid Ahmed (Retd), President CASS, Islamabad concluded the webinar by underscoring the need for Pakistan to address structural and institutional challenges in digital inclusion. He highlighted the importance of fostering indigenous Research and Development (R&D), digital literacy, and entrepreneurship to reduce reliance on foreign technologies and funding. President CASS urged that it was important for Pakistan to learn from global digital models while tailoring solutions to its unique needs. He also called for public-private partnerships to expand digital education and create an inclusive tech ecosystem.

Convert varsities into housing societies if govt can't operate: PHC

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has expressed disappointment and annoyed the non-implementation of its orders regarding the appointment of vice chancellors in 19 universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Sahibzada Asadullah granted 10 days to the provincial government for compliance with its orders to appoint vice chancellors in the universities, on Thursday.

Justice S.M. Attiq Shah, remarked that it is unfortunate and regrettable that 19 universities are functioning without vice chancellors. He asked the provincial government to explain why it has not implemented the court's orders despite the passage of three months. The Additional Advocate General, Shah Faisal Otmanzai, informed the court that the Higher Education Department has sent a summary to the chief minister for the appointment of vice chancellors. However, the court expressed dissatisfaction with the government's response and observed that the government is not taking the court's orders seriously.

Justice S.M. Attique Shah remarked that the government's failure to implement the court's orders is a violation of the Constitution and the

law. He warned the government that if it fails to implement the court's orders, it will be forced to take actions.

Justice Sahibzada Asadullah observed that the government's attitude is not satisfactory. He asked the government to explain why it has not implemented the court's orders despite the passage of three months. The Advocate General Shah Faisal Otmanzai argued that the provincial government has challenged PHC judgement at Supreme Court of Pakistan and requested for provision of further time to implement the court's orders.

However, Justice SM Attique Shah observed that if government didn't operating universities then covert the premises into housing societies as 19 universities are running without vice chancellors from long time. He added that administration is unable to ensure provision of salaries to employees due to financial crunch. PHC adjourned further hearing for 10 days, and the provincial government has been directed to implement the court's orders regarding the appointment of vice chancellors in 19 universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

PHC orders lawyer to prepare for next hearing: The Peshawar High Court has adjourned the hearing of appeals filed by 17 convicts who were sentenced by a military court.

The court has directed the counsel for the appellants to come prepared on the next date of hearing to assist the court in the matter.

PHC divisional bench comprising Justice S.M. Attique Shah and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah heard the appeals filed by the convicts who were sentenced by a military court under the Pakistan Army Act. The counsel for the appellants, Sadique Ahmed, informed the court that the appellants were arrested in 2013 and were sentenced to seven years imprisonment by a military court in 2018. He argued that the appellants have already served their sentence and are entitled to be released.

However, the Additional Attorney General, Sanaullah, opposed the appeals and argued that the sentence awarded to the appellants has not been completed. He contended that the military court had awarded the sentence under Section 135 of the Pakistan Army Act, and the appellants are not entitled to be released until they complete their sentence.

The court, after hearing the arguments of the counsel for the appellants and the Additional Attorney General, adjourned the hearing of the appeals until the next date. The court directed the counsel for the appellants to come prepared on the next date of hearing to assist the court in the matter.

Govt to establish Anti-Riots Force

(Continued from Page 1)

Emphasizing the government's commitment to execute a comprehensive 'Charter of Economy', the prime minister said that in 2018, he as an opposition leader, also suggested the idea of charter of economy and now "We are fully prepared to execute this idea".

The prime minister, stressing the need to privatize all the State Own Entities (SOEs), said, "The government's mandate is only to facilitate the private businesses." "We should completely do away with the businesses to save trillions of rupees," he said adding that all institutions were on same page and he and the Army chief were also fully aligned on this issue.

Facilitating the audience over strong performance of Pakistan Stock Exchange that crossed 100,000 points on Thursday, the prime minister said this was the result of team effort and close coordination among the federal government and various stakeholders. "This is also about business sentiments and we believe that Pakistan is slowly and steadily moving towards right direction." He said the

day before yesterday the stock market witnessed a steep fall of around 4000 points due to what happened in Islamabad, however he said as the situation became normal, the market rebounded in next couple of days and crossed the 100,000 points which never happened in history of Pakistan.

The prime minister said this was the fact that over a period of time spanning over a decade, the economic progress slowed down rather deteriorated due to various factors. He said the country was still facing many challenges. "We all know that in June 2023 it was touch and go as Pakistan was at the verge of default due to various of reasons that we all know."

The prime minister highlighted that the government managed to bring the economy out of crisis due to a successful standby agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, he said that the programme would bring more hardship to the people but the government had no choice.

He also hoped and prayed to the Almighty that this would be the last programme with the IMF. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated that

over the past 76 years, Pakistan has seen numerous brilliant economic plans, but they have failed due to a lack of will to implement them.

He said that the government was preparing a homegrown plan that would be implemented in letter and spirit. "I will do my best along with my colleagues to implement this plan in letter and spirit and transform Pakistan's economic landscape." Other than the economic challenges, the prime minister said the country was also facing the security challenge. He said around 80,000 people had sacrificed their lives in war against terrorism and the economic losses touched US\$130 billion.

During the Nawaz Sharif government, the terrorism was completely defeated, however this monster had surfaced again and was showing its ugly face as the sad incidents were happening on daily basis. "What happened in Parachinar just a few days ago, innocent people lost their lives from both sides," he expressed the grief. The prime minister stated that there was an attack on Islamabad, in which thousands of people marched with guns, aiming to create uncertainty and chaos.

PTI founder not a political prisoner: Ahsan Iqbal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday said that the jailed founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Imran Khan, is not a political prisoner but is facing serious charges of corruption and inciting violence. These charges involve encouraging the public to attack sensitive installations, with the intent of sowing chaos and anarchy in the country.

"It should be clear to the international community that Mr. Imran Khan is not being victimized. He is not a political prisoner. He faces serious allegations, and no politician, public office holder, or celebrity in the Western world would be allowed to go unpunished for such actions," he said during a briefing for foreign media, alongside Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage, and Culture, Attaullah Tarar.

He drew a parallel to recent racial riots and arson in the UK, highlighting the swift and decisive action taken by the British judicial system. "In just 24 hours, the UK authorities brought

the perpetrators to justice, sending a strong message that such acts of violence would not be tolerated," he remarked.

Ahsan Iqbal emphasized that PTI had attempted to create mayhem in Islamabad in recent days, bringing armed protesters to not only stage a sit-in but also to occupy the Parliament House, as they had done in 2014. "At that time, they had stormed the Red Zone under the guise of a sit-in, eventually overrunning the Parliament House and setting fire to the PTV headquarters," he added.

He noted that PTI had established a troubling pattern of violent politics, beginning with the events of 2014. In the years since, PTI had staged multiple protests and long marches, often using official resources from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government. However, these attempts were unsuccessful due to decisive action by the federal government.

He pointed out that PTI leadership and supporters had grown accustomed to violent behavior, even while appearing in court for routine proceedings. They had engaged in acts of intimidation, throwing

petrol bombs at officials who attempted to serve court summons, which reflected their extremist mindset.

"There is a clear pattern that reached its peak on May 9, when PTI supporters attacked Pakistan's key military installations. They targeted the General Headquarters of the Army, the Corps Commander's residence in Lahore, military and air force bases, intelligence headquarters, and monuments honoring our martyrs," Iqbal recalled. The minister also noted that the scale of violence directed at military installations had reached unprecedented levels. "No democratic nation, whether the USA, the UK, or any European country, would allow any group to attack sensitive military installations or vital state institutions in the name of freedom of expression or action," he stressed.

He further explained that PTI had once again attempted to replicate these actions in the federal capital, particularly during Pakistan's hosting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in October 2024, one of the most high-profile events Pakistan has hosted in nearly two decades.

Participants of maritime security workshop visit Naval HQs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The participants of 7th Maritime Security Workshop (MAR-SEW), led by Commandant Pakistan Navy War College, Rear Admiral Azhar Mahmood, visited Naval Headquarters.

The workshop participants received a briefing on contemporary maritime challenges and Pakistan Navy's response strategies, including its contributions to maritime awareness and socio-economic development of coastal communities. Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed



Ashraf, also interacted with the participants.

In his address, the Naval Chief elaborated on maritime security challenges and highlighted Pakistan's Blue Economy potential. He emphasized efforts to enhance maritime and coastal security through initiatives such as Regional Maritime Security Patrols

and Coastal Security and Harbour Defence measures.

The visiting delegation, comprising parliamentarians, politicians, bureaucrats, Armed Forces officers, members of the media, and representatives of civil society, highly appreciated Pakistan Navy's efforts and offered valuable suggestions.

Israel ups bombing in Gaza, strikes kill 17 people

CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli military strikes killed at least 17 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip on Thursday, medics said, as forces stepped up bombardments on central areas and pushed tanks deeper in the north and south of the enclave.

Six people were killed in two separate air strikes on a house and near the hospital of Kamal Adwan in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip, while four others were killed when an Israeli strike hit a motorcycle in Khan Younis in the south. In Nuseirat, one of the Gaza Strip's eight historic

refugee camps, Israeli planes carried out several air strikes destroying a multi-floor building and hitting roads outside mosques. At least seven people were killed in some of those strikes, health officials said.

Medics said at least two people, a woman and a child, were killed in tank shelling that hit western areas of Nuseirat, while an air strike killed five others in a house nearby. In Rafah, near the border with Egypt, tanks pushed deeper into the northern-west area of the city, residents said.

There has been no Israeli

comment on the fighting in Gaza overnight and early Thursday. Israel's 13-month campaign in Gaza, with the avowed intent of eradicating Hamas militants, has killed nearly 44,200 people and displaced nearly all the enclave's population at least once, according to Gaza officials. Vast swathes of the territory are in ruins. The war was launched in response to an attack by Hamas-led fighters who killed around 1,200 people and captured more than 250 hostages in Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, Israel has said.