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No revenge, only service: Nawaz

Addresses massive gathering at Minar-e-Pakistan grounds; wants all institutions, state pillars, political parties to work together; says he doesn't want to utter any word that he wasn't supposed to; says no one should be allowed to play with country's fate in future; stresses shunning conflict with neighbours, moving ahead with grace to resolve Kashmir issue; asserts he suffered some wounds in politics which would never heal; asks crowd who orchestrated sit-ins against his govt; says he was ousted as PM for not taking salary from his son; condemns Israeli bombardment of Palestine, asks world to ensure resolution of issue; Shehbaz, Maryam tweet welcome messages; PMLN president declares Nawaz Quaid-e-Pakistan; party chief organiser says her father endured more hardships than any other leader in Pakistan

Ali Raza/News Desk

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) supremo Nawaz Sharif made it clear in his homecoming speech at the iconic Minar-e-Pakistan grounds on Saturday that he did not want to take revenge from anyone, rather serve the Pakistani people with the cooperation of all political parties and institutions.

He made a long speech, revealing his agenda for steering the country out of perpetual crises and the upcoming general election.

The three-time former prime minister was residing in London for the past four years due to a self-imposed exile after he was allowed to travel to the British capital in 2019 on health grounds.

"I do not want to take revenge," said Nawaz, dispelling rumours that he would adopt a confrontational policy in the lead-up to the general election. He kick-started his party's campaign for the next year's election in a rally of thousands after landing in Islamabad, where he signed and filed appeals against the convictions he was jailed for before he left the country in 2019.

The PMLN supremo said: "I am talking with much restraint today so that I may not utter the words that I'm not supposed to." However, added, "We should not allow anyone to play with the country's fate in the future."

The return of Nawaz Sharif
— Editorial on page 7

While he cannot run for or hold public office because of his convictions, Nawaz promised to tackle the record inflation. "I don't have the slightest wish for a revenge but all I wish is to see no poverty or illiteracy in the country," said the 73-year-old veteran politician in his address.

"I am meeting you after a long time, but my love for you remains intact. You have never betrayed me and I have never betrayed you," he told the crowds, wearing his signature red scarf.

Nawaz said his spirits to serve the country had not died even after four years. "We'll have to decide how to regain the lost status," the former premier said while vowing to resolve the country's issues.

Nawaz also hinted at mending the country's ties

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LAHORE: (Clockwise) Pakistan Muslim League supremo Nawaz Sharif addressing his supporters, who gathered in huge numbers to welcome him at Minar-e-Pakistan here on Saturday; the former premier releasing a pigeon into the air before his speech; the PMLN leader stands with his daughter Maryam Nawaz and brother Shehbaz Sharif.

Metro buses and power banks — scenes from PMLN rally

By Zebunnisa Burki in Lahore

MINAR-E-PAKISTAN was covered in the 'sher' brand on Saturday, as young men wearing all manner of lion-crested clothes danced to the PML-N's music, signalling a revival of enthusiasm among party supporters.

From power bank vendors to more out-of-Lahore supporters than Lahoris at the venue, the scenes reported by witnesses from on-the-ground on Saturday's PML-N rally welcoming Nawaz Sharif back home gave a picture of enthusiasm and some unique responses to Nawaz Sharif's appeal.

Aleena Farooq Sheikh, host of Geo's Report Card, was in Lahore covering the rally. Speaking to Naya Pakistan's Shahzad Iqbal on

Continued on page 4

PTI terms Nawaz's return 'humiliation of nation'

PPP's Kundi says if decision already made, no need of elections; warns selection cannot be made as majority of voters are young people; Shujaat says nation has high expectations from PMLN supremo; JUIF welcomes former PM's homecoming

By Mumtaz Alvi/ News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Spokesperson Raoof Hasan Saturday dubbed the homecoming of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) supremo Nawaz Sharif as the murder of justice and humiliation of the nation.

He said that Nawaz got bail within a few minutes by trampling the justice system. He claimed the former prime minister was given a special concession to materialise the notorious London Plan, as neither any judge had

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IPP asks Aun Chaudhry for explanation on meeting with Nawaz

By Sher Ali Khalti

LAHORE: The Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) has asked Aun Chaudhry for an explanation on his meeting with Nawaz Sharif

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Nawaz throws weight behind ECP on polls

Doesn't outright reject Fazl demand for election delay

By Muhammad Saleh Zaafir in Dubai

PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif has said that his party is ready to accept "the ECP's decision regarding elections". The former prime minister was speaking to the media at the Dubai Airport.

To a question about the demand by Maulana Fazlur Rehman to delay the elections due to inclement weather in January, Nawaz said that the ECP should be given enough time to complete delimitation of constituencies, and that the commission is the entity that can made a better decision regarding the elections. Nawaz also made it clear that the ECP is performing its duties fairly. He did not explicitly oppose the

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Avenfield and Al-Azizia cases

Nawaz signs documents for restoration of appeals in IHC

By Muhammad Anis

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) will be moved on Monday (October 23) for restoration of appeals of the ex-prime minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in verdicts against the Avenfield and Al-Azizia cases.

Nawaz Sharif, during his brief stay at the Islamabad International Airport on Saturday on his return from four years of self-exile, signed legal documents, including appeals to be filed in the Islamabad High Court.

The appeals were dismissed due to non-appearance

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Hamas attack aimed at disrupting Saudi-Israel thaw: Biden

Aid begins to trickle into Gaza; Guterres says 'much more' aid needs to be sent; Israel to immediately step up its strikes in Gaza; Cairo summit criticises world leaders for seeking to manage the conflict and not end it permanently; Arab nations refuse to condemn and hold Hamas responsible for escalation; Saudi Arabia blasts UNSC failure to pass resolution calling for ceasefire; Jordan condemns 'global silence' on Palestinian deaths, suffering; Egypt says Palestinians must realise their legitimate rights to self-determination; Turkey condemns unconditional military aid to Israel

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden said Friday that he believed Hamas's brutal attack on Israel two weeks ago was aimed at disrupting warming ties between the country and Saudi Arabia.

"One of the reasons why they acted like they did... why Hamas moved on Israel... (was) because they knew I was about to sit down with the Saudis," Biden told guests at a campaign fundraiser.

"The Saudis wanted to recognize Israel... unite the Middle East," he said.

Momentum toward a landmark US-brokered deal to normalize relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, guardian of Islam's two holiest sites, was shattered by the October 7 attack by Hamas militants on Israel.

The Islamist group stormed into Israel from the Gaza Strip, taking more than

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Situation in Gaza catastrophic: UN agencies
Qatar emerges as centre of hostage release efforts
— See page 10

Casualties as Israel trades fire with Hezbollah
Switzerland opens probe into Hamas financing
Related picture
— See page 11

Delay in ECC's gas pricing reforms to amplify gas crisis

News Analysis

By Israr Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) has postponed the implementation of gas pricing reforms which were intended to standardize gas tariffs for all fertilizer manufacturers. It is expected to aggravate Pakistan's gas crisis, posing a threat to the long-term sustainability of the sector, as per official sources.

The delay comes as the gas sector's circular debt surged to Rs2.9 trillion. Notably, the current practice of supplying gas to the fertilizer sector and applying varying tariffs have placed certain industry players at a disadvantage, as both (subsidized and regular) plants sell their products at the same price. Interestingly, the government had initiated the process of gas sector reforms to unify the tariff to win over the ballooning gas sector circular debt, a senior official of the Energy Ministry said.

The Ministry of Energy has been actively working to introduce gas pricing reforms over the past few weeks. The reforms aimed

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Week ahead
Bullish stocks seen as gas price adjustment looms
— See page 15

FOREX RATES

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	277.50	280.50
Canadian Dollar	204.00	206.00
Pound Sterling UK	340.00	343.00
Australian Dollar	176.00	178.00
Malaysian Ringgit	63.00	65.00
U.A.E Dirham	77.00	77.75
Saudi Riyal	74.50	75.20
Omani Riyal	715.90	723.00
Euro	293.00	296.00
Japanese Yen	1.84	1.88
Kuwaiti Diner	887.35	896.20
Bahrain Diner	730.95	738.25

• All rates are as per Saturday October 21, 2023.

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LAHORE: Members of a trade union take out a rally in support of Palestine. —The News photo

Israeli attacks on innocent Palestinians painful, says governor

By our correspondent

LAHORE: Honorary Consul for Netherlands in Lahore, Asma Hamid called on Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman here at Governor's House on Saturday.

The situation in Palestine, mutual interest and promotion of bilateral cooperation were discussed in the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Punjab Governor said that the bombing and atrocities on innocent children and civilians in Palestine are painful. He said that a strong voice should be raised against any injustice against humanity in every part of world. He said that the exchange of trade, educational, and cultural delegations between Pakistan and the Netherlands will further expand the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Punjab Governor said that there is a need to boost trade relations with the Netherlands. He said that Pakistan is offering favourable business opportunities to international companies in various sectors. He said that Pakistan is providing best facilities to foreign investors in various sectors through special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). He said the development of industry and foreign direct investment is vital to the development of any country.

Honorary Consul for Netherlands in Lahore, Asma Hamid said that Pakistan and the Netherlands have cordial relations. She said that Dutch companies are investing in Pakistan in dairy, livestock, veterinary and other sectors. She reiterated her determination to play her due role in further promoting the trade relations between Pakistan and the Netherlands. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali on Saturday visited Lahore where he met with the Punjab Governor Baligur Rehman.

They discussed the overall situation of the country including political, economic and law order and discussed enhancement of trade activities, inter provincial coordination and mutual relations between Punjab and KP.

Business Centre to remove obstacles to investment

By our correspondent

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce SM Tanveer Saturday said the establishment of a Business Facilitation Centre at Lahore will remove every obstacle to investment, the officers of the relevant provincial and federal departments will provide all facilities to the investors under one roof. Presiding over a meeting at Tevta Secretariat, the minister said establishment of Business Facilitation Centre is an important initiative towards ease of doing business and the elimination of slowness in the investment process. The meeting held consultation with the presidents of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry regarding the establishment of a One Window Business Facilitation Center. The minister said the One Window Business Facilitation Centre will start functioning in the next two months. He said all kinds of information regarding investment will be available in the Knowledge Hub. The performance of the Business Facilitation Centre will be monitored at all levels and the investor will be informed about the application process through the mobile app, he concluded.

FJMU holds exhibition of scientific posters, seminar on World Anatomy Day

By our correspondent

LAHORE: Fatima Jinnah Medical University (FJMU) Department of Anatomy organised an exhibition of scientific posters and models followed by a seminar in connection with World Anatomy Day on Saturday.

Renowned Endocrinologist and Regional Director of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Pakistan, UK, Dr Asad Rahim was the chief guest on this occasion. He was welcomed by Vice-Chancellor, Prof Khalid Masood Gondal. The chief guest Dr Asad Rahim along with FJMU VC Prof Dr Khalid Masood Gondal, Principal Prof Noreen Akmal and senior faculty inaugurated the Anatomy Science Models and Posters Exhibition held at the Department of Anatomy and also cut the cake.

Principal Prof Noreen Akmal, Chairperson Department of Medicine/Dean Nursing/Director Quality Enhancement Cell Prof Bilquis Shabbir, Registrar Prof M Nadeem, Heads of Departments, faculty members and a large number of undergraduate students attended the seminar.

In the welcome address, Prof Aliya Zahid said World Anatomy Day is celebrated every year in October to commemorate the birth anniversary of the Father of Anatomy.

Principal Prof Noreen Akmal appreciated the beautiful exhibition of posters, models, and paintings made by the students and commended their efforts.

Prof. Khalid Masood Gondal thanked Dr Asad Rahim for attending and congratulated the Department of Anatomy and Head of Anatomy Department, Dr Alia Zahid, for organising this successful event. He said, "I am really impressed by the outstanding models and posters made by our talented students at FJMU and appreciate the efforts of all the students".

Dr Asad Rahim, in his address, while thanking Prof Dr Khalid Masood Gondal, faculty and participants, said, "I am Pakistani, and the people in Pakistan are very friendly.

I was really impressed by the overwhelming participation of the students in World Anatomy Day, and the anatomy science models and posters made by the students were commendable".

He further said that Fatima Jinnah Medical University Lahore is the best institution of Higher Medical Education and today the students have shown their full potential.

He paid tribute to Prof Khalid Masood Gondal for introducing Pakistan's Higher Medical Education at the International level.

At the end of the seminar, Prof Dr Khalid Masood Gondal presented the shield to the chief guest Dr Asad Rahim.

15 pickpockets arrested from Minar-e-Pakistan

By our correspondent

LAHORE: Organised Crime Unit Chung has arrested a gang of 15 pickpockets from Minar-e-Pakistan Jalsa. The arrested pickpockets told the police they belonged to Sindh and came to Minar-e-Pakistan Jalsa for stealing cash. They said they had a group of 40 to 45 pickpockets. They pickpocketed citizens in rallies and crowded places, Chung DSP Farooq Asghar Awan said. They are history-sheeters and involved in dozens of theft incidents. Further investigation is under way. The accused were arrested with the help of professional skills, modern technology and public relations, said Chung DSP.

The accused will be severely punished with the help of prosecution partnership. Further operations will continue against the criminal elements. Certificate of appreciation from DIG Organized Crime Unit Lahore was given to DSP Chung and his team.

FAKE POLICEMAN ARRESTED: Raiwind Railway Police have arrested a fake policeman looting citizens.

The suspect identified as Ejaz Shah looted citizens by posing as a policeman. He had looted a citizen at Raiwind Railway Yard. Police recovered over 30,000 rupees looted from a citizen from the suspect's custody.

Eighteen cases were registered against him in different police stations of Lahore. Police were investigating.

Rs19.2m from 498 defaulters recovered

By our correspondent

LAHORE: The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO), in collaboration with Tehsildars (Recovery), has recovered Rs19.2 million from 498 dead defaulters in all the five districts - Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara - on the 38th day of its recovery campaign.

Lesco spokesman told the media on Saturday that on the 38th day, Chief Engineer O&M (T&G) Zafar Iqbal with the support of Tehsildar City Mujahid Zia and Tehsildar Shalimar Noreez Humayun recovered outstanding dues of Rs1.86 million from 62 defaulters in Northern Circle and Rs4.83 million from 52 defaulters in Eastern Circle respectively. Similarly, Lesco Manager (Material Disposal) Engineer Anwar Watto along with Tehsildar Model Town Rana Arsal and Tehsildar Cantt. Sajjad Qureshi recovered Rs2.43 million from 70 defaulters in Central Circle and Rs0.85 million from 24 defaulters in South Circle, while Manager (Technical) Engineer M Farooq with the assistance of Tehsildar Nankana Sahib M Iqbal Rasheed and Tehsildar Sheikhupura M Aslam Gujjar recovered Rs1.07 million from 57 defaulters in Nankana Circle and Rs4.32 million from 53 defaulters in Sheikhupura Circle.

He added that Lesco Manager E&S (PMU) Engineer Abbas Ali in collaboration with Naib Tehsildar Kasur and Okara Mirza Zahid Baig recovered outstanding dues of Rs1.22 million from 69 defaulters in Okara Circle and Rs2.67 million from 111 defaulters in Kasur Circle.

Up till now during the recovery campaign, the Lesco with the help of Tehsildars (Recovery) recovered more than Rs968 million from 30,140 dead defaulters in its all circles of operation. He elaborated that Lesco recovered outstanding dues of Rs126.40 million from 4,066 defaulters in Northern Circle; Rs221.35 million from 3,406 defaulters in Eastern Circle; Rs141.20 million from 3,830 defaulters in Central Circle; Rs56.79 million from 1,701 defaulters in South Circle, Rs59.32m from 2,568 defaulters in Nankana Circle; Rs133.47 million from 3,179 defaulters in Sheikhupura Circle; Rs66.56 million from 4,651 defaulters in Okara Circle and Rs163 million from 6,739 defaulters in Kasur Circle.

For the recovery campaign started on September 13, the Lahore Division's Commissioner had assigned additional charge of Tehsildar Recovery (from Lesco defaulters) to relevant Tehsidars, while Lesco Chief Executive Officer Engineer Shahid Haidar has also designated four senior officers to assist them in the dues recovery from defaulters. Lesco Chief Executive Officer Engineer Shahid Haider said that the company is facing loss due to dead defaulters, and vowed to continue action against them.

LWMC makes special measures

LAHORE: Expecting the arrival of huge crowd in LWMC Saturday took special cleanliness measures. On the instructions of LWMC CEO Babar Sahib Din, the LWMC operation's team deployed thousands of its sanitary workers along with machinery and made extraordinary cleanliness arrangements. The LWMC team gave special attention to VVIP routes such as Pine Avenue Road, Jati Umra Road and Raiwind Road and cleaned the routes excellently. —*Correspondent*

253 road accidents in City

By our correspondent

LAHORE: The Emergency Services Department (ESD) responded to 1,219 road accidents in all districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. In these road accidents, 11 people died, whereas 1,307 were injured. Out of these, 673 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals.Motorbikes were involved in the majority (77%) road accidents. The statistics showed that 253 road accidents were reported in provincial capital, which affected 269 persons placing the provincial capital at top of the list followed by 84 in Multan with 87 victims and at third Gujranwala with 83 road accidents and 82 victims.

'Rs150m aid sent to Gaza'

By our correspondent

LAHORE: The head of Alkhidmat Foundation Pakistan Dr Hafeezur Rehman Saturday said the organisation has given Rs 150 million worth assistance to the people of Gaza. Talking to reporters, Dr Hafeezur Rehman said they are pledging an extra Rs500 million for the people of Gaza.

Dr Rahman said working together with global charities, Alkhidmat started helping out in Gaza on October 7. He said situation there was really tough and residents are in need of water, food, and medicines. He said that they are doing their best to help those who need it. He said right now, Alkhidmat is sending medical teams to help out, giving cooked meals to people in hospitals and camps, and making sure people get essential supplies. Dr Rahman said it's tricky because Gaza is kind of cut off from the rest of the world, but they are finding ways to get help there.

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PESHAWAR: A PMLN convoy heading for Lahore to welcome former premier Nawaz Sharif, Saturday. — PPI

Poliovirus found in 11 more environmental samples across Pakistan

By M Waqar Bhatti

ISLAMABAD: A day after fourth child was crippled by poliovirus in Pakistan, Wild Poliovirus 1 was detected in the environmental samples from 11 more sites in all the four provinces, officials in the country's polio eradication programme said on Saturday.

"The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health Islamabad has confirmed the detection of Type-1 Wild Poliovirus (WPV1) in 11 environmental (sewage) samples collected in October 2023 (four from Peshawar, three from Quetta Block, two from Karachi and one each from Bannu & Lahore)," an official associated with the polio program told The News.

In Balochistan, poliovirus was found in Pishin, Chaman and Quetta, the official said, adding that in Pishin, the environmental sample (Grab) was collected on October 2, 2023 from the 'Turwa' environmental sample collection site. This is the second positive sample from District Pishin this year. The isolated virus is classified as YB3A cluster and 99.4% genetically linked to the virus detected in an environmental sample in Kandahar (Afghanistan) on May 21, 2023.

In Chaman, the environmental sample (Grab) was collected on October 2, 2023 from the 'Army Kaziba' environmental sample collection site. This is the second positive sample from District Chaman this year. The isolated virus is classified as YB3A cluster and 99.89% genetically linked to the virus detected in an environmental sample in Dera Bugti on September 18, 2023.

The official said that in Quetta, the environmental sample (BMFS) was collected on October 3, 2023 from the 'Surpul' environmental sample collection site. This is the first positive sample from District Quetta this year. The isolated virus is classified as YB3A cluster and 99.77% genetically linked to the virus detected in an environmental sample in Dera Bugti on September 18, 2023. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, poliovirus was detected at the 'Hinjil Noorabad' environmental sample collection site in Bannu, which is the second positive sample from District Bannu this year. Moreover, three human polio cases have also been reported from District Bannu in the current year. The isolated virus is classified as YB3C cluster and 99.4% genetically linked to the virus detected in an environmental sample in the same district, i.e. Bannu on September 21, 2023.

Similarly, poliovirus was detected at four sites - 'Naray Khuwar', 'Hayatabad 1&2', 'Yousafabad & Tajabad' and 'Gulabad & Chungee' composite environmental sample collection sites. In Karachi, the environmental sample (Grab) was collected on October 3, 2023 from the 'Orangi Nala' environmental sample collection site, which is the third positive sample from Keamari this year. Similarly, in District Karachi Central, the environmental sample (BMFS) was collected on October 4, 2023 from the 'Haji Mureed Goth' environmental sample collection site.

"This is the second positive sample from District Karachi Central this year. The isolated virus is classified as YB3A cluster and 99.77% genetically linked to the virus detected in an environmental sample in the same district (Karachi Central) on September 7, 2023," the official said.

In Lahore, the environmental sample (BMFS) was collected on October 2, 2023 from the 'Gulshan-e-Ravi' environmental sample collection site, the official said, adding that this was the sixth positive sample from District Lahore this year. "The isolated virus is classified as YB3A cluster and 99.5% genetically linked to the virus detected in an environmental sample in the same district, i.e. Lahore) on August 15, 2023," the official said.

These new detections take the total number of positive environmental (sewage) samples in Pakistan in 2023 to 54. While the number of human polio cases in Pakistan in 2023 is four.

Former PTI minister sent to jail

By our correspondent

PESHAWAR: Former provincial minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Kamran Bangash was sent to jail on 14-day judicial remand after he was produced in a local court on Saturday.

The former cabinet member was arrested from his house in the limits of the Chamkani Police Station a day earlier. Accompanied by a large number of workers and lawyers, Kamran Bangash was produced before the court a day after his arrest.

His counsels told the court that a false case had been lodged against him only to force him to quit his party.

The police on Friday said the cops conducted a raid on a hujra in Chamkani to arrest Murad Saeed, former federal minister who was wanted by police in many cases, but Kamran Bangash and others offered resistance, threatened cops and helped him escape from the place.

A brother of Kamran later filed an application in the same police station seeking to lodge a case against the DSP, SHO and other policemen for abducting the former PTI minister.

On Friday, raids were also conducted on the hujras, houses of former MNA from Peshawar Arbab Sher Ali and former MPAs Taimur Jhagra, Fazal Illahi and city president Irfan Saleem. However, they could not be arrested.

Another former cabinet member from Bajaur Anwar Zeb was also arrested from Bajaur.

Many of the former ministers and members of the National and Provincial Assemblies of PTI from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were arrested in raids in the last few months.

Dil Ka Rishta celebrates 5,000 successful marriages

By Mohammad Nasir

KARACHI: Dil Ka Rishta, a leading name in the online matchmaking industry, is rejoicing as it marks a significant milestone of facilitating 5,000 successful marriages.

This achievement underscores the platform's commitment to fostering lasting relationships and bringing hearts together. The app has emerged as a beacon of hope for countless hearts in search of their soulmates. The Dil Ka Rishta app, known for its user-friendly interface and advanced matchmaking algorithms, has become a trusted choice for individuals seeking life partners. Since its launch last year, it has garnered a reputation for its dedication to connecting people based on compatibility, values and shared aspirations. Each story is a unique blend of two hearts and two families, and the 5000th marriage of Arooma and Waqar holds a special place in this heartwarming narrative. The 5,000 successful marriages stand as a testament to the app's effectiveness in bringing together like-minded individuals ready to embark on a journey of love and companionship. So far 8.5 lakh matches have been made on this app and now this app is working in 172 countries. Since its international launch, the Dil Ka Rishta app has proven to be a secure and hopeful means of finding your soulmate wherever they are in the world. Among its countless international success stories is the heartwarming tale of Khaula and Omer who found love across borders through this app.

Another snatcher killed in clash with Peshawar police

By Javed Aziz Khan

PESHAWAR: Police and snatchers clashed at more places in the provincial capital on Saturday, resulting in the death of a street criminal involved in the murder of a young college student a few days back.

The cops and alleged snatchers have clashed at almost a dozen places in the last four days, which resulted in the death of two criminals while seven were held in wounded condition.

"An accused, Shahsawar, was held for involvement in the murder of a college student Hassan Tariq during snatching few days back. He was being taken by the cops to help identify hideouts of other accomplices when the police was attacked in the limits of Rahman Baba Police Station," the spokesman for the Peshawar Police told media. He added that police retaliated and an exchange of fire took place for some time.

"A cop was hit by two bullets but he remained unharmed as he was wearing bulletproof jacket. The accused in custody Shahsawar, however, was shot dead by his own accomplices," said the official. The attackers managed their escape.

The official said another alleged snatcher was wounded after an encounter with police in the University Town.

He added the police clashed with snatchers at many places after aggressive policy was adopted by the cops on the directives of Capital City Police Officer Ashfaq Anwar and SSP Operations Kashif Abbasi.

"Two snatchers were killed and seven held in wounded condition in clashes with cops after the police parties were attacked in limits of Rahman Baba, Badaber, Bhanamari, Tehkal, Agha Mir Jani Shah, Phandu, Gulbahar and other police stations in the last few days," said the spokesman.

The cops were directed a few days back to adopt aggressive policing against the street criminals, keep a check on all those released from jail and compile a data of the criminals as well as ice sellers and addicts.

There were complaints that innumerable gangs of street criminals got strengthened in the last couple of years to a great extent and were openly challenging the writ of the state in almost all parts of Peshawar.

On the other hand, the police officers and juniors were said to be discouraging registration of the large number of cases happening daily.

After innumerable complaints, the SSP had to circulate a cellular number for sending a complaint if the police refused to lodge a case or misbehave with the people.

Benazir complex vacated from 'grabbers' in Nowshera

By our correspondent

NOWSHERA: The personnel of police and Cantonment Board, Risalpur, in a joint action on Saturday vacated the under construction Benazir Complex.

On the directives of Deputy Commissioner Khalid, Iqbal, the personnel of police and Cantonment Board, Risalpur, expelled the alleged grabbers and vacated the building.

The police said that the alleged grabbers had been living in the complex for the last 13 years and were reluctant to vacate the building.

They said that people displaced from Swat and Bajaur tribal district during the military operations against the militants had come and occupied the complex.

They were sent notices to vacate the building but they did comply with Cantonment Board, Risalpur, directives.

FIA seizes foreign currency from illegal dealer

By Shakeel Anjum

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has seized a substantial amount of foreign currency from an illegal currency exchange in the federal capital, an FIA spokesperson said Saturday.

The FIA Commercial Banking Circle (CBC), Islamabad, during its ongoing crackdown against the mafia involved in money laundering, Hundi and Hawala, conducted a raid at a fake and illegal money exchange at Jinnah Avenue and seized 17,000 US dollar, 30,000 UAE dirham, 28,000 Saudi riyal, 2,234 Qatri riyal, 15,000 Afghani and currency of 10 other countries and arrested two people hailing from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Meanwhile, FIA Human Trafficking Circle, Islamabad, arrested a human trafficker with the help of Interpol wanted to the agency in many cases and started investigation. The accused has been identified as Khurram Iqbal who was running an organised network of human trafficking.

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KP IGP urges people to help curb terror

Inaugurates police station in Swat

By Mahboob Ali Yousafzai & Essa Khankhel

MINGORA: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police (IGP) Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur on Saturday urged the local people in Swat to remain vigilant and help the police in eradicating the menace of terrorism.

He was talking to the media after the inauguration of a police station at Chuprial area of Swat district.

Akhtar Hayat Gandapur assured the public that KP police were fully equipped to cope with any untoward situation. He said that the sacrifices of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police were not hidden from anyone.

The IGP said the police rendered sacrifices for the establishment of peace so that the tourists could visit the beautiful places without any fear. "The peace was established after the sacrifices rendered by the people and the police. The war was fought for the sake of peace," he said, adding that the police sacrifices would always be remembered. He said that Swat was a beautiful district where domestic and foreign tourists used to come. He maintained that the locals were supposed to stand with the police to revive the golden era of Swat. He said that terrorism would not be accepted and dealt with iron hand. The IGP urged the locals to remain vigilant in pinpointing terrorists and helping police in eradicating this menace from the entire region. Akhtar Hayat Gandapur assured the public that KP police were fully equipped to cope with any untoward situation.

Earlier, Regional Police Officer Muhammad Ali Gandapur and District Police Officer Shafiullah briefed the IGP on security and law and order.

PMA hosts passing-out parade for graduates

RAWALPINDI: The passing out parade of cadets of 148th PMA Long Course, 67th Integrated Course, 35th Technical Graduate Course and 22nd Lady Cadet Course was held at Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul on Saturday.

Cadets from Iraq, Maldives, Nepal, Palestine, Qatar, Sri Lanka and Yemen were also amongst the graduates.

Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) Admiral Naveed Ashraf was the chief guest on this occasion, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. The chief guest reviewed the parade and gave awards to distinguished cadets.

The coveted Sword of Honour was awarded to Academy Senior Under Officer Muhammad Abdur Rehman Awan of 148th PMA Long Course.

The President's Gold Medal to Battalion Senior Under Officer Muhammad Hamza Khalid of 148th PMA Long Course.

Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Overseas Gold Medal to Battalion Senior Under Officer Shreejan Baniya of 148th PMA Long Course from Nepal.

Commandant's Canes were awarded to Course Under Officer Muhammad Najam Azam of 67th Integrated Course and Course Under Officer Fareeha Kainaat Arif of 22nd Lady Cadet Course. Chief of Army Staff Cane to Company Quarter Master Sergeant Frasat Toufique of 35th Technical Graduate Course. Sri Lankan Army Commander Lieutenant General HLVM Liyanage also graced the occasion as Guest of Honour. — APP

ATC allows police to quiz Khadija Shah in prison

LAHORE: An-Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) on Saturday accepted the investigation officer's (IO) petition seeking questioning PTI leader Khadija Shah in connection with torching of police vehicles in Lahore's Rahat Bakery Chowk on May 9 inside the jail.

In his petition, IO Naveed Anjum said that questioning was required in yet another case in which Khadija Shah had been nominated. A case had been registered against her at Sarwar Road police station for setting police vehicles on fire.

The officer told the court that although Khadija had been granted bails in Askari Tower and Jinnah House attacks cases, she had not been set free yet since she was still to deposit surety bonds.

Earlier, ATC had ordered the release of another PTI female activist Sanam Javed after the approval of a surety bond in the case but she was arrested again after she came out of the jail. Sanam was granted bail in the May 9 riots case last week. – PPI

Pakistan, China agree to boost media cooperation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China have decided to further strengthen cooperation between the mainstream media of the two countries.

The decision was made during a meeting of a Chinese media delegation led by China"s Political Counsellor Ms. Bao Zhong with the Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi, said a press release on Saturday.

The two sides also decided to highlight Pakistan-China Economic Corridor projects through PTV, Radio Pakistan and APP.

Both the countries agreed to further strengthen practical cooperation in joint reporting and exchange of media delegations.

Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi said that Pakistan valued Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). 'BRI project is a manifestation of bringing peace and prosperity through economic development', Solangi maintained. The role of media in creating public awareness regarding the centrality of CPEC and iron friendship with China for economic development was indispensable, Solangi opined.

The minister said that Pakistan would strengthen ties and cooperation with China in various fields in the new phase of high-quality development of CPEC and expressed a desire to benefit from China's development experience. 'We will benefit from China's achievements in poverty alleviation, research and development, information technology, media and other fields', he added.

Speaking on the occasion, a Chinese Political Counsellor said CPEC will be made a corridor of love and friendship. She assured that China would increase cooperation with Pakistan in media, IT, agriculture and industrial sectors.

Besides, Federal Secretary of Information and Broadcasting Zahoor Ahmed, Executive Director General EP Wing, Managing Director APP, Director General PBC and PTV Director Current Affairs were present at the meeting. —APP

Substandard tea leaves seized in Peshawar raid

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: A team of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority raided a tea leaves manufacturing factory in Mian Gujjar village on the outskirts of the provincial capital here on Saturday, an official said.

A spokesperson for the authority said that acting on a tip-off, a team of the authority raided the factory and seized about 1000 kg of substandard tea leaves, 300 kg of gram straw, and 6.5 kg of non-food grade colour.

Nawaz's sons don't return to Pakistan

Hussain Nawaz bids farewell to father in Dubai

DUBAI: Nawaz Sharif's two sons have not returned to Pakistan.

Hussain Nawaz bade farewell to Nawaz Sharif in Dubai. Hasan Nawaz did not reach Dubai as he was in London.

Nawaz Sharif came from Dubai to Islamabad in a special plane along with close associates, overseas workers and media. —NNI

SUI SOUTHERN GAS COMPANY LIMITED (SSGCL)

NOTICE FOR CANCELLATION OF EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING (EOGM) FOR ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

This is to inform all the stakeholders that the Extraordinary General Meeting (EOGM) / Election of Directors of Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (the Company), which was scheduled to be held on 23 October 2023 at 6:00 p.m., is hereby cancelled.

The fresh notice with new date for the EOGM will be communicated in due course for submitting fresh consent papers / nominations and proxies etc.

We apologize for the inconvenience this cancellation may cause and appreciate the understanding and support of our valued shareholders / stakeholders.

22 October 2023
Karachi

Mateen Sadiq
(Company Secretary)

SSGC Sui Southern Gas Company Limited

www.ssgc.com.pk

Aga Khan Agency for Habitat Pakistan

(Invitation to Bid No. AKAHP/23/TREASURY/PIAS-PILE/SKHI/P-03)

PROCUREMENT OF EMERGENCY STOCKPILES ITEMS

Project: Prepositioning and improving access to stockpiles, to ensure disaster preparedness and humanitarian needs at the local level.

Aga Khan Agency for Habitat Pakistan for its project titled **"Prepositioning and improving access to stockpiles, to ensure disaster preparedness and humanitarian needs at the local level"** invites sealed bids from the original manufacturers / authorized distributors / suppliers for the supply of emergency stockpiles Items.

Lot#	Items Description	Unit	Estimated QTY
1.	**Stockpile Items** (Fire Balls, Fire Extinguisher, First Aid Box, Wheelchairs, Raincoat, Long Shoes & High beam search lights etc.)	No	**Items Quantity will be provided in Bid Document**
2.	**Emergency Response Team (ERT) Kits** (Items detail will be provided in Bid Document)	No	**Items Quantity will be provided in Bid Document**

The bidder must either apply for single lot (Lot # 1 &Lot # 2) or both lots. Partial tendering within any lot will lead to rejection of the bid. The financial bid of all items shall be sealed in one closed envelope.

Bidding shall be conducted through Single Stage – Single Envelope procedure. Bidding documents containing detailed terms and conditions, stockpile specifications, BoQs etc. are available for the interested bidders which can be obtained from the undersigned address.

The interested bidder should be registered with relevant TAX Departments in respective regions.

The bids, prepared in accordance with instructions in the bidding document, must reach the undersigned on or before **07-11,2023 at 03:00 PM**. Bids will be opened on the same date at **03:30 pm**.

Point of Contact

Mr. Asif Ali Taj

AKAHP, 310,311,3rd Floor Kassam Court, BC-9,Block-5 , Clifton, Karachi, 75600-Pakistan

Email:asif.taj@akdn.org Phone: +92 300 7041162

Aga Khan Agency for Habitat Pakistan

(Invitation to Bid No. AKAHP/23/TREASURY/PIAS-PILE/NCB-002)

PROCUREMENT OF EMERGENCY STOCKPILES ITEMS

Project: Prepositioning and improving access to stockpiles, to ensure disaster preparedness and humanitarian needs at the local level.

Aga Khan Agency for Habitat Pakistan (AKAHP) for its project titled **"Prepositioning and improving access to stockpiles, to ensure disaster preparedness and humanitarian needs at the local level"** invites sealed bids from the original manufacturers / authorized distributors / suppliers for the supply of emergency stockpiles Items.

Lots No.	Lot Description	Unit	Estimated QTY
1-	**Deluxe Winterized Tents/ Tarpaulin sheet**	No	**950/2500**
2.	**Blankets**	No	**2500**
3-	**Snow clearing blades**	No	**12**
4.	**Water Rescue Boat (Inflatable) with Engine**	No	**3 each**

The bidder must either apply for complete Lot # 1, Lot # 2, Lot # 3, or Lot # 4 or all Five lots. Partial tendering within any lot will lead to rejection of the bid. The financial bid of each lot shall be sealed in separate envelopes with Lot No. clearly marked on outer envelope.

Bidding shall be conducted through Single Stage – Single Envelope procedure. Bidding documents containing detailed terms and conditions, stockpile specifications, BoQs etc. are available for the interested bidders which can be obtained from the undersigned address.
The interested bidder should be registered with relevant TAX Departments in respective regions.
The bids, prepared in accordance with instructions in the bidding document, must reach the undersigned on or before **07-11,2023 at 03:00PM**. Bids will be opened on the same date at **03:30 pm.**

Point of Contact:

Mr. Jafar Ali

Aga Khan Agency for Habitat Pakistan Level 9,
Serena Business Complex, G-5,Islamabad.

E-mail: jaffar.ali@akdn.org , Landline: 051-111-253-254 Ext. 257

NRSP

PREQUALIFICATION OF FIRMS/ VENDORS/ SUPPLIERS/ COMPANIES/ CONSULTANTS FOR 2024-25

National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) invites applications of reputable firms/ vendors/ suppliers/ companies/ consultants having active NTN and GST registration for procurement of various goods and services as described below: -

Advertising Agency/Media House	Automobiles	Events Management
Fire, Safety & Security	Furniture & Fixture	Hand Pumps & Hardware
Hotel & Guest House	IT Equipment	Insurance Companies
Kitchen & Toiletries	Livestock & Dairy	Medical & Surgical
Office Appliances	Relief Items	Rent A Car
Repair & Maintenance	Stationery & Printing	Seed & Fertilizer
Solar Equipment	Tools& Kits	Travel Agencies
Uniforms	Water Purification	Consultants/Firms/Resource persons

NRSP intends to create a category wise database of vendors prequalified for a period of two (2) years. Prequalification Application Form can be downloaded free of cost from NRSP website **https://nrsp.org.pk/tenders/** Interested firms/vendors/ suppliers/ companies/ consultants should send their applications latest by **Nov 08, 2023** in an sealed envelope marked"VENDOR PREQUALIFICATION 2024-25" in the top-right corner to the address given below.

Note: Current prequalification of suppliers will expire on **Dec 31, 2023** so all the pre qualified supplier need to send the fresh applications.

In-charge Procurement, National Rural Support Programme,
#7 Sunrise Avenue, Near COMSATS University, Park Road, Chak Shahzad,Islamabad.
Tel:(051) 8746170-173 Email: procurement@nrsp.org.pk

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
GIZ-Office Islamabad Pakistan

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Labour Market Assessment in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

As a federal enterprise, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

Support for the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector in Pakistan (TVET-SSP) is commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in close collaboration with the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) as well as provincial Technical Education and Vocational Training Authorities (TEVTAs) and private sector organizations.

GIZ Pakistan invites suitably qualified firms and institutions to submit their EOI for conducting a labour market assessment in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces for its Support for the TVET Sector in Pakistan (TVET-SSP) Programme. The proposed study will map the demand for skilled workforce for districts in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that will aid in aligning the TVET courses, institutes and capacity of human resources with the requirements of the job market.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Only interested firms and institutions that have the required proven expertise in conducting large-scale surveys and demonstratable experience of having worked in this field may apply. The entity submitting proposals should have the following minimum eligibility qualifications:

i. Expertise in labour market assessment, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and data collection from industry;
ii. Legal entity in Pakistan for last 05 years and must have a corporate office in Pakistan;
iii. Maintains an active NTN and GST with relevant tax authorities;
iv. Has a qualified and an experienced team of labour market experts, data analysts, database/IT experts and enumerators;
v. Conducted at least one labour market assessment or skilled workforce forecasting or similar study for a province or a region in last 03 to 05 years in Pakistan;
vi. Annual minimum turnover of Rs.10 million as per audited financial statements duly audited by a licensed audit firm. The audited financial statement of a recent year must be provided along with the proposal submitted;

Interested firms should provide compilation / evidence of the above stated requirements in the form of a **company profile** with table of contents. Each of above **stated 6 requirements** should be addressed in separate sections within the profile and should contain documentation proving the required qualification and experience. Interested firms are encouraged to include **ONLY** relevant and required information in the submitted EOI. Subsequently, **only** those firms or institutions who have successfully passed the EOI assessment will be formally invited to submit the Request for Proposal (RFP) with detailed technical & financial proposals.

A response to the EOI does not necessarily imply that your firm or institution will receive the GIZ's RFP for the subject assignment.

Interested firms or institutions should clearly mention the title **"Expression of Interest (EOI) for Labour Market Assessment in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Ref No. 83451267)"** on the envelope.

Please submit the EOI documents in a sealed envelope latest by Friday,03rd Nov 2023 at GIZ Office, Level-02, Serena Business Complex, Khayaban-e-Suhrawardy, Sector G-5/1 Islamabad, Pakistan.

The firms or institutions should fulfil all above mentioned requirements in order to be qualified. Only qualified / shortlisted firms or institutions will be contacted. Please note that all correspondence, proposals and dealing with the GIZ must be in English.

PMLN rally

Continued from page 1

Saturday night after the rally, she said that initially there was little crowd – at around 3-4pm – which she said was something unexpected since the party's supreme leader was coming back and the thinking was the party would pull out all stops to bring people in for the welcome home rally. However, Sheikh said, "post 5pm people started coming and we also heard that there were people outside the venue as well, cars were stuck outside too....overall, it was an impressive crowd."

Sheikh added that one thing that stood out for those covering the event was that there were not as many Lahoris at the event as those from outside of the city: "those present here were from Muslim Students Federation (MSF) or from Azad Kashmir and other areas of Punjab. It seems those in the PML-N who were tasked with bringing people to Lahore for the rally, they are the ones who came and filled up the venue". Co-host of YouTube show 'Mahozariyan' Mahwish Bhatti travelled by the Metro bus to Minar-e-Pakistan, and reporting for her show right from the venue, showed a horde of young men dancing with abandon. Her favourite question at the venue: "what makes Mian Sahib glow?" The answers from the enthusiastic supporters went from "he eats halal" to "he uses creams" to "he will bring back economic prosperity".

One particular young man interviewed by her had come all the way from Gujranwala on a bike. When asked why one couldn't find anything to eat at the venue, the man said "when you're this passionate you don't feel hungry!", laughingly adding "you can say we have fasted before coming here!" Bhatti asked another supporter whether the establishment would be happy at Nawaz Sharif's return. The answer: the establishment tried with an experiment that failed: "Mian Sb is the only option now".

One of the more interesting things noted by Bhatti was the fact that vendors were selling power banks at the venue, something she said showed enterprise "since they knew people would be covering the event and using their phones." Natasha Zai, a freelance journalist covering Nawaz's homecoming rally, tells The News that a leader's "popularity can be judged by how enthusiastically he's received by the crowd at a rally."

According to her estimations, "PML-N leader from Chilas, Engineer Muhammad Anwar, is a genuinely popular leader amongst his people. Before Nawaz Sharif came on stage, other PML-N leaders were climbing up one by one, waving to the crowd. The loudest cheer was not for Saad Rafique or Ayaz Sadiq, both major figures from Lahore. It was for Engineer Muhammad Anwar, a surprise for me. Talking to people before the jalsa began, the Chilas crowd was the most energetic and enthusiastic. They were all wearing white caps with a decorative feather up front. You can see the footage, the white caps were the ones having the most fun." She adds that: "among the rest, Ahsan Iqbal seemed the second most popular leader, if an enthusiastic welcome from the crowd is an indicator of popularity. He got a resounding cheer and lots of applause."

Talking to The News about the food arrangements at the rally venue, Asfand Gurmani, reporter at The Current covering the rally, says that some of the people he spoke with "those from Rawalpindi or Bahawalpur or other places told me that they had not gotten any food since they reached the venue and they had to spend their own money for food and water." Vendors at the venue were selling" channa chaat and samosas and water, perhaps because there was none or little water arrangement at the venue."

He adds that most of the people he talked to were "happy and hopeful that [with Nawaz Sharif's return] they would get a respite from the economic misery and inflation and unemployment – though there are some who felt nothing would change economically for them."

Earlier in the day, as Nawaz took the journey from Dubai to Islamabad and then onward to Lahore after passport control at the Islamabad airport, there were reports of scuffles on the plane. A BBC report by Tarhub Asghar said that while in the plane "journalists and activists were angry because they were not being allowed to take selfies with Mian Sahib". At one point, reports BBC, there was also a scuffle between PML-N party workers and journalists, which escalated to a fight. Perhaps in a more bizarre turn of events, the report also mentions that when the plane was to depart from Islamabad for Lahore, there was apparently one 'missing passenger'.

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College Wing Subject Teachers	Mathematics (M.Sc/ M.Phil). Preferably B.Ed / M.Ed
Cambridge/ O level & Senior Wing Subject Teachers	Computer Science, Islamiyat (O Level) and English (O Level) (M.A / M.Sc). Preferably B.Ed / M.Ed
Middle Wing Subject Teachers	English and Mathematics (M.A/M.Sc). Preferably B.Ed / M.Ed
Pre School Wing Montessori Directresses	M.A / M.Sc, B.A / B.Sc with Montessori / ECE Diploma.
IT Assistants	Science Graduate, Database / Networking / Graphics and Computer skills

Send your CVs and photocopies of all necessary documents along with Handwritten Application and two latest photographs by 3rd Nov 2023 on the following address:

Principal, Army Public School & College – COD Main Rashid Minhas Road, Karachi.

Government of Pakistan
Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training
National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC)

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Joint Venture Training Partners (High-End,Industrial & Conventional)Trainings

DATE EXTENSION

Reference to subject "Request for Proposals (RFP)" Joint Venture Training Partners (High-End, Industrial & Conventional Trainings) PID(1) No.1744/23 of NAVTTC published on 17-09-2023 and PID(I)2084/23 of NAVTTC published on 05-10-2023 in the National and Regional dailies.

The last date for submission of online applications has been extended from **20-10-2023** to **06-11-2023**.

Online applications may be submitted on **http://nsis.navttc.gov.pk.** The other terms and conditions will remain the same.

Deputy Director (P&D), NAVTTC
Plot # 38, Kirthar Road, Sector H-9/4 Islamabad
Ph: (051) 9044413 PID(I)2409/23

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
MINISTRY OF ENERGY (POWER DIVISION)
NATIONAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
NEECA

Notice for Public Inputs and Feedback on Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Regulations 2023

National Energy Efficiency & Conservation Authority (NEECA), Ministry of Energy (Power Division) is mandated for all the energy efficiency and conservation activities in Pakistan. NEECA has developed Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Regulations 2023 in the light of its mandate as stipulated in National Energy Efficiency & Conservation Act 2016 and National Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy 2019. The Draft Regulations can be accessed from NEECA's website www.neeca.gov.pk

NEECA invites inputs, comments and feedback from the stakeholders and general public to make the regulations more inclusive and to ensure sustainable EV charging infrastructure development in Pakistan. The comments and feedback can be shared at: dir.electrical@neeca.gov.pk or through courier at the given address within 15 days of this notice.

DIRECTOR (ELECTRICAL)
NATIONAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
5TH FLOOR, NEECA BUILDING, SECTOR G-5/2. ISLAMABAD.
PHONE: 051-9211098 PID(I)2404-23

FDB Fisheries Development Board **FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT BOARD**
A Company Established under Section 42 of the Companies Ordinance 1984

PILOT SHRIMP FARMING CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

TENDER NOTICE

Fisheries Development Board (FDB), Islamabad intends to invite bids under the project **"Pilot Shrimp Farming Cluster Development Project"** from the firms registered with Taxation Department (Active Tax Payers), for the following services:

Tender Title	Last Date Tender Submission	Tender Opening
Purchase Of Shrimp Seed and Feed for Model Shrimp Farm	7th-Nov-2023 at 11:30 AM local Islamabad time	7th-Nov-2023 at 12:00 PM local Islamabad time

1. The tender documents comprise a single package containing **two separate sealed envelopes** are required to be delivered at Fisheries Development Board office, Islamabad latest by 9:00 am to 4:30 pm by paying tender fee Rs. 1000/ (non-refundable) in the form of Pay Order / DD in favor of Fisheries Development Board.
2. Financial offer must be accompanied with **02%** of total bid value in the form of pay order/ call deposit/ Demand draft in favour of Fisheries Development Board.
3. FDB reserves the rights to accept or reject any or all bids under relevant PPRA Rules.
4. Sealed envelopes must clearly state the Tender Title.

PROJECT MANAGER
PILOT SHRIMP FARMING CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
Fisheries and Livestock complex, Gate # 2, NARC, Fisheries Development Board, ISB PID(I)2420-23

Nawaz signs documents

Continued from page 1

of Nawaz Sharif in the IHC.

Nawaz Sharif also held a detailed discussion with former law minister Azam Nazir Tarar, Amjad Pervez, advocate, and members of the legal team who briefed him on the appeals.

Sources said that arrangements were also made at the VVIP Lounge of the airport for biometics of Nawaz Sharif as part of some legal fornalities.

On Nawaz Sharif's plea, the IHC had granted him protective bail in two cases, barring the police from arresting him till October 24 (Tuesday).

In July 2018, the ousted prime minister was handed 10 years in jail in the Avenfield properties corruption reference for owning assets beyond known income and one year for not cooperating with the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), which was to be served concurrently.

PMLN Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz was sentenced to seven years in jail in the case but was acquitted in September 2022 along with her husband Captain (R) Safdar.

In the Al-Azizia Steel Mills corruption reference, Nawaz Sharif was sentenced to seven years in jail on Dec 24, 2018 and then taken to Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail from where he was shifted to Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail next day.

He was also fined Rs1.5 billion and US$25 million in the case.

ZTBL **ZARAI TARAQIATI BANK LIMITED**
INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY GROUP

CORRIGENDUM
Tender No. ZTBL-03-2023-2

Attention is invited towards Zarai Taraqiati Bank Limited "Invitation to Bid" Tender No. ZTBL-03-2023-2 **(Previously inadvertently mentioned as Tender No. ZTBL-03-2020-2)** having title "Procurement of Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) Solution" published in newspapers and PPRA & ZTBL Websites to be opened on 24.10.2023. at 11:00AM.

In order to expect better competition and upon the requests of prospective bidders, bid submission date has been extended and now bids may be submitted by 31st October, 2023 up to 11:00 AM. Bids shall be opened on the same day at 11:30 AM.

Vice President,
Procurement Facilitation Department,
Innovation & Technology Group, Zarai Taraqiati Bank Limited,
1-Faisal Avenue, Zero Point, Islamabad
Phone: 051-9252798 PID(I)2439/23

اسلام آباد الیکٹرک سپلائی کمپنی (آئیسکو) IESCO

Invitation for Bids (IFB)

1. IESCO invites sealed bids from the contractors for the Procurement of Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of CCTV System, Access Control System and allied Facilities under ADB Counterpart funding as per following requirement.

Tender Identification	ITEM DESCRIPTION	Average Net worth in Million	Amount of Bid Security in Million	Average Annual Turnover in Million	Financial Resources in Million
NCB-144	Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of CCTV System, Access Control System and allied Facilities at Main Data Centre IESCO Head Office, Islamabad and at 132 KV Grid Station Gujar Khan	1.6	0.12	7	4

2. IESCO Project Management Unit (PMU) has reserved the funds for above mentioned material under ADB Counterpart funding. It is intended that part of the proceeds of the fund will be used to cover eligible payment under the contracts for the above procurements.

3. The undersigned now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for supply of above material.

4. Qualification & Experience:-

i. Bidder/JV must demonstrate two (02) No. of contracts that have been successfully completed within last Five (05) years similar to the required material. The aggregate value of each contract Agreements / Work Orders shall be equal to **Rs. 4 Million.** However, none of the work order should be less than **30% of Rs. 4 Million.** For the purpose, the bidder/JV shall provide relevant Work Order/Contract agreement & Completion Certificates etc. Bidder/JV must also demonstrate satisfactory performance of the completed works.

ii. The Bidder/JV shall demonstrate financial soundness as mentioned above, however detailed terms and conditions are mentioned in **Appendix-A of BD**

iii. Manufacturer will demonstrate at least five-years' experience of designing and manufacturing of similar material / equipment and three-years satisfactory operation performance from date of submission of bid.

5. The bidding shall be conducted in line with the Single Stage Single Envelope procedure of the Public Procurement Rules 2004 (amended to-date), Regulations, Regulatory Guides, Procurement Guidelines or Instructions issued by the Authority (from time to time), and is open to all potential bidders.

6. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in favor of General Manager (Development) in an acceptable form mentioned in ITB in the amount fixed in **PKR valid for 28 days** beyond bid validity period and validity of **bid is at least 70 days** from date of submission.

7. The original bid along with one copy, properly filled in, and enclosed in sealed envelope(s) must be delivered through courier or physically to the Office of General Manager (Development), IESCO Headquarters, Street # 40, Sector G-7/4, Islamabad on or before **8th November, 2023 at 1100 Hours** and same will be opened at **1130 Hours** in the office of General Manager (Development), IESCO Headquarters Street No. 40, G-7/4, Islamabad on the same date in the presence of participants or their authorized representatives who choose to attend (bearing Authority letters).

8. Interested bidder(s) / firm (s) may visit IESCO website for scrutiny of bidding documents, however bidder will submit their bid(s) after purchase of bidding document from office of the undersigned on request after payment of non-refundable fee of Rs.5,000/- for participation on any working day during office hours or may be sent through Courier if requested by the bidder with an additional fee of **Rs. 1,500/-** per document.

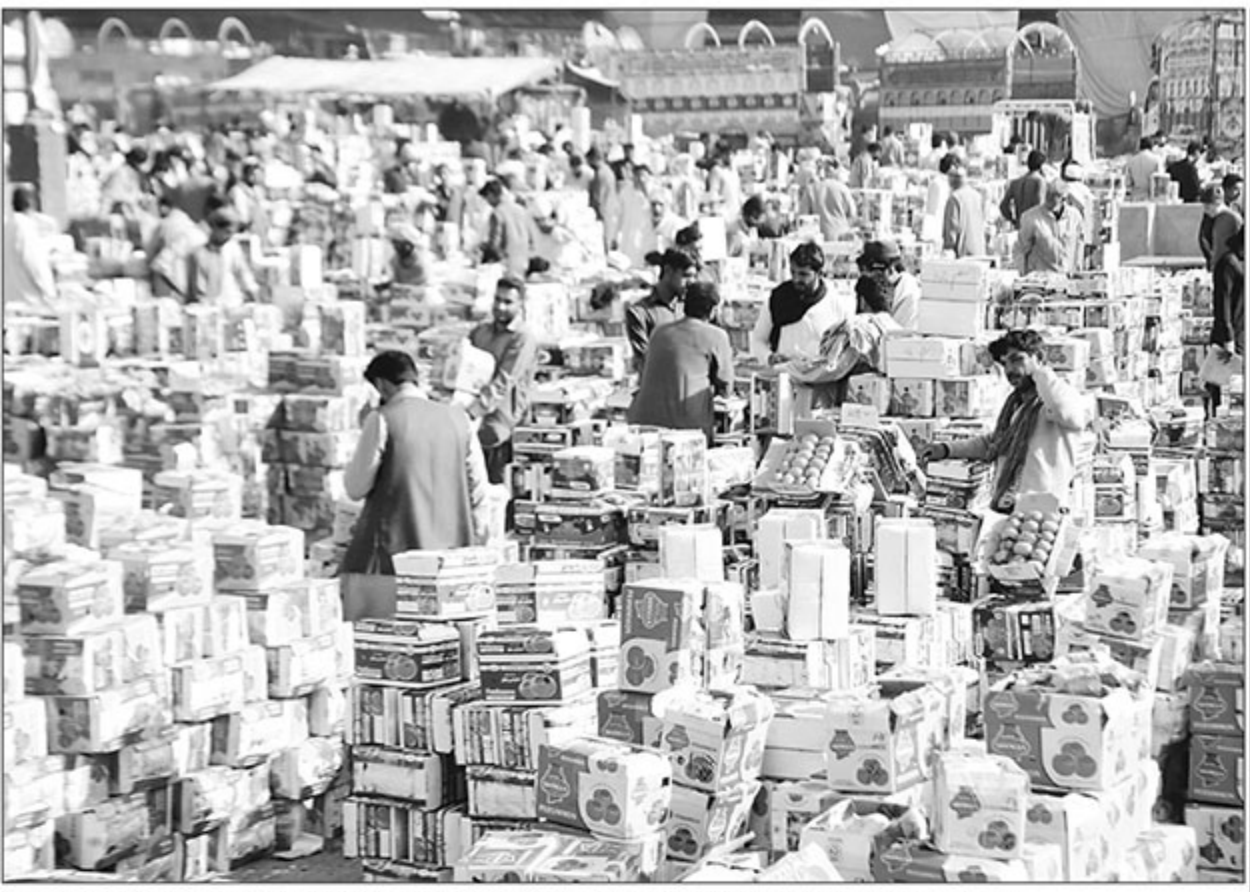
9. Late submission of bid will not be entertained.

10. IESCO reserves the right to reject the bids as per PPRA Rule-33 (1) 2004 (amended to date)

11. Electronic bids are not acceptable. PID(I)2441/23

General Manager (Development),
IESCO Head Quarter, Street No. 40, Sector G-7/4, Islamabad
Phone No. +92-51-2378045, Fax No.+92-51-9252345
Email Address iescopmu@iesco.com.pk

بجلی چوری دینی ۔ اخلاقی اور قومی جرم ہے
بجلی چوری کی اطلاع ہیلپ لائن 118 پر کریں



ISLAMABAD: Retailers buying fruits from wholesale dealers at the Fruit and Vegetables Market on Saturday. — Online

Government employees call off strike

By Khalid Iqbal

RAWALPINDI: Finally, government employees have called off their strike and opened all departments and educational institutions here in the province including Rawalpindi on Saturday.

The government employees have called off the strike on the assurance of PML-N leader Maryam Nawaz Sharif. She has assured government employees to accept all their genuine demands. On the directions of Maryam Nawaz, police have released all arrested employees from all cities. The Punjab government will quash all FIRs and no action will be taken against government employees.

Punjab Government Employees Association senior representatives named Nazar Hussain, Chaudhry Khalid Javed, Ziaullah Khan Niazi, Mehar Muhammad Yaseen, Gull Nawaz Swati, Chaudhry Muhammad Mukhtar, and several others met PML-N's Malik Ahmed Khan who assured to accept all genuine demands. The protesters were on strike against changes to the pension and leave encashment rules and demanded their salaries according to federal government employees. The teachers were on strike against the privatisation of public schools. All government schools and government departments were locked for over 10 days here in the Punjab province including Rawalpindi Division.

Thousands of parents have protested against the closure of all public schools and demanded the Punjab government to restart educational activities here in Rawalpindi. All public schools under the Punjab government were locked for over 10 days but bosses saw the whole drama with closed eyes. The citizens particularly parents have strongly appreciated the positive role of Maryam Nawaz she interfered to resolve this issue.

The senior representatives of government employees told 'The News' that if the Punjab government turned back its promise we would again come on the roads. The senior representatives of teachers also warned that if the Punjab government does not take back the decision to privatize government schools, we will once again close down all public schools for an indefinite period.

The public faced hell-like situations during protest days because they failed to do their routine work. The school-going children were wandering here and there without education for over 10 days.

25 plots sold for Rs12.90 billion

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) auctioned 25 commercial and residential plots for Rs12.90 billion during four-day open auction which concluded here on Friday.

The finalization of highest bids which were accepted by the auction committee is subject to approval by the CDA Board. One of Blue Area plots measuring 611 square yards was auctioned for Rs1.033 billion. A residential plot measuring 555.55 square yards 8n sector F-8/4 received highest bid of Rs255 million another plot of same size in Sector F-10/2 was auctioned for Rs183 million.

41 beggars netted

ISLAMABAD: In a major crackdown on professional begging, the Islamabad Civil Defense arrested 41 alms seekers from outside mosques after Friday prayers in different areas of the federal capital.

The operation was carried out under the directions of the Deputy Commissioner Islamabad and the supervision of the Assistant Commissioner Secretariat and the Assistant Director of Civil Defense. The teams of Civil Defense personnel were deployed in different areas of the city, including outside mosques, to arrest professional beggars.

A total of 28 beggars were arrested by the Civil Defense teams, while 13 beggars were arrested by the Assistant Commissioner City from Kohsar Market and Aabpara. The beggars were transferred to the police station, while the minor children were sent to the Edhi Center. —APP

Facilities for transporters at VICS Rawat Centre reviewed

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chattha on Saturday visited the Vehicle Inspection and Certification System (VICS) Rawat Centre and reviewed the facilities provided to the transporters.

The Commissioner also got the fitness certificate of the official vehicle, he was using by inspecting the VICS Center Rawat and reviewed all the processes in detail.

The Secretary, of Regional Transport Authority Rashid Mehmood, the Chairman of Rawalpindi Waste Management Company Rafiq Ahmed and representatives of the Transport Union were also present on this occasion.

The Commissioner inquired about the facilities being provided by the Punjab government to the transporters who came to get the vehicle fitness certificate.

The Secretary RTA, Arshad Mahmood gave a detailed briefing on this occasion. During the briefing, the Commissioner was told that wheel alignment, suspension, brake, tire, and appearance tests, headlights, seat belt check, engine sound and smoke tests are done during the vehicle inspection.

The fitness test would be mandatory after every 6 months while the fitness test of about 60 vehicles is done daily at the centre.

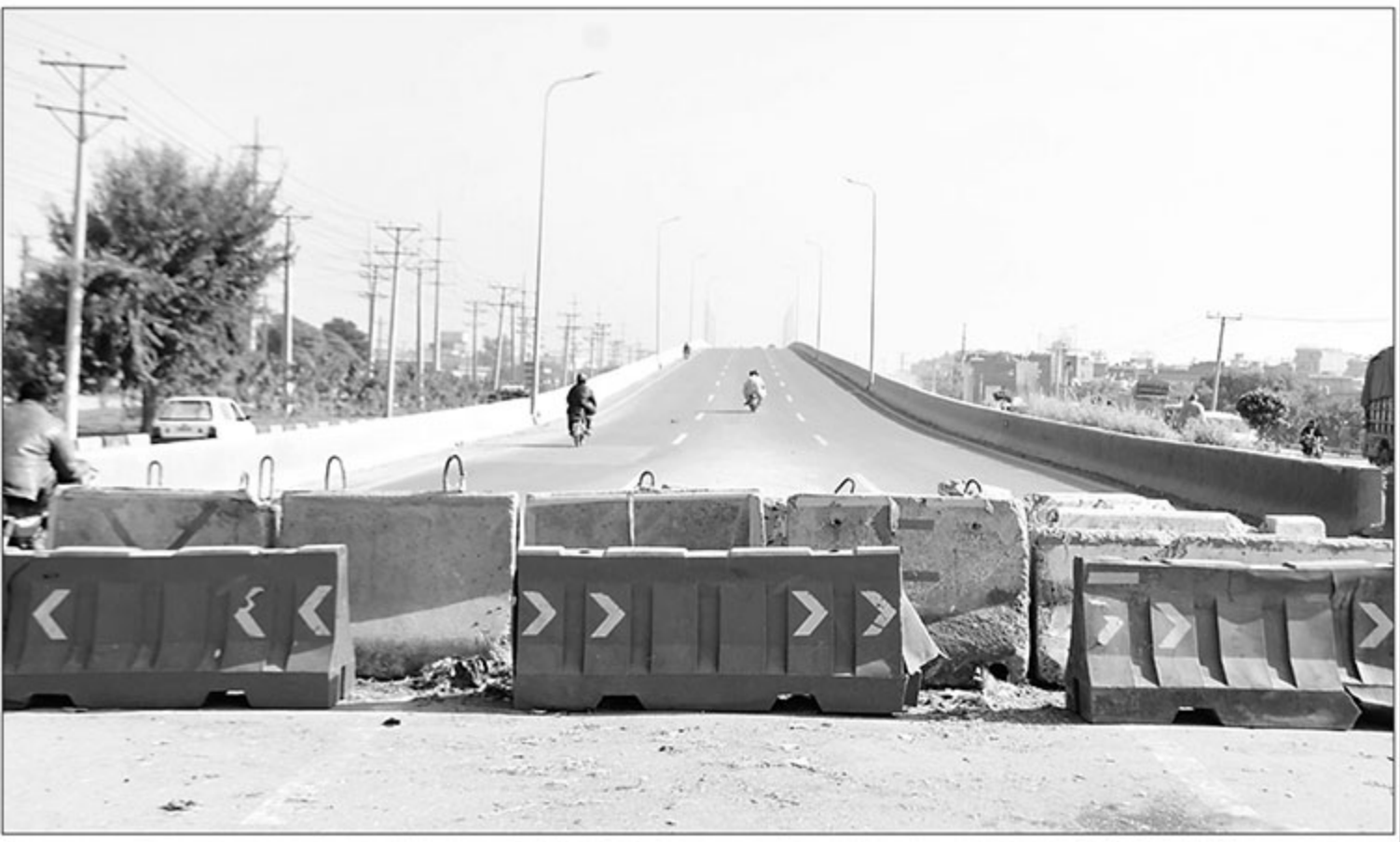
The Commissioner said that vehicle fitness checks are mandatory to control smog. He directed the authorities concerned to take action against all smoke-emitting vehicles. He informed that Rawalpindi City would be made smog free area.

The transporters must get fitness certificates for their vehicles from VICS before bringing their vehicles on the roads, Liaqat Ali Chattha said. State-of-the-art vehicle fitness certification system is fully functional in Rawalpindi, he informed.

The fitness certification system would help reduce pollution, the Commissioner said adding, that the issuance of fitness certificate for public transport and freight vehicles are conducted with modern technology. The fitness certificate is very important for road safety.

The Commissioner also directed the authorities to display banners regarding anti-smog measures on major roads and public transport terminals.

The transporter union office bearers should guide the transporters to get the fitness certificates from VICS centres, the Commissioner added. He warned that the commercial vehicles violating the rules would be impounded and that strict action would be taken against the rules violators. — APP



ISLAMABAD: A section of newly built Pirwadhai Flyover has been closed for heavy traffic since the opening of Colonel Sher Khan Shaheed Road. — Online

System for improving police work ecology, performance evaluation being initiated

By Shakeel Anjum

ISLAMABAD: In the dynamic realm of law enforcement, the National Police Bureau (NPB) of Pakistan takes on a pivotal role as the Police Order of 2002, mandates NPB to serve as the secretariat to the National Public Safety Commission (NPSC) and the National Police Management Board (NPMB).

In this capacity, the NPB has evolved into a crucial national platform providing policy insights and recommendations to the federal government across a broad spectrum of issues, encapsulating matters related to policing, police strategies, public safety, maintenance of law and order, and the broader canvas of policing. Though most experienced and professional police officers were appointed to command one of the most significant institutions of the police related institutions most of the time, the NPB was turned into a paralysed institution by appointing unprofessional and irrelevant police officers to head the department, dipping its status into a non-operative tool of the government machinery.

Presently, after the appointment of Mr Ehsaan Sadiq and Director General of the NPB, visible changes could be noticed in the working and professional performance of the Bureau. Among its numerous functions, the NPB assumes a crucial role in monitoring various forms of crimes in general and against women and children in particular. It also diligently maintains an extensive database for tracking criminal activity in Pakistan, including organised crimes, financial crimes, and trafficking in persons. In pursuit of these objectives, the NPB collaborates closely with all police organizations across Pakistan, tackling challenges related to crime, security, and the maintenance of law and order. Additionally, the NPB extends its support to police organizations by offering valuable assistance in various domains, encompassing police development, standardization, computerization, internal accountability, forensics, communication infrastructure, and structural reforms.

At the heart of its mission, the NPB serves as the central hub for international cooperation in police training and development. In an interconnected global milieu where knowledge exchange and the dissemination of best practices are of paramount significance, the NPB plays a pivotal role in nurturing relationships with international counterparts, and enriching the collective policing wisdom. The NPB's unwavering commitment to its mandate remains steadfast, despite operating within a challenging environment characterized by limited resources. Resolute in the face of these constraints, the NPB is firmly dedicated to spearheading and contributing to a more responsive, inclusive, progressive, and accountable police service in Pakistan. It is firmly believed that the NPB's endeavors will have a profound and far-reaching impact on the quality of life and the fundamental rights of the nation's citizens.

The NPB is acutely cognizant of the intricate challenges confronting modern-day policing in the 21st century. The rapid pace of urbanization, advancements in communication technologies, the proliferation of arms, a significant youth demographic, and a transformed socio-economic landscape collectively render policing an intricate and demanding task. In response to these challenges, the NPB recognizes the imperative need for unconventional and innovative approaches to policing and internal security. The National Police Bureau, in alignment with the government's strategic vision, and in collaboration with international organizations and civil society, remains steadfast in its commitment to foster an efficient, accountable, and people-centric police service, one that stands as a bastion in safeguarding the rights and well-being of all Pakistani citizens.

During the past few decades, policing has evolved from simple crime prevention and investigation to a complex phenomenon. Contemporary policing in the 21st Century has become highly demanding and complex due to. Terrorism, transnational organized crime, cybercrime, arms proliferation, and drug trafficking have posed formidable challenges to traditional policing. Moreover, an ever-changing socio-economic context of policing is characterized by rapid urbanization, communication technologies, and a high proportion of youth in the population. The changed societal context requires non-conventional and innovative approaches to policing and internal security. It also necessitates a policing model that is technology-driven, citizen-centric, and human rights compliant and promotes strategic and specialized responses.

To respond to emerging and future challenges Police Order 2002, envisaged the establishment of a National Police Bureau (NPB), as a premier police institution at the national level. NPB, which replaced the erstwhile Bureau of Police Research and Development, was mandated, apart from other functions, to serve as a secretariat to the National Public Safety Commission (NPSC) and National Police Management Board (NPMB). In its later capacity, NPB acts as a national forum for all police organizations to provide policy inputs to the federal government on matters related to police, internal security, law and order, and policing. Some nationally acclaimed officers including Mr. Afzal Ali Shigri, Dr. Shoaib Suddle, Mr. Tariq Khosa, and Mr Ihsan Ghani headed NPB. Under such distinguished leaders, NPB contributed towards the drafting of Police Order 2002, the implementation of police reforms envisaged under the Order, the establishment of the National Public Safety Commission, and National Forensic Science Agency, and the development of Manuals on key police functions. NPB also oversees the implementation of decisions of the National Police Management Board-comprising heads of all federal and provincial police organizations. Moreover, NPB is the secretariat of the Police Reforms Committee formed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan. Despite its very critical role and the very important functions it is mandated to undertake, NPB is a highly under-resourced and under-utilized organization.

Despite these constraints, NPB once again seems poised to lead the effort to transform and reshape the police in Pakistan to make it more responsive, representative, progressive, and accountable. To this end NPB has already accelerated the ongoing implementation of recommendations by the Police Reforms Committee formed by the Supreme Court of Pakistan for better quality investigations, adopting a new urban policing police model, promoting ADR, and strengthening internal accountability. Work on internal police reforms pertaining to improving police station working and work ecology, human resource management practices, performance evaluation systems, and management structures have also been initiated recently. Dedicated working groups, headed by senior and experienced police officers, have been constituted, with representatives of all relevant police organizations.

To institutionalize mandated functions of NPB and new initiatives; functional units with specific tasks have been established. These include the Strategic Police Planning Unit, Gender Responsive Policing Unit, Counter Organized Crime Unit, Cybercrime Coordination Unit, Police Reforms and Development Unit, Police Standardization Unit, Mass Awareness Unit, International Cooperation Unit, Protection of Minorities Unit, National Crime Database Unit, Criminal Justice and Legal Reforms Unit, and Community Policing Promotion Unit. NPB is also starting the Police Executives Development Program to prepare police officers to perform their leadership role as heads of police organizations/ units and in key areas of policing. The aim of all these initiatives is to strategically revamp and streamline the working of key components of the National Police Bureau to enable it to lead the process of policy development, reform, and modernization in Pakistan.

These initiatives reflect the commitment of NPB to genuinely improve the quality of policing in the country. They also demonstrate the determination and proactive approach of the Bureau to address the emerging issues and challenges confronting law enforcement in the 21st Century. It is hoped with the support of police organizations NPB will be able to bring substantive institutional transformation to promote quality, efficiency, competency, consistency, transparency, accountability, and integrity in the police.

Dengue continues to haunt population in the region, 77 cases in a day

By Muhammad Qasim

ISLAMABAD: Despite a significant fall in temperature, dengue fever is continuously haunting the population in Islamabad Capital Territory and Rawalpindi district and the number of dengue fever patients being reported from this region of the country is still much higher.

Data collected by 'The News' on Saturday has revealed that in the last 24 hours, another 77 individuals have tested positive for dengue fever from ICT and Rawalpindi district taking the total number of patients so far reported from the region to well over 4000 though there has not been reported any death due to the infection from the region.

The number of confirmed dengue fever patients reported from the twin cities in the last one week hints that the situation regarding spread of the infection is well under control. In the last seven days, as many as 430 dengue fever cases have been reported from the region at an average of around 62 cases per day. It is important that during the previous week, the average number of patients reported per day from the region was recorded as well over 100.

Wisdom of empowerment

Syed Mohibullah Shah

Weakness is a curse. It invites others to deprive you of your legitimate rights and resources. The poverty, indignity and injustice that people suffer from are symptoms whose causes lie elsewhere. These are symptoms of the weakness and disempowerment of the people and these will keep hanging over their heads until their disempowerment is replaced with empowerment.

That is the crux of the message of the poet-reformer of Sindh, Shah Abul Latif Bhittai. "Empower yourself with knowledge and work ethics", went his clarion call, "and nobody will keep you poor and downtrodden. Instead, you will be able to hold the state accountable to work for the well-being of the people".

He followed his clarion call with a roadmap for the empowerment of the people, and to rid them of the dangers of disempowerment which was a hangover from medieval culture. His roadmap calls for a culture change – to create the enabling environment that highlights the importance of knowledge, hard work, and respect for time while encouraging inquisitiveness because curiosity is the mother of inventions, and questioning the status-quo opens doors that otherwise remain closed.

During his extensive travels all over Sindh and neighbouring regions, he observed first-hand the lives and living conditions of people – landless peasants, farmers, fisherfolk, and people associated with various trades and skills. The social scientist in him had studied the problems of poverty, and the indignities and injustice people faced everywhere. And the reformer in him realized that no superficial measures would help solve these problems until their root cause is addressed and eradicated.

And the root cause, he diagnosed, lay in the absence or poor quality of the knowledge, skills and capacities of the people. In today's language, it is called 'human resources'. So, the root cause of their disempowerment lay in the poor quality of their human resources.

His lament about the poor state of human resources in Sindh 300 years ago seems as valid today as when he observed it; and he summed it up in this iconic verse: mahroom thee maree vaya, maher thee na moa" (they lived their life without acquiring knowledge, skills or capacities and passed away as they came. Disempowered as they remained, they were not able to solve their problems).

But if people's conditions have not improved despite such a clarion call from their most loved and respected person, and they remain disempowered even after a lapse of 300 years, there must be a method in this madness.

While the empowerment of the people and developing human resources is good for the country, often it is not an appealing idea for the status-quo forces still clinging to medieval culture, who see it as a zero-sum game and fear that with an empowered people, they may lose their control over the national pie.

Pakistan has generally followed this course. Instead of developing a massive base of quality human resources to lift the country — as other developing countries have done and benefited from – its status-quo forces have taken to importing ready-made solutions from abroad with back-breaking loans which have now become the albatross sinking the whole economy.

Who suffers the most if the knowledge, skills and capacities of their own people are not developed? None other than the weakest sections of society. And today's Pakistan provides proof of the wisdom of this verse of our poet-reformer. But first the verse: "paani mathe jhoopra, moorakh unj maran" (look at these ignorant fools). They are living in the huts over the water but are still dying of thirst. They suffer because they have not developed the capacity to solve their problems – even when the solution lay in front of them.

Let us apply the same verse to our present predicament. It would now say: look at these ignorant fools; they are sitting on one of the largest coal reserves of the world in Thar coal, but they are destroying the lives of millions of people with the most expensive electricity from imported fuel. They suffer because they did not develop cheap electricity from it when it was available to them 30 years ago at 2.4 cents/unit and are now forcing people to pay 10 times more for the same electricity from imported fuel – over which the country has neither any control nor any dollars to pay for.

Our colonized minds have been tuned to block any message of wisdom from our indigenous thinkers, poets, philosophers. But we are eager to lap up any such idea coming from our former colonial masters. To satisfy such colonized minds, let me clarify that the ideas of the empowerment of people that Shah Latif espoused were also voiced by contemporary European thinkers and reformers

The electricity bill today is more than what millions of families are able to earn in a month – leaving them wondering how they will meet other expenses of their bare existence. One of the byproducts of such a cruel system will be the people slipping down the poverty line, increase in street and other crimes and creating low- hanging fruit for dubious organizations. Our policies are creating liabilities instead of assets for the country.

But if we have not invested in developing our human resources and are paying a severe price for that neglect, have we learnt any lesson and taken measures to rectify past mistakes and accelerate the pace of development of our human resources?

The first building block in human resource development is education – the first pillar of the empowerment of people as our polymath poet had identified. Here is a list of some developing countries with a percentage of their GDP going into educating their citizens: Cuba 12 per cent, Namibia 9.0 per cent, Bolivia 9.0 per cent, Botswana 8.0 per cent, Saudi Arabia 7.0 per cent, and Pakistan with 1.7 per cent of GDP (2022-23 allocation) going into education comes at 154th position out of 200 countries.

What it means is that the country is not yet empowering its people with knowledge, skills and capacities to build the foundation for a quick take-off in the foreseeable future. So, for whom has this system been working, if not the people of Pakistan?

Amazingly, our polymath poet had seen the situation in his time when rulers were sweet-tongued and deceptively friendly towards the people but on the inside were actually working against their wellbeing and empowerment. In yet another iconic verse he describes these medieval rulers: "Munh ta Moosa jhahro, andar mein iblees, ahro khaam khabees kadhi koh na chhadje" (It is better to change the rulers who appear innocent like Prophet Moses but are devil incarnate against the people).

Our colonized minds have been tuned to block any message of wisdom from our indigenous thinkers, poets, philosophers. But we are eager to lap up any such idea coming from our former colonial masters. To satisfy such colonized minds, let me clarify that the ideas of the empowerment of people that Shah Latif espoused were also voiced by contemporary European thinkers and reformers like John Locke, Rousseau, Montesquieu and others.

Let me close this series of interpreting the poetry of Shah Latif by his message from another iconic verse: "Take my poetry seriously. These verses are not merely for entertainment but would lead you to the path of enlightenment."

The writer designed the Board of Investment and the First Women's Bank. He can be reached at: smshah@alum.mit.edu

Capital suggestion

Two parties

Dr Farrukh Saleem

The PML-N and the PPP are stuck in the 20th century while voters have embraced the ideas and values of the 21st century. This growing disparity between two of Pakistan's largest political parties and their electorate is now undeniable. Lo and behold, the disconnect between these two parties and their electorate is growing. Yes, there is an urgent need for the PML-N and PPP to adapt and reform.

The PML-N and the PPP continue to be dominated by leaders who have their roots in the politics of the 20th century. The PML-N and PPP continue to maintain traditional structures and continue to hold on to 20th century ideologies. Result: the PML-N and PPP are struggling to resonate with the rapidly evolving aspirations and values of the 21st century voter.

As of March 31, 2023, there are 126 million registered voters, with 83 million falling within the 18 to 45 age bracket, and 23 million among those aged 18 to 25. Imagine the potential influence of these numbers. It's intriguing to recall the 2018 general election when the PTI clinched a remarkable victory with just 17 million votes. This historical fact underscores the increasingly pivotal role that younger voters are poised to play in shaping the outcomes of upcoming elections.

The PML-N and the PPP continue to promote ideologies and policies that were conceived in a different era. These ideologies and policies do not address the economic and social challenges faced by a 21st century Pakistan. Dynastic politics continues to be a feature of Pakistan's political landscape, where political power is passed down through family lines. Surely, this practice is not unique to Pakistan but it is contrary to the principles of meritocracy and inclusivity that 21st century voters increasingly value.

The organizational structures of the PML-N and the PPP are hierarchical and centralized, making it challenging for new and innovative voices to emerge. This hierarchical structure stifles the participation of young and digitally connected voters. Yes, the internet and social media have connected Pakistani voters to global ideas and trends, expanding their horizons and exposing them to a wide range of perspectives. The 21st century Pakistani voter aspires for progress, inclusivity, and social justice. The 21st century Pakistani voter demands responsive governance, transparency, and accountability in a way that the old political structures often fail to deliver.

The PML-N and PPP need to adapt to the changing needs and values of the electorate. The PML-N and PPP need to revamp party structures, embrace new technologies, and promote fresh voices within their ranks.

The PML-N and PPP must reevaluate their ideologies to align with contemporary issues and global trends. Policies should be crafted to address 21st-century challenges such as social justice and technology. The PML-N and PPP should actively involve young leaders and voices in decision-making processes and leadership positions, ensuring that the aspirations of the youth are heard and addressed.

The PML-N and the PPP must recognize the evolving dynamics of their electorate. The PML-N and PPP must change and modernize their approaches to stay relevant and connected with 21st-century voters. The PML-N and PPP must address the needs and aspirations of the youth. The PML-N and PPP must adapt to contemporary values. The PML-N and PPP must bridge the divide and truly represent the diverse population of Pakistan in the 21st century.

The writer is a columnist based in Islamabad. He tweets/posts @saleemfarrukh and can be reached at: farrukh15@hotmail.com

The BRI as disruptor

Sarmad Khawaja

If the often-used Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Silk Road analogy is true, and indications are that it is, then by bringing some ancient Silk Road history to bear, we may better appreciate the need to get onto the BRI.

Briefly, the Silk Road history goes like this: It began during the Han dynasty in 130 BC about 2,500 years after silk was first reeled in China and gave its name to the several routes connecting China with the Mediterranean. The Silk Road's western stretches coincided with King Darius' (d 486 BC) famous Royal Road, which was later extended by Alexander. And it lasted until the mid-fifteenth century. About this time one Western ambassador to Timur's court in Samarkand reported that "almost anything useful to almost anybody was being passed along the Silk Road".

Countless caravans brought the world's products into the bazaars along the Silk Road, as well as new ideas, technologies, cultures, religions and people. Some technologies moved east, others west. Paper manufacturing and silk weaving went west out of China, while glass making moved east to China. The business arrangements underpinning the trade, like pooling capital to distribute risk, monetization and partnerships, and accounting methods were sophisticated, which sustains healthy trade. Its consequences went far beyond trade and economics.

How did this map on to our region? Very gainfully for our ancestors. Ours (especially present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) being the 'central region' on the Silk Road, as it is now on the BRI, was the meeting place of the pathways between flanking trading partners. And the gateway into the Indian subcontinent. Consider, for instance, the case of Taxila, which was a hub of ancient learning.

Scholars flocked here from far off places, such as the famous Chinese monks Fa-hsien (399 AD), Song Yun (520 AD), Hsuan-tsang (664 AD). They are among hundreds of visitors to the region recorded in history books. Cutting-edge ideas received from the West and East were refined here and relayed down into the Indus and Ganges plains. The region became the seedbed of a rich and tolerant culture. It produced magnificent Gandhara artefacts, and among other things, modern numerals, which the French mathematician Simon Laplace calls one of the great inventions of mankind.

The BRI is already upending the present system and taking over as dramatically as the West took over the world system in the 16th century

An iconic emblem of our ancestors' intellectual achievements and sign of a prosperous commercial life is the Bakshali Manuscript. This 1,500-year-old artefact found 142 years ago in the town of Bakshali near Mardan (and taken away by the British) is an accounting book inscribed on seventy pieces of birch bark – and the oldest recording of modern numerals. Its jottings of income and expenses tracking business operations use zero as a symbol representing nothing, as well as a number with mathematical properties. Meaning, our ancestors manipulated modern numerals in the abstract eight hundred years before the West even saw them!

Likewise, Chinese metallurgy, paper-making and printing technologies in the 12th century would not be duplicated in Europe for several centuries. Meanwhile, Roger Bacon advocated, a la Sir Syed Ahmed reversed, the study of oriental languages, and reforming European education by learning from 'higher' eastern civilizations.

Janet Abu-Lughod in her book 'Before European Hegemony: The World System AD 1250-1350' tells us these achievements were among several Silk Road benefits. By the 13th century, she writes, a variety of cultural systems from China to the Mediterranean, cooperated along it in a tightly integrated network of production and exchange. Technological innovations produced surpluses, which were traded on the Silk Road and generated even more surpluses, and efflorescence of cultural, artistic and intellectual achievement.

So, while the West languished in its Dark Age, the lights shone brightly all along the Silk Road. Crucially, the Silk Road system was not hierarchical. There was 'no single hegemon dictating the terms of production and trade to others.'

But from the mid-fifteenth century the Silk Road systems faltered. The Mongol empire's fragmentation, the Black Death in the mid-fourteenth century, and finally, the Ottomans' capture of Constantinople in 1453 cut the East from the West. The region's natural connectedness was lost. The Silk Road was to have no counterpart until the BRI, whose broad features it matches.

As the Silk Road waned, Western players pulled ahead and forged a new system. More interested in short-term plunder and subjugation than long-term exchange and trade on equal terms, by the end of the 19th century, the new players conquered four fifths of the world, colonized half a billion people and sold nine million in slavery to enjoy previously unknown levels of prosperity.

A 'sanitized', though unstable, version of this system persists. It's undisputed though declining hegemon: the United States. For us, the system locks in inequality and subordination. Consider for instance, how our economic coordinates are locked in by crippling shock therapies, aka IMF programmes, and by low growth, unbearable debts, poverty. On the other hand, the BRI is a 'bricks and mortar' development model, more suited to our needs, since we urgently need roads, railroads, bridges, factories, etc.

The moral of our story, which recounts the vast difference in our Silk Road ancestor's prosperity and our present economic wretchedness, is that we should no longer endure the present world system. It is not good for us. That it is neither inevitable nor permanent because global systems come and go. And that in the Silk Road we have a model for a better future world system for us.

Be that as it may, the BRI is already upending the present system and taking over as dramatically as the West took over the world system in the 16th century. And transferring massive industrial capacity to us. Which is a unique chance to get on to the new Silk Road, the BRI. To rotate our country's axis northward, back to our natural connectedness, and to integrate our economy with the prospering economic neighborhoods of Shanghai, Central Asia, Istanbul. It looks like our only chance given the political and economic reality, namely that powerful forces are determined to keep us locked in a web of shock therapies and impoverishment.

The writer is a freelance contributor. He can be reached at: Khwaja.Sarmad@gmail.com

News Post

E-mail: news.post@thenews.com.pk

Note to readers: Please send your letters to the following email address: Email: news.post@thenews.com.pk Address: The News, I.I. Chundrigar Road, Karachi. Readers are welcome to write for this column. Please include your full name and address; letter-writers may be contacted to verify their identity. Letters should be to the point and may be edited for brevity and clarity. The views on these pages do not necessarily reflect the newspaper's policy.

Disappointed

The Pakistani cricket team has lost two important World Cup matches – against India and Australia. Cricket fans have observed that the reason for Pakistan's dismal performance is a lack of confidence. In the match against India, Pakistani batters completely failed, and now our bowling attack failed in front of Australian batters.

These two matches have been a big disappointment for us. The Pakistani team has to struggle hard to qualify for the semi-finals. Players must break away from negative thoughts and must enter the playing field confidently.

Abdul Ahad Ghunyo
Ghotki

Wind of change?

This letter refers to the editorial 'Lucky Nawaz' (Oct 20). It has discussed the facilities granted to Nawaz by state functionaries for his safe return. Nowhere in the world does a convict and proclaimed offender enjoy such concessions – which point to a deal with 'neutrals'. The best time to return was when his brother was PM, but it was his narrative against the usual suspects that became a major hurdle. However, there was a sudden change in his tone and narrative – after he listened to people around him – that paved the way for his return.

The question is: how will he convert the crowd into voters and beat the PTI's popularity? Getting a two-third majority may seem a simple dream, but ground realities are totally different. Those who use the crutches of 'powerful forces' are bound to fail in the long run. It seems that this time, all predictions and assessments are likely to fail as happened in the 1970 elections. To bring stability and economic revival to Pakistan, the only solution lies in giving equal opportunities to all players and call for free and fair elections.

Mukhtar Ahmed
Karachi

Big plans

The justice system in Pakistan does not work independently, leading to justice for only the privileged and not for the underprivileged. This is evident from the fact that Nawaz is allowed to land in Pakistan to become PM for the fourth time.

Under the current circumstances, holding general elections will only waste tons of money as people's votes have no value in a country where 'selections' are common. How can our leaders realize the difficulties being faced by the downtrodden when they are so divorced from reality? Their hunger for power is based on their aspirations to become richer.

Engr Asim Nawab
Islamabad

Gaza bleeds

Israel's brutal attack on a hospital in Gaza shows the impunity enjoyed by the IDF. World leaders, surprisingly, have failed to safeguard the rights and lives of Palestinians. They are more interested in sending billions of dollars to Israel to strengthen the settler state's defence.

The hypocritical attitude of world leaders has exposed their false claims of being human rights defenders. At this point, nothing else matters. All countries should be focused on providing aid and healthcare to the 2.2 million unarmed Palestinian civilians trapped in Gaza.

Zakeriya Ali
Islamabad

Right to study

In Punjab, the decision by the caretaker government regarding the privatization of government schools has created panic and chaos. Students, teachers and parents are united in the protest against this ill-thought-out decision. Parents have expressed their inability to afford private education. This crisis, if unaddressed, will hinder progress and leave countless children without education.

The government should think about protecting our public education, which is vital for our success and progress. Every child deserves an equal chance at receiving an education.

Zarjan Mohammad
Kech

Power woes

This is to draw the attention of the authorities concerned to frequent power outages in the city; this has caused problems for people of all classes and ages. Due to the constant power failure, factories are reporting low levels of production.

Students also cannot study comfortably, and this has a negative impact on their studies. Power outages are one of the reasons why development in the country has not kicked off. All stakeholders must work together to solve this problem immediately.

Maryam Khalil
Karachi

How surprising!

This refers to the news report 'Stage set for Nawaz's hassle-free homecoming' (Oct 21). I am 85 years old, have lived and worked in three continents and have been a keen newspaper reader all my life. However, unless my memory is failing me, I cannot recollect any case of a prisoner serving long sentences given permission to go abroad for medical treatment, and, to make the story even more thrilling, still being given a celebratory status on his eventual return to the country.

There could be some justification for not arresting him at the airport. However, with the sentenced man attending social/political events first and surrendering to the court at leisure – with a possibility of seeking further relief due to health emergency – this is surely taking the joke a bit too far.

SRH Hashmi
Karachi

Speak up

The people of Palestine have been under a brutal occupation since 1948. Thousands of families have lost their loved ones just because they happen to live in the Gaza Strip. No one can understand the excruciating pain of a mother who has to see the lifeless body of her child. This time, Israel has crossed all limits of cruelty and apathy; it targeted a hospital, leaving almost 500 people dead. What is happening in Palestine calls for the unity of Muslim-majority states, which must make a strong case for Palestinians. The OIC has to play its part and speak up for the oppressed. Only our collective action can help heal the wounds of Gazans.

Aamir Ali
Shikarpur

Tackle inflation

Inflation is a major issue in Pakistan right now, and it is causing grave difficulties for people in their daily lives. The rising prices of everyday items like fuel, food, and utilities keep going up, making it harder for people to afford basic necessities. As price hikes put a strain on household budgets, it gets tough for individuals and families to manage their expenses.

It is important for the government to address this issue and implement effective policies to regulate prices. It is also essential for them to work with businesses, economists, and the public to address this problem. By taking steps to stabilize prices and improve the economic situation, they can help alleviate the burden on the people.

Afsa Shoukat
Karachi

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THE HOLY QURAN

(Saying): Serve none but Allah. Lo! I am unto you from Him a warner and a bringer of good tidings.

Surah Hud – 11, Verse – 2

The return of Nawaz Sharif

Emotion trumped politics as Nawaz made his first live speech at a rally in Pakistan after four years in exile. Much has been said on the how and why of the return of Punjab's once favourite son. That analysis stands, given the particular circumstances surrounding politics in the country. But Saturday evening was for Nawaz to make a grand re-entry into politics, and try and revive his party's dwindling popularity in a time of crippling inflation. The PML-N managed to put together an acceptable enough power show at Minar-e-Pakistan. A visibly emotional Nawaz reaching the stage set the tone for the evening's messaging: heavy on nostalgia, justifiable emotional references to his deceased wife Kulsoom Nawaz and his deceased mother, and visible reservations regarding his ouster from power. There had been a lot of wonder at what Nawaz Sharif's 'narrative' would be on his return. Anyone expecting a speech of resistance or vengeance would have been disappointed on both counts. Nawaz opted for the role of elder statesman, emphasizing several times that he was not back to take revenge, but to unite the country and lead it towards prosperity. The 'rising up' by Nawaz was however not without its references to just how much he and his family and his party had suffered – in a shift from his earlier iteration we weren't told who was inflicting all that misery on him and his people.

Nawaz has now set the tone for what will probably be the PML-N's narrative going forward into the elections: a party that has been around, knows the business of the state, knows people's economic misery, and also knows what it's like to be persecuted – but is still willing to work for the people. A politics of compromise and unity as opposed to a politics of defiance. On the economic front, Nawaz made much of the inflation rate, electricity prices and prices of other commodities when he was in power and how things have drastically changed over the years because someone somewhere decided to throw him out. What he failed to mention was the PDM government's economic performance or lack thereof. The irony of talking about inflation as Ishaq Dar sat on the stage might be too much to digest at least for economic experts in the country. In a nutshell, the somewhat vague agenda given by Nawaz includes reducing expenses, improving governance, enhancing exports and bringing in reforms. In a throwback to the Nawaz of the past, he did make a point to talk about keeping good ties with neighbouring countries. But the most important takeaway for all would be the reference to 'working together' for growth and prosperity – what some may see as a not-so-hidden hint at maintaining more of the same-pageness that he once accused Imran of indulging in.

Perhaps one of the more redeeming qualities of Nawaz has always been an effortless calm. Despite the high emotions, and the visible grief over what his family went through, Nawaz made it a point to say that he will not bring himself to speak of Imran Khan in a way that lowers his 'political training' – no dirty politicking at least in speech. That is something all mainstream parties in Pakistan should keep in mind: there need to be some lines that they should all promise not to cross. The political polarization that started under Imran Khan has now reached epic proportions. And, while Nawaz Sharif's sentiments are appreciated, he needs to also realize that 2023 is not the age to take jibes at women participating with equal enthusiasm – whether in slogans or in song and dance – at political rallies; the PML-N needs to grow up and embrace the 21st century. With a much-needed prayer for Palestine and condemnation of Israel, Nawaz's first appearance back home will be seen as a success by his supporters. But analysts rightly warn that populist talk of bringing down inflation may work well as a first speech but what is needed is a clear roadmap, especially when his handpicked finance minister wreaked havoc on the economy. Nawaz faces significant challenges: one of them will be to win back those voters and supporters who are angry at the rising inflation. The other will be to ensure that his party regains its popularity that it lost to the PTI due to the PDM rule. Lastly, it will be a huge challenge for him to have elections that are credible. With no opposition, an election cannot be credible.

An unending challenge

Polio is not going anywhere from Pakistan – or at least, as things stand, not anytime soon. A few days back, environmental samples taken from the country's four major cities – Chaman, Karachi, Rawalpindi, and Peshawar – tested positive for the poliovirus. This was reported a week after samples from Hub, Lahore, and Peshawar tested positive for the virus. This has hopefully set alarm bells ringing in the healthcare department, with the country's caretaker minister for health ordering the relevant authorities to take all possible measures to protect children from this life-long disease. Regardless of the latest disturbing news, Pakistan's performance this year has been better. As compared to 2022 when the country reported 20 new polio cases, only three new cases have been reported in the 10 months of 2023. But the fact that the samples have turned out to be positive suggests that the problem is still very much present and needs urgent attention.

The caretaker health minister is of the opinion that the virus has travelled from Afghanistan – the only other country in the world except Pakistan where polio is still an epidemic. Whatever the route taken by the virus to reach, it is certain that the problem is now ours to deal with. Blame game cannot go much far, and in the end, it is on the government of Pakistan to increase its efforts to keep the children of Pakistan safe from the virus. What is missing from the government's anti-polio drive is more effective awareness campaigns. Short informative videos and social media posts should be made to explain to people about the consequences of missing the polio vaccination deadline and why their children should be given polio drops.

The lack of trust that people have in our healthcare authorities has made it difficult for the government to carry out well-meaning projects. Parents look at government-approved initiatives with suspicion and rarely agree to get their child the essential drops that can save them from life-long disability and other related issues. It is important for a child's parents and guardians to understand that there is no cure for polio and that only through immunization can a child's future be secured. Through the use of AI, the government can make interactive chatbots that can assuage parent's fears and provide answers to their questions. In the past, the government took impressive initiatives to vaccinate children. Polio workers would revisit houses to ensure that no child is left behind. But all of this requires people's cooperation as well. All efforts should now be made to bridge the gap between people and the government and create trust between the two. Polio is a dangerous and soul-crushing disease that creates countless difficulties for children; all stakeholders have to get together to put an end to this avoidable disease.

Timely elections and people's will

Benazir Jatoi

All election commissions around the world are established for the primary purpose of applying electoral laws and holding elections. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is a constitutional body required to organize and conduct general elections in the Senate, National Assembly and provincial assemblies and to do this "honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with the law." Should assemblies be dissolved prematurely, the constitution demands that the ECP hold elections within 90 days of the dissolution.

The latest announcement by the ECP, of holding elections in late January instead of November, takes us over the 90-day requirement by at least three months (the ECP has not announced an exact date for the elections yet) and violates the constitution. In many ways, it also contradicts the main purpose for which the ECP is established.

The ECP's reason for the delay is the redrawing of constituencies to align with the latest consensus results, which it claims will take till at least November 30. But this is questionable for various reasons. First, the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies' elections were not held by the ECP in the time frame required, even though at the time all work was based on the previous official consensus results. We were, therefore, still working with the previously established constituency demarcations, yet no elections were held as required by the constitution.

Second, the constitution does not articulate any contradiction on the requirement of new demarcation of constituencies, as per census results, and the 90-day period to hold the elections. Article 222(b) requires the ECP to carry out the delimitation of constituencies and Article 222(d) requires the conducting of elections. There is no overlap, nor a caveat, which allows for delaying the stated time period for the elections because of the demarcation of constituencies. The question then is: if demarcation is not possible within the time frame in which elections are to be held, could we have held the elections based on the previous consensus to fulfil the constitutional requirement of the 90 days?

There are fundamental reasons for why our constitution, like most constitutions, does not have 'ifs and buts' nor negotiable clauses on election dates. Holding timely elections are the bedrock; a democracy and a clear electoral calendar allows certainty and confidence in the system. Our constitution, international human rights treaties on voting rights, the 2018 electoral laws and the ECP, all combine under the fundamental principle of the will of the people and their right to exercise the right to choose their representative in a timely and transparent manner.

This is because it is the people's vote that gives the government its authority and goes to the heart of the argument of the right to free expression. And the people's right to express their will through the electoral process. By this account, an interim government can never hold the legitimacy required to govern, and the longer it stays on, the more uncertain its position and hold on power will become.

The ECP, therefore, does not just have a legal obligation to hold the elections on time but it is safe to say that a moral duty to hold the general elections in November is as valid, urgent and well-founded an argument. If the constitution is supreme, then the ECP has a supreme responsibility to uphold it.

This delay will no doubt further delegitimize the independence and strengthen of the ECP and contribute towards anti-democratic precedents. Other election commissions take pride in pushing back anti-democratic forces, not capitulating at the first sign of resistance to carry out their primary function. In India, for example, the Election Commission is being recognized as an unavoidable pillar of state, along with the executive, legislature and judiciary. This is perhaps because democratic norms have become institutionalised in the Indian political and social infrastructure, due to a consistent Election Commission that holds its ground and fulfils its responsibility to the country's constitution.

Pakistan is far from this. Delaying elections and, more importantly, deviating from constitutional requirements, means the ECP is complicit in delaying democratic and constitutional traditions from taking ground and becoming foundational. The ECP should be mindful not to be remembered as the body that allows powerful institutions to crush the democratisation process in the country. The way to start, for the ECP to follow its constitutional requirement, is simple: hold your ground by holding the elections on time.

It is unfortunate that some politicians have agreed to delay the elections. Nawaz Sharif, for example, who has suffered many political defeats because of unconstitutional actions against him and his party, is now supporting the delay. If politicians, particularly those that created democratic alliances, remain so short-sighted as to believe it will increase their chances of winning, or will help keep out political opponents, they should remember our political history shows otherwise.

There is no political party that has gained in such situations; there are no winners in the long term if one subsides the constitution. What we have learnt is that in situations when the supremacy of the constitution is not respected, like we are presently facing, undemocratic forces will always have a hold on electoral and parliamentary processes.

We would think politicians would also be able to see how political uncertainty adds to the existing economic woes of ordinary people and tunnel vision on major constitutional decisions such as holding elections, causing further suffering, dissatisfaction and security, social and economic turmoil. Do they not see it, or do they not care?

Timely elections and the will of the people are closely interlinked. That is why political parties that believe in parliamentary democracy, progressive civil society and all other democratic forces in the country must push back on the ECP's decision to delay elections. We can no longer afford to hinder democratic foundations from taking hold.

The writer is a lawyer and consultant. She tweets @BenazirJatoi

A war in our minds

Ghazi Salahuddin

During my infrequent encounters with university students, I have been quoting that first sentence of the Unesco constitution: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be created".

Ah, but how does one relate the truth of this maxim to the reality of the ongoing war in the Middle-East? Somehow, this is one war that is also being passionately fought in the minds of men, in places far from the arena of actual conflict. And the big question is: when and how will peace be instituted, particularly when the victors and the defeated are becoming indistinguishable?

For many, it seems easy to take sides on the basis of who they are in terms of their religion or race or nationality or ideological beliefs. But it is not so easy for those who can think and feel empathy for the ones who suffer and who have a sense of justice and truth. These sensitive people who also respect reason and facts have to contend with the complexity of an emotionally divisive issue.

With my two daughters living abroad, the elder in the US and the younger in Italy, I do feel concerned about how this highly charged confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians is playing out in their countries that are essentially plural and open, in a democratic sense. Watching and reading the American media, I have a fair idea of how this issue is being debated.

I was wondering whether my nine-year-old Italian grandson, Daaniyal, was exposed to any unpleasant situation because I knew that there are Israeli and Arab children in his international school. When I spoke to Aliya about it, she shared with me a communication that the school principal had sent to all parents on the first day of school after the war began on October 7.

The health crisis in Gaza is on the brink of explosion. Humanitarian assistance is not yet being allowed to enter Gaza. The horrors of this war are steadily mounting

As a journalist, I can appreciate this resolve to remain apolitical in the midst of raging emotions in the context of imparting education to young minds. This stance, I am told, was not liked by all the parents.

Anyhow, this was the gist of Principal Iain Sachdev's letter: "Dear families. The team at International School of Monza are aware that students from kindergarten to Grade 13 have returned to school today having all been exposed in different ways to recent events in the Middle East. We want to ensure that families who we understand might be most emotionally or practically connected to the conflict, in particular, feel supported and, in doing so, remind our entire community that peace, respect, fairness and honesty are core components of both the school's and IB's ethos and philosophy".

It added: "There is also wider thinking in place for all of the students in our care. Children observe, listen, and build their own thoughts and theories about what is happening and, as educators, we have returned to school today to be attentive and mindful of our students' needs without adding information, mis-information or cultural bias which may exacerbate any fear or anxiety that they may be harbouring".

From a prestigious school in a northern Italian town, I would want to hop over to arguably the most reputed university of the world, America's Harvard. After the devastating Hamas attacks inside Israel, the Harvard Undergraduate Palestine Solidarity Committee and more than 30 other student groups put out a letter to "hold the Israeli regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence".

This was a shocking statement in a country that is formally the primary defender of Israel. There was a strong demand from the Harvard administration to identify the students who had signed the letter and take action against them but Harvard President Claudine Gay rejected calls to punish and name those students. She reiterated the university's commitment to free expression.

Meanwhile, what is happening on the ground is unspeakable. Explosion at a major hospital in Gaza on Tuesday in which hundreds were killed could be seen as a game changer, provoking a new wave of protests against Israel across the world, including in countries ruled by pro-Israel regimes. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has baffled the world. Air strikes by Israel are destroying mosques, churches, hospitals and residential buildings.

Chief of UN relief agency UNRWA has told BBC that the Middle East is on the 'edge of an abyss'. He said that "the world is now losing its humanity". The health crisis in Gaza is on the brink of explosion. Humanitarian assistance is not yet being allowed to enter Gaza. The horrors of this war are steadily mounting.

However, the point I am making is that perhaps there is a shift in the war that is being fought in the minds of men. Progressive elements in the West are becoming more sympathetic towards the rights of Palestine and are criticizing Israel for becoming, as one observer said, as crazy as Hamas. Take this as a victory for Hamas.

"A real friend of Israel would be making it face up to some uncomfortable truths" was the title of one opinion piece in The New York Times. There was another, titled: "There is a Jewish hope for Palestinian liberation".

In this column, Peter Beinart said: "From this overcrowded cage, which the United Nations in 2017 declared "unlivable" for many residents ...many Palestinians in Gaza can see the land that their parents and grandparents called home, though most may never set foot in it". And this is how the columnist has concluded: "Like many others who care about the lives of Palestinians and Jews, I have felt in recent days the greatest despair I have ever known".

Obviously, the war has sparked a widespread debate on a dispute that has roots in history. This debate is being conducted in the media in countries that have a measure of democratic freedoms. But essentially, it is continuing in the minds of men. And there, the tables are beginning to turn against Israel.

The writer is a senior journalist. He can be reached at: ghazi_salahuddin@hotmail.com

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LOOKING for one of our clients (Pharma Company) 1st Class Boiler – ETP Operator – RO Operator – PW Operator – Production Technician – Mechanical Technician – Instrumentation Technician – Education: DAE / B-Tech, 2-5 years relevant experience. Applicant may send CVs to rehab@go4cnc.com or WhatsApp 0321-1260263. Preference will be given who are living nearby Landhi, Korangi, Shahfaisal and Malir. (NJ-051040-A)

FOR reputed Textile Company situated in Korangi Industrial area required a **CHIEF ELECTRICIAN** with experience of 5 years in same field for transformers, RMU, Cable joints, energization + earthing. Interested person can send CV to info@unicongroup.com.pk or only drop CV on WhatsApp # 0333-2435516 (please do not call). (NJ-051069-B)

Others

HIRING for an international Company Salary up to 125,000 + Bonuses Strong English fluency required 5pm-2am PST, Monday – Saturday 0311-2042021 Email: info@eliteconsultingusa.com (NJ-051058)

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PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

CORRIGENDUM

TENDER NOTICE – SINGLE STAGE TWO ENVELOPE
BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES AT JINNAH INT'L AIRPORT KARACHI
GRANT OF LICENSE FOR ESTABLISHMENT, OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE OF "PREMIUM LOUNGE" IN INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURE OF JINNAH TERMINAL, JIAP KARACHI

1. Reference is made to PCAA advertisement published on Friday, 8th September, 2023 and its subsequent corrigendum published on Saturday, 7th October 2023 regarding invitation of tender for subject concession. In this regard, the revised detail as tabulated below is hereby notified for the information of all concerned -

Concession Name	RESERVE PRICE (In PKR P.M.)	DATE, TIME & VENUE OF SUBMISSION	DATE, TIME & VENUE OF OPENING
Establishment, Operation & Maintenance of "Premium Lounge" in International Departure Jinnah Terminal, JIAP, Karachi	20,168,900/- No offer less than reserve price shall be entertained	10-11-2023 at 1100 hrs Main Conference Room (Room No.6035) at Level-VI, Jinnah Terminal, JIAP Karachi	10-11-2023 at 1130 hrs Main Conference Room (Room No.6035) at Level-VI, Jinnah Terminal, JIAP Karachi

2. Inconvenience is regretted.

DIRECTOR COMMERCIAL & ESTATES
HEADQUARTERS CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY
TERMINAL-I HQCAA JIAP KARACHI
TELEPHONE: 021-99242531
www.caapakistan.com.pk

PID(K)#1229/2023

PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR HIRING OF TRAVEL AGENT

1. Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) invites Request for Proposal (RFP) for hiring of Travel Agent (having a demonstrated experience at least five years) for providing air tickets (Domestic & International) on credits, processing of visa and other air travel facilities to CAA employees for initially three years (extendable further six months).

2. Binding Document / Request for Proposal (RFP) which are containing detailed terms and conditions, procedure for submission of proposal, bid validity, opening of offer, evaluation, criteria, clarification / rejection of bids etc are available for the interested travel agents from the address below during office hours on working days but not later than **6th November, 2023.** Price of the binding document / request for proposal is PKR3,000/- (Rupees Three Thousand only) paid to CAA Collection Account No. C-2561-8 through bank challan in NBP Airport Branch, Karachi or pay order in favor of CAA.

3. The bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the binding document / request for proposal shall reach to this office by **7th November, 2023** on or before 1030 hrs. Bids / Offers will be opened on the same day at 1100 hrs. This advertisement is also available on PPRA website at www.ppra.org.pk and CAA's website www.caapakistan.com.pk.

Additional Director HR (BSS)
Headquarters Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority
Terminal-1, Jinnah International Airport, Karachi
Tel : 99072041 – 99072474
Fax : 99242081
www.caapakistan.com.pk

PID(K)#1230/2023

INVITATION TO BID

TENDER NO. 31/HVAC 1/FOR/NLC/2023

1. Sealed tenders are invited from **OEMs/ Authorized Dealer of OEMs** for supply, installation, commissioning and testing of HVAC System (Split System) on **FOR (Islamabad)** Basis by HQ National Logistics Corporation.
2. Tender will be submitted under PPRA Rule 36b at HQ NLC HARDING ROAD NEAR AFIRM RAWALPINDI on or before **07 November 2023** by **1100 hours**, which will be opened on the same day at **1130 hours**.
3. Tender Fee Rs. 2,000.00 and bid security Rs. 1,000,000.00 must be attached with technical offer, otherwise offer will be rejected.
4. A Pre-bid meeting will be held at KHU Project site (at Park Road Chak Shahzad), Islamabad NLC office on **30 October 2023** at **1100 hours**.
5. Bids qualification criteria, bidding documents and relevant BOQs/ Drawings can be downloaded from NLC website i.e **www.nlc.com.pk**

NLC National Logistics Corporation

HQ NLC Rawalpindi
Tel No. 051-9052536
051-5916200 Ext: 536

HEADQUARTERS PAKISTAN RANGERS (SINDH)

MUSLIM JINNAH COURTS DR ZIA-UD-DIN AHMED ROAD KARACHI-4

No. 16/TPRO/679/2023 Dated 19-October-2023

TENDER NOTICE

1. **Sealed tenders** are invited from the manufacturers or their sole distributors/ authorized dealers to provide different types / sizes of following items for vehicles of **Pakistan Rangers (Sindh).** Tenders will be opened on **07 November 2023 at 1100 hours**:-

Ser	Tender No	Name of Items	Type	Tender Fee
a.	6011/EME/Tyre/01/23	Tyres, tubes & flappers	Different sizes	Rs.3000/-
b.	6011/EME/Bty/02/23	Batteries	Different AH	Rs.3000/-

2. Tender **documents can be obtained on payment (non refundable)** from **19 October 2023** to **06 November 2023** between 0900 to 1600 hours (on working days) from EME Branch, Headquarters Pakistan Rangers (Sindh), Muslim Jinnah Courts Building, Dr Zia Ud Din Ahmed Road Karachi - 4.
3. Tenders will be opened in the presence of representatives of the firms.
4. Tenders can be dropped in tender box by **07 November 2023** till 1030 hours.
5. Director General Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) has the right to accept or reject any or all tenders as per PPRA Rules 2004.
6. For further information please contact telephone numbers **021-99205263**, during office hours.

Lieutenant Colonel
for Director General
(Pakistan Rangers Sindh)

PID(K)1216/2023

TENDER NOTICE

HIRING OF SERVICES FOR ROUND THE YEAR OPERATION / MAINTENANCE CONTRACT OF HVAC EQUIPMENTS INSTALLED AT PIA BOOKING AND AIRPORT OFFICE QUETTA

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) intends to invite tenders for hiring of services from HVAC&R firms / companies registered with Pakistan engineering council 2023-24 Minimum in C6 with Specialized code (ME01/ME06) and having vast experience to provide operation, maintenance, repair and overhauling / servicing (routine & annually) with optimum performance and efficiencies.

- Tender is called on **"Single Stage Two Envelope"** basis
- Complete RFP can be downloaded from **www. Piac.com.pk** and **www.ppra.org.pk**
- Bidders are required to submit Pay Order of Rs. 5,000/- (Non-Refundable) as tender cost in favour of PIAC alongwith 'Technical Proposal' PKR 100,000 as earnest money (Refundable) in shape of pay order alongwith 'Financial Proposal separately.

Prospective bidders are requested to submit their sealed proposals on or before **14-11-2023 till 1200 hrs** in the Office of Manager FM Division (Works) PIA, PIA Booking office hali road Quetta, technical proposals will be opened on same date at **1600 hrs** in the presence of bidder or their representatives who wish to attend the proceedings in the office of District Manager PIA, PIA Booking office hali road Quetta.

For any query, to feel free to contact.

Rasheed Khan Qambrani
Manager PIA,FM Division PIA
Booking Office Hali Road Quetta.
uetwspk@piac.aero
081-9203861

General Manager (Facilities Management)
1st Floor, PIA Flight Operation & Works Building
Karachi Airport, Karachi
Ph: +92-21-9904 4640
E-mail: gm.facilitesmanagement@piac.aero

PID(K)#1227/2023

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PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

پاکستان سول ایوی ایشن اتھارٹی

CORRIGENDUM
SITUATION VACANT NOTICE NO.15/2023

1. Reference our advertisement published in the newspapers on 25th June, 2023.
2. Please amend to read qualification criteria for the following post as mentioned against each:-

Post	Prescribed Qualification
Electronics Assistant (SG-05)	• F.Sc (Pre-Engineering) with minimum 70% marks OR • DAE in Telecommunication / Electronics with minimum 70% marks
Communication Assistant (SG-05)	• F.Sc (Pre-Engineering) with minimum 70% marks OR • DAE in Telecommunication / Electronics with minimum 70% marks
Electrical / Mechanical (E/M) Technician (SG-05)	• F.Sc (Pre-Engineering) with minimum 70% marks OR • DAE in Electrical / Mechanical with minimum 70% marks

3. Interested candidates having above qualification may apply against the above said posts within Seven (07) days from the publication of this notice. Candidates who had applied earlier are not required to submit fresh applications again.
4. Rest of the contents of the above mentioned advertisement shall remain same.

ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR HR (TM)
HEADQUARTERS CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY,
TERMINAL-I, JINNAH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, KARACHI
TEL: 021-99072068
www.caapakistan.com.pk

PID(K)#1231/2023

Invitation for Bids

TENDER FOR SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF DIRECT GAS FIRED ABSORPTIONS CHILLERS OF 300 TONS AT KARACHI EXPO CENTRE

Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), an authority established for promotion of trade and business, under the Ministry of Commerce, invites sealed bids from firms registered with Pakistan Engineering Council having valid certificate of category C2, Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments and who are on Active Taxpayers List of the Federal Board of Revenue and qualified in all respects, for supply and installation of direct gas fired absorptions chillers of 300 tons at Karachi Expo Centre.

2. Bidding documents which are containing detailed terms and conditions, method of procurement, procedure for submission of bids, bid security, bid validity, opening of bid, evaluation criteria, clarification / rejection of bids, performance guarantee etc. are available for the interested bidders at the Office of the Deputy Director (Expo), Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), Karachi Expo Centre, University Road, Hassan Square, Karachi on payment of Rs.10,000/- through pay order in favour of "Account Officer, TDAP, Karachi Expo Centre".

3. Single Stage Two Envelope Procedure as per PPRA rule 36(b) would be used for Open Competitive Bidding for each work. Sealed Bid proposal should accompany a bid security equivalent to five per cent (5%) of the bid amount in the shape of pay order / bank draft in favour of Trade Development Authority of Pakistan. Trade Development Authority of Pakistan reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to annul the bidding process at any time, however, reasons for rejection or annulling bid process will be communicated to the concerned bidder (s) in accordance with the Procurement Rules.

4. The bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the bidding documents, must reach at the office of the Deputy Director (Expo), Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), 5th Floor, Block-A, FTC Building, Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi on or before 11:30 AM on 10th November, 2023. Bids will be opened the same day at 12:00 PM. This advertisement is also available on PPRA website at www.ppra.org.pk.

Deputy Director
(Expo Centre)
Tel: 021-99232667
Trade Development Authority of Pakistan
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
Block-A, 5th Floor, Finance & Trade Centre, Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi-75350

PID(K)#1224/2023

ISLAMABAD: PMLN supremo Nawaz Sharif arriving aboard a private airline plane at the Islamabad International Airport, Saturday. —Online photo

Pipe bomb explodes near Israeli embassy in Cyprus

NICOSIA: Four people were arrested after a pipe bomb exploded near the Israeli embassy in Cyprus early on Saturday, causing little damage and no injuries, police said.

The incident occurred in the Cypriot capital Nicosia at 1:37 am (2237 GMT on Friday) about 30 to 40 metres (yards) from the embassy as a deadly war between Israel and Gaza´s Hamas rulers entered its third week.

The conflict began when Hamas militants stormed into Israel from Gaza on October 7, beginning an attack that has killed at least 1,400 people, mostly civilians who were shot, mutilated or burnt to death on the first day, according to Israeli officials.

Since then, more than 4,300 Palestinians, mainly civilians, have been killed in relentless Israeli bombardments, according to Gaza´s Hamas-run health ministry. Cypriot explosive experts called to the site found the remains of a pipe bomb which detonated causing slight damage, with police saying it contained the type of explosive material used in making fireworks.

Police said they arrested four suspects aged between 17 and 21, two of whom were on foot close to the scene and another two who were in a car parked on a nearby residential street. They did not give any information about their identities nor nationality, with all four due to appear in court later on Saturday. One suspect had two knives and a hammer in his car, they said.

Cyprus has a sizable Jewish community, and since the conflict began, police have tightened security around the Israeli embassy and other sites of Jewish interest, such as the synagogue in the southern port town of Larnaca.

But there have been few reports of anti-Semitic incidents on the holiday island which is favourite destination for Israeli tourists, who make up the second-largest national visitor group after Britons.—AFP

Turkey to take part in new Ukraine peace talks: Zelensky

KYIV, Ukraine: Turkey will take part in peace talks next week to discuss ways to end the Ukraine conflict, President Volodymyr Zelensky said Saturday, after speaking with Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Mediterranean island of Malta announced Friday it would host a round of Ukraine peace talks on October 28-29, after similar meetings in Jeddah and Copenhagen earlier this year. "We discussed the next round of the Peace Formula talks in Malta," Zelensky said after a call with Erdogan. "Turkey will participate, adding its authoritative voice and stance," Zelensky said.

Russia is not expected to take part in the talks, which Zelensky hopes will rally support for his own peace plan.

Similar talks were held in Copenhagen in June and in the Saudi city of Jeddah in August. Representatives from around 40 countries including China, India, the United States and Ukraine took part in the Saudi summit, which did not result in a final declaration.

Both Russia and Ukraine are preparing for a gruelling winter ahead, with Ukraine warning of renewed strikes on its energy infrastructure and Russia trying to suppress a Ukrainian counteroffensive. Turkey has offered itself as a mediator between the two warring parties, helping to broker a deal in July last year that allowed safe grain exports via the Black Sea. Turkey has since been in talks with both sides about reviving the deal, which collapsed after Russia pulled out less than a year later.—AFP

Fifth attack on US-led troops in Iraq

BAGHDAD: A suicide drone hit an airbase in Iraq hosting US troops on Saturday, Iraqi security sources said, the fifth such attack in four days.

Armed factions close to Iran have threatened to attack US interests in Iraq over Washington's support for Israel since Hamas militants killed more than 1,400 people in a shock cross-border attack from Gaza on October 7.

Israel's retaliatory bombardment of Gaza has killed more than 4,300 people, according to its Hamas-controlled health ministry.

"The drone came down inside the (Ain al-Assad) base" in the western province of Anbar, without causing any casualties or damage, a military source told AFP on condition of anonymity. A statement issued on Telegram channels used by pro-Iranian armed groups said the attack was carried out by a group calling itself the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. A second Iraqi security source told AFP the attack had involved two suicide drones. "The first was intercepted and the second crashed because of a technical problem," the source said.

Since Wednesday, three Iraqi bases used by US-led coalition troops have been targeted in five separate attacks -- Ain al-Assad, the Al-Harir base in northern Iraq and a military camp near Baghdad airport.

The United States currently has about 2,500 troops stationed at the three bases, alongside around 1,000 soldiers from other countries in the coalition set up to fight the Islamic State jihadist group. The attacks came after factions loyal to Iran stepped up threats against the United States. One of them, the Hezbollah Brigades, demanded that US forces "leave" Iraq, "otherwise they will taste the fires of hell".—AFP

Nearly 100,000 pro-Palestinians march in London

Continued from page 12

police said on X (formerly Twitter) that almost 100,000 had attended. It broke up peacefully close to Downing Street. "We came to show our support because we can't stay silent, watch the news, and then do nothing," Mariam Abdul-Ghani, an 18-year-old student whose family is from the Palestinian territories, told AFP.

David Rosenberg, a member of the Jewish Socialists Group, said he was there "to give solidarity and to disrupt that narrative that says it's Muslims versus Jews, Palestinians versus Israelis. "I'm 65 but there's people here in their 20s and 30s, who have grown up in mainstream Jewish households, who cannot stand what is supposedly done in their name," he added. "I do have cousins, family and friends (there)", said Nivert Tamraz, a 38-year-old marketing consultant, who came with her children so they "understand that sometimes everyone has to stand for humanity and not just shy away." "I have a friend whose family is in Gaza, they can't even get in touch with them, it's horrible for them, they don't know if they are dead, if they are alive," she added.

Other demonstrations took place in Birmingham, central England, Cardiff in Wales, and other European cities.

The first aid trucks arrived in the war-torn Gaza Strip from Egypt on Saturday, bringing humanitarian relief to the Hamas-controlled Palestinian enclave suffering.—AFP

Russian strikes

Continued from page 12

separate attacks, the head of Ukraine's central Dnipropetrovsk region said Russia fired a missile at a group of dachas, a type of cottage, in Kryvyi Rig -- President Volodymyr Zelensky's hometown -- killing a 60-year-old man and wounding a woman.

"She is in a serious condition in hospital. The attack caused a fire, which rescuers have already extinguished," Dnipropetrovsk governor Sergiy Lysak said Friday evening.

He later said on Saturday that Russian artillery strikes on Nikopol, a city of about 100,000 people on the river Dnipro, had killed one person.

"The enemy has once again fired on peaceful Nikopol with heavy artillery. Unfortunately, a man died as a result of the attack," Nikopol mayor Oleksandr Sayuk said.

Russian shelling near Kupyansk in Ukraine's north-eastern Kharkiv region and strikes on Avdiivka in eastern Donetsk region wounded at least two people on Friday, officials said.

Fighting and shelling in and around Avdiivka has escalated in recent weeks as Russia tries to encircle and capture the strategically important town.—AFP

PSO resumes

Continued from page 12

support was declined by the government, prompting Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar to initiate a restructuring plan to stabilise the airline's finances. "PKR 220 million have been received [from the PIA] for Saturday and Sunday's refueling," Naila Erum, a PSO spokesperson, said. "Thirty-nine flights' list [has been] given for 21.10.23." Besides other financial needs for repairing parts and maintaining aircraft, the airline needs Rs100 million a day to pay for fuel from PSO, which canceled supply this week over Rs1.4 billion in unpaid dues.

As of October 16, 2023, the outstanding amount owed by PIA to PSO stood at Rs26.825 billion, Erum said earlier this week. This comprises Rs14.803 billion as the principal amount and Rs11.932 billion as Late Payment Surcharges (LPS). "The payable amount against current supplies as of October 17 was Rs2,072 million," she said. PIA is grappling with a fuel crisis as it aims to resume flights to the United Kingdom within the next two months.

Aun Chaudhry

Continued from page 1

at the Lahore Airport. According to the party spokesperson, a written explanation has been sought from Aun Chaudhry. The spokesman said that Aun Chaudhry's meeting with Nawaz Sharif had nothing to do with the party. If Aun Chaudhry has gone for a meeting in a personal capacity, he should explain it immediately, according to the spokesperson. The IPP has also decided to issue a show cause notice to Aun Chaudhry.

PTI terms Nawaz's return

Continued from page 1

any health issue nor had any urgency to go on leave.

The PTI spokesperson said that "fragility of our judicial system" could be judged from the fact that a convicted person who escaped to London on a Rs50 stamp paper was granted bail without court appearance.

However, he recalled, contrary to it, the country's most popular leader, implicated in nearly 200 false cases, was denied bail sans appearing in person in the court despite being injured.

The PTI spokesperson contended that the mothers and daughters of the nation, who have been imprisoned in jails for the last four months in fabricated and bogus cases, were looking towards honorable judges for justice against unjustified delay in the proceedings of their cases. He called the "wastage of the state resources worth billions of rupees" on reception of Nawaz an insult to the nation, adding that the warrant of the person who stole vehicles from Toshakhana was canceled without any objection.

The spokesperson said that it would be a joke with the country and the nation to pin hope of economic revival on those who build properties, palaces and factories abroad with the nation's looted money. He alleged that the person, who was responsible for the country's economic catastrophe during his three stints of rule including the last 17-month-long devastating government, was a national criminal.

Hasan said that ironically, at present, all the state system was busy in welcoming Nawaz who was not only disqualified for life but also convicted. He pointed out the PMLN supremo was offering free motorcycles, food and tickets to heaven to make himself acceptable but all such attempts proved an exercise of futility. He said that despite of political engineering and use of all the state machinery, those responsible for the destruction of the country would not find any place to hide to avoid the public wrath.

Meanwhile, PTI Secretary General Omar Ayub denounced the VVIP protocols being given to Nawaz, saying that one country and two constitutions were not acceptable to the people as a convict was being unjustly and unlawfully facilitated in everything. He said that Pakistan's legal system has been completely destroyed by the PMLN, adding that Nawaz was being brought back on the pretext that he will 'fix' the country.

About Nawaz's picture of biometrics at the airport, the PTI secretary general stated that one country, two constitutions! "This picture is not only of Nawaz Sharif's biometrics, but of the funeral of Pakistan's judicial system...," he charged.

Pakistan Peoples Party leader Faisal Karim Kundi said that "if a decision had been made, then announce it" and asked what is the need to hold elections then.

Speaking on the Geo News programme Naya Pakistan, he said Nawaz Sharif should have talked about elections, but he did not. He alleged that the administration of Punjab had helped Nawaz Sharif. "The PMLN trampled the law today. It was probably coronation and Nawaz Sharif presented his CV. Is any political party allowed to paint train coaches like this?" he asked.

Kundi said that if Nawaz Sharif was sure that people would vote for him, then he should have talked about elections. "National institutions should work within their constitutional limits. If you have already decided, then announce it, what is the need to hold elections," he added.

He said that selection could not be made as the majority of voters were young people. "Holding a large meeting is one thing and getting votes another. This time, voters cannot be cheated. If it happens, anarchy will spread. The decision should be left to people. The PMLN has changed its narrative. Musical chairs are played in the country and the PMLN will repent tomorrow," he added.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PMLQ) chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain has welcomed the return of Nawaz Sharif, saying the nation has high expectations from the former prime minister.

"The country needs unity and reconciliation. Nawaz Sharif will have to work hard for the revival of economy and ending inflation," the seasoned politician said. The country doesn't need politics of revenge, but a strong economy, he added.

During a meeting with senior PMLQ leader Imtiaz Ranjha, Shujaat said, "As an experienced politician, it is hoped that Nawaz Sharif will choose the path of reconciliation." The PMLQ chief said, "There is an urgent need to work towards revitalising the country's economy and eradicating unemployment and terrorism."

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUIF) Spokesperson, Aslam Ghauri, said his party had also welcomed Nawaz Sharif on his return to the country.

He urged all political parties to stop indulging in tussle, adding that there was a dire need to take the country out of the quagmire.

Delay in ECC's gas

Continued from page 1

to unify feed gas prices for the fertilizer industry, aligning them with the industrial rate of Rs1,260/MMBTU. The fertilizer industry is a key consumer of both fuel and feedstock source gas. This move would have stabilized urea prices, optimized gas reserves and ensured a surplus in the Gas Development Surcharge (GDS) – crucial for gas infrastructure development and addressing gas shortages.

However, the ECC's recent decision to form an inter-ministerial committee, comprising representatives from various ministries (including finance, planning, commerce, food security, industries, power, and petroleum), to recommend gas allocation and pricing for the fertilizer industry has caused a delay. The next ECC meeting is scheduled after the return of Finance Minister Dr Shamshad Akhtar from China.

The gas circular debt has reached Rs2.9 trillion, as disclosed by caretaker Federal Minister of Energy Muhammad Ali in a recent media briefing.

An analyst of the sector highlighted disparities in input costs for various producers, causing distortions in urea market prices for farmers. Some manufacturers are disadvantaged as they are supplied gas under the Petroleum Policy 2012 pricing, which is linked to USD and is affected by rupee devaluation and crude oil rate fluctuations. To maintain business viability, these manufacturers must adjust urea prices. Gas price unification is seen as the only permanent solution to stabilize fertilizer prices, curbing excessive profiteering and black-market activities.

Over the past five years, feed gas tariffs under the Petroleum Policy 2012 have surged by over 235 per cent, from Rs518/MMBTU to Rs1,745/MMBTU. The fuel gas tariff under the Petroleum Policy now surpasses the Fertilizer Policy tariff.

An industrial expert proposed that the fertilizer sector should contribute positively to the GDS by unifying gas prices across all manufacturers. Unifying gas rates at Rs1,260/MMBTU for feed gas could generate a GDS pool of approximately Rs90 billion for gas-producing provinces, serving as a targeted subsidy for small farmers.

He suggested that gas prices for the fertilizer sector should be subject to a bi-annual review to address changes in revenue requirements due to shifts in crude oil prices and exchange rates.

Nawaz throws weight

Continued from page 1

Maulana's demand though, unlike the PPP and the PTI which have opposed any delay in elections.At the airport, Nawaz Sharif looked happy to be returning home. Taking a jibe at the PTI chairman, a smiling Nawaz quipped: "We are people of May 28 not of May 9."

To a query by this reporter, the former prime minister said that he could hardly sleep the last night of his exile, but he had tried to since had to be with his people and had a tough task before him to help people overcome the enormous difficulties they currently face. He said that he was returning to Pakistan vindicated, and that the PML-N would steer Pakistan out of its various crises: "I wasn't happy when I had to leave the country four years ago but I am now feeling happy. However, the worsened condition of the country's economy and people are painful for me".He said that he was returning to Pakistan after four years and the country is in a much worse situation, adding that "Had the government in Pakistan not been dislodged in 2017, today it would have been in a much better condition."The PML-N leader believes that his party can take Pakistan out of the crisis it is in. "We are competent enough to solve the problems of the country," said Nawaz Sharif while mentioning his government's achievements when he was the prime minister. "I am returning to Pakistan after being vindicated with the grace of Almighty Allah".

Hamas attack

Continued from page 1

200 hostages and killing at least 1,400 people on the first day of the raid, according to Israeli officials. Israel has since vowed to destroy Hamas, and says around 1,500 of the group's fighters were killed in clashes before its army regained control of the area initially under attack. A bombing campaign launched in response has levelled entire city blocks in Gaza, so far killing 4,137 Palestinians, mostly civilians, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

Saudi officials announced on October 14 during a visit to Riyadh by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken that the country had suspended talks with Israel on normalization of relations. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, had spoken of progress with Israel but also insisted on movement on the Palestinian cause.

In a related development, the first aid trucks arrived in war-torn Gaza from Egypt on Saturday, bringing urgent humanitarian relief to the Hamas-controlled Palestinian enclave suffering what the UN chief labelled a "godawful nightmare".

UN chief Antonio Guterres said the 20 trucks admitted so far fell far short of the needs of Gazans, more than one million of whom have been forced from their homes. "Much more" aid needs to be sent, Guterres told a peace summit in Egypt on Saturday. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken welcomed the aid and urged "all parties" to keep the Rafah crossing open.

But a Hamas spokesman said "even dozens" of such convoys could not meet Gaza's requirements, especially as no fuel was being allowed in to help distribute the supplies to those in need.

As international tensions soar, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was hosting a peace summit in Cairo on Saturday attended by regional and some Western leaders. "The time has come for action to end this godawful nightmare," Guterres told the summit, calling for a "humaritarian ceasefire".

The region "is reeling in pain and one step from the precipice", he said.

Guterres said "the grievances of the Palestinian people are legitimate and long" after "56 years of occupation with no end in sight". But he stressed that "nothing can justify the reprehensible assault by Hamas that terrorised Israeli civilians".

"Those abhorrent attacks can never justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people," he added.

According to Arab diplomats who spoke with AFP on condition of anonymity, the meeting broke up without a joint statement, highlighting the gulf between Arab and Western countries on how best to bring lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Western delegates demanded "a clear condemnation placing responsibility for the escalation on Hamas" but Arab leaders refused, the diplomats said.

Instead the Egyptian hosts released a statement – drafted with the approval of Arab delegates – criticising world leaders for seeking to "manage the conflict and not end it permanently".

The statement said such "temporary solutions and palliatives... do not live up to even the lowest aspirations" of the Palestinian people.

Jordan's King Abdullah II called for "an immediate end to the war on Gaza" and condemned "global silence" on Palestinian death and suffering.

"The message the Arab world is hearing is loud and clear: Palestinian lives matter less than Israeli ones. Our lives matter less than other lives," he charged. "The application of international law is optional. And human rights have boundaries – they stop at borders, they stop at races, and they stop at religions."

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi argued that the "only solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is "justice" and said that "Palestinians must realise their legitimate rights to self-determination" and have "an independent state on their land".

Turkey's foreign minister Hakan Fidan urged for the current conflict to become, "rather than a regional conflagration, a breeding ground for a just and lasting peace". He also condemned "unconditional military aid to Israel which only serves to maintain the occupation", while Saudi Arabia´s Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan condemned the failure of the UN Security Council to pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire after a US veto.

Meanwhile, a military spokesman told a press conference on Saturday Israel is to immediately step up its strikes in Gaza to increase pressure on Hamas. "We have to enter the next phase of the war in the best conditions, not according to what anyone tells us. From today, we are increasing the strikes and minimising the danger," spokesman Admiral Daniel Hagari told a press conference.

A full-blown Israeli ground offensive of Gaza carries many risks, including to the hostages Hamas took and whose fate is shrouded in uncertainty.

So the release of two Americans among the hostages – mother and daughter Judith and Natalie Raanan – offered a rare "sliver of hope", said Mirjana Spoljaric, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Natalie Raanan's half-brother Ben told the BBC he felt an "overwhelming sense of joy" at the release after "the most horrible of ordeals".

Hamas said Egypt and Qatar had negotiated the release and that it was "working with all mediators to implement the movement's decision to close the civilian (hostage) file if appropriate security conditions allow". Traumatised families with loved ones missing in Gaza demanded more action.

"We ask humanity to interfere and bring back all those young boys, young girls, mothers, babies," Assaf Shem Tov, whose nephew was abducted from a music festival where Hamas killed hundreds, said Friday.

Almost half of Gaza's residents have been displaced, and at least 30 percent of all housing in the territory has been destroyed or damaged, the United Nations says.

Thousands have taken refuge in a camp set up in the city of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza.

In Al-Zahra in central Gaza, Rami Abu Wazna was struggling to take in the destruction wreaked by Israeli missile strikes. "Even in my worst nightmares, I never thought this could be possible," he said. Hezbollah number two Naim Qassem warned: "If something comes up that calls for greater intervention by us, we will do so." Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant retorted: "Hezbollah has decided to participate in the fighting, and is paying a price for it." Violence has also flared in the West Bank, where 84 Palestinians have been killed since October 7, according to the Palestinian health ministry. —Agencies

No revenge

Continued from page 1

with India, saying that "we can't progress under conflict with the neighbours". He said Pakistan would have to move ahead "with grace and tactics" for resolution of the Kashmir issue.

He said he served the country with loyalty whenever he was given a chance and resolved the issues of Pakistan and never hesitated from any sacrifice.

The former premier regretted the "false" cases against him, Shehbaz, Maryam, and other PML-N leaders.

The PML-N supremo recalled making Pakistan a nuclear power and "ending" load-shedding in the country during his time as the prime minister. "Do you remember those 18 hours of loadshedding? Who ended it?" he asked, noting that it was under his leadership that the power issue was resolved.

He then showed the bill as well, which has now skyrocketed due to the rupee-dollar parity and a rise in fuel prices.

The former premier stressed that "some wounds never heal", saying that "the loved ones who pass away never come back". He was referring to the passing away of his mother and wife when he was facing legal battles.

He said these women won't be there to receive him at home like they did in the past. He recalled the time when he was given the news of his wife's passing.

Sharing his ordeal in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail, the three-time former premier said Maryam lost consciousness when he told his daughter about the death of her mother. The elder Sharif said: "I am a true Pakistani."

Talking about Pakistan's nuclear tests on May 28, 1998, the former premier said that then-United States president Bill Clinton and other world leaders had been pressurising and refraining him from the tests and offered $5 billion but he refused the offer and made Pakistan a nuclear state.

Without taking the name of deposed premier Imran Khan, the elder Sharif asked: "Could he have dared to refuse the US president?"

"Clinton had offered $5 billion to me in 1999 for not carrying out nuclear tests, but my conscience did not allow me to accept which was against the interest of Pakistan," he added.

He maintained that they still conducted the nuclear tests and gave India a befitting response.

The PMLN supremo said no one in Pakistan would have been unemployed if his party had been allowed to continue the 1990s momentum. "I was ousted because I didn't allow the dollar rate to fluctuate," he said.

Nawaz lamented that due to the ongoing economic crisis, "one has to decide whether to pay electricity bills or take care of one's children". "People are committing suicide and borrowing money to pay the bills."

"[During my tenure] the poor had enough financial resources to [at least] seek healthcare and get one treated."

"This didn't start in Shehbaz's tenure. it started way before that. The dollar was out of control, bills were going up, and rates of daily utilities and petrol were also surging. During our tenure, sugar was 50 rupees per kilogram, today it is at 250."

"This is why you ousted Nawaz Sharif?" the former prime minister said while criticising his disqualification in 2017.

"Pakistan was on its way to becoming an Asian Tiger, we were preparing to ensure Pakistan's inclusion in the G20."

"A lot of countries which were trailing us are now leading us. We have been left behind. Not only do we have to catch up with those countries but in fact have to surpass them."

Turning his guns towards arch-rival Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Nawaz slammed the sit-ins staged by the former ruling party. "I am addressing any political gathering after a gap of six years as I faced cases for two years." "I have come today with electricity bills from May 2016 during my tenure as PM when there were sit-ins but we were busy doing our work. "You know who was orchestrating the sit-ins? But we ensured electricity to your homes despite the sit-ins," Nawaz said. Moving on to the skyrocketing inflation, the PMLN supremo said roti was being sold for Rs4, sugar at Rs50 per kilogram and petrol at Rs60 per litre in his tenure. "US dollar was at Rs104," he said, adding that they did not let the local unit fall against the greenback. He once again raised questions over his disqualification as prime minister and asked the participants if they agreed with the verdicts against him.

"I was ousted from the Prime Minister's Office for not taking salary from my son," he added.

Commenting on the ongoing Israeli bombardment of Palestine, Nawaz said: "We condemn the barbarism, and brutalisation of Palestinians. May Allah help Palestine."

"We urge the world [powers] to ensure a [viable] solution to Palestine [issue]."

Earlier, former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif, while speaking at the public meeting, said he was thankful to all those who came there to welcome Nawaz Sharif. He said the crowd represented the entire country.

He said Nawaz was the name of a passion, struggle and builder of the country. "Nawaz Sharif was handcuffed, sent to jails and exiles, but did not leave his struggle and tolerance," he said, adding that the May-9 incident was beyond imagination of entire nation. Not a single pot was broken during Nawaz Sharif's struggle. He also tweeted: "Nawaz Sharif Ji Ayan Noun".

Also, PMLN Chief Organiser and Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz said on Saturday her father and party Quaid endured more hardships than any other leader in Pakistan. Taking to microblogging website X, formerly Twitter, she said: "Today is perhaps the biggest day of my life; I am thankful to the Almighty. No one has endured as many hardships as Nawaz Sharif in the last 24 years."

She said some of Nawaz Sharif's wounds would never heal. Yet he had experienced many highs also than anyone else, she added. "Pakistan is ready to witness another rise of Nawaz Sharif In-sha-Allah. Come, our eyes await you. Welcome Nawaz Sharif."

Later, addressing the public gathering at Minar-e-Pakistan, she said Nawaz Sharif was once again present among his people. Maryam said what PMLN faced was not political revenge but height of brutality. She said the PMLN leadership only survived because people of Pakistan were with them and Nawaz Sharif would not forget that.

"They wanted to kill Nawaz Sharif, but Allah foiled all their plans and today Nawaz Sharif is back in his country with dignity and honour," she added.

Emotional scenes were witnessed after the PMLN leader appeared on the stage. Maryam Nawaz hugged her father with wet eyes and later touched his father's feet to pay her respect. Other PMLN leaders also stood up and individually met their leader. Nawaz Sharif held hands of both Maryam Nawaz and Hamza and raised them in the air.

Online adds: PMLN senior leader and former finance minister Ishaq Dar said if people gave the party an opportunity, it would make Pakistan an economic power. "It takes time to set economy right. It is not magic wand that the whole economy will be corrected by moving the wand," he said in a statement issued here on Saturday.

He said Panama was a drama. One was to be imposed on the country. The country was devastated by lowering the national economy from 24th number to 47th number, he added.

PMLN Information Secretary Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Saturday Nawaz Sharif would become the prime minister of Pakistan for the fourth time.

Addressing a press conference at Minar-e-Pakistan, she said Pakistan would write a new history today with the homecoming of Nawaz Sharif after four years.

AROUND THE WORLD

ROME: French actress Juliette Binoche attends a photocall for La Passion de Dodin Bouffant (The Pot au Feu) by director Tran Anh Hung at the 18th Rome Film Fest on Saturday. *—AFP wirephoto*

Probe into Kenya cult leader points to failings in judicial system

NAIROBI: An inquiry into a suspected cult leader accused of inciting at least 428 of his followers to starve themselves to death, has pointed to "failures" in Kenya's security and criminal justice systems, according to a report seen by AFP on Saturday.

Self-proclaimed pastor Paul Nthenge Mackenzie has been in police custody since mid-April after the discovery of human remains in the Shakahola forest near the Indian Ocean coast.

The former taxi driver and founder of the Good News International Church is accused of preaching to his followers to starve to death "to meet Jesus".

While starvation appears to be the main cause of death, some of the victims -- including children -- were strangled, beaten or suffocated, according to autopsies carried out by the government.

"Kenya has experienced deaths linked to religious extremism in the past, however, the Shakahola tragedy has registered the highest number of fatalities in Kenya's recorded history," the Senate commission of inquiry said in its report.

It added that the self-proclaimed pastor had faced charges back in 2017 for his extreme preaching, but "the criminal justice system failed to deter the heinous activities of Paul Mackenzie in Shakahola".

Mackenzie was acquitted on charges of radicalisation in 2017 for illegally providing school teaching -- he rejected the formal educational system which he claimed was not in line with the Bible.

In 2019, he was also accused of being linked to the death of two children "who had succumbed to starvation and suffocation and buried in a shallow grave in Shakahola Forest". He had been released on bail, pending trial.

The commission of inquiry also pointed to failings in the local police force, which had received "recurring complaints by religious leaders and the local community against his activities from as early as 2017". —AFP

UN peacekeepers leave northern Mali camp

DAKAR: UN peacekeepers in Mali on Saturday left their camp in Tessalit in the tense Kidal region, UN and military sources said, as part of a withdrawal ordered by the troubled country's military leaders.

The withdrawal of the UN stabilisation mission known as MINUSMA from the region has ignited fears fighting will intensify between troops and armed factions for control of the territory. "Our last convoy left our base in Tessalit on Saturday afternoon," an official from MINUSUMA, as the UN force is known, in the town told AFP.

The information was confirmed by a Chadian military source within the mission. The Tessalit camp is close to the airport and had been operated largely by Chadian soldiers under the UN banner.

Mali's ruling junta, which seized power in 2020, had in June demanded that the mission – which had been deployed since 2013 – depart the country despite being in the grip of jihadism and raging crises. That followed months of deteriorating relations.

The withdrawal of some 11,600 soldiers and 1,500 police officers is scheduled to continue until December 31, and has exacerbated rivalries between armed groups present in the north. The Coordination of Azawad Movements -- an alliance of predominantly Tuareg groups seeking autonomy or independence from the Malian state -- has carried out a series of attacks on army positions.

And the Al-Qaeda-linked Support Group for Islam and Muslims has also increased attacks against the military. Prior to Tessalit, MINUSMA had transferred four camps to the Malian authorities since August. But the evacuation of the camps in the Kidal region -- and especially that of Kidal, a bastion town of the separatists -- remains a major challenge.—AFP

Situation in Gaza catastrophic: UN agencies

GENEVA: The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is "catastrophic," five United Nations agencies said Saturday, calling for more international help as conditions deteriorate in the densely populated coastal enclave.

Their statement came as Israel said it would step up its strikes in Gaza to increase pressure on Hamas, and its senior officers warned troops to be ready to enter the besieged Palestinian territory.

Since shock Hamas attacks on Israel on October 7 left 1,400 dead, Israel has launched devastating air and ground bombardments of Gaza. The Hamas authorities say 4,385 people have died. The statement by the UN agencies came as the first aid trucks arrived in Gaza from Egypt Saturday.

"More than 1.6 million people in Gaza are in critical need of humanitarian aid," said the statement from agencies including the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, the children's agency.

"Children, pregnant women and the elderly remain the most vulnerable. Nearly half of Gaza's population are children," it added. "Gaza was a desperate humanitarian situation before the most recent hostilities," it added.

"It is now catastrophic. The world must do more."

The other three agencies to sign the statement were the World Food Programme, the development agency UNDP and the UNFPA, the population fund.—AFP

Storm Babet triggers flooding, power cuts in northern Europe

STOCKHOLM: Deadly Storm Babet unleashed extensive flooding and damaged towns in Denmark and Norway late Friday and early Saturday, while continuing to sweep across the UK.

Three people died in Scotland and England and families were trapped in flooded homes on Friday as the storm battered Britain and Ireland. After it made landfall in Scandinavia, the storm triggered a sharp rise in water levels in towns in southern Denmark, flooding the first floor of homes which were left without power for several hours.

Water levels in several Danish towns exceeded their normal height by more than two metres (seven feet), levels normally only reached once every hundred years, according to Denmark's DMI weather service.

"We are having to clear large quantities of water from the towns, especially in southern Jutland," Martin Vendelbo of the Danish Emergency Management Agency told the Ritzau news agency.

Fishing boats were left stranded or about to sink in the port town of Rodvig, according to photos from Danish media.

In southern Norway, up to 20,000 residents were without power early Saturday after strong winds blew roofs off buildings and downed trees and power masts, but the Norwegian news agency NTB said the situation was improving. The storm continued to wreak havoc in the UK, with London's King's Cross station forced to close on Saturday afternoon to prevent passengers massing on platforms after the cancellation or delay of numerous trains.

Network Rail said on X, formerly Twitter, that London North Eastern Railway (LNER), which runs services between London and the north-east of England and Scotland, was still severely disrupted due to the storm.

Leeds Bradford airport in northern England, which was closed on Friday after a passenger plane skidded off the runway in strong winds, reopened late Saturday morning. The UK's Environment Agency has issued three severe flood warnings posing "a danger to life" in the area around the River Derwent in the city of Derby, central England.

Flood duty manager at the Environment Agency, Katharine Smith, said "ongoing flooding is probable on some larger rivers including the Severn, Ouse and Trent through to Tuesday."

Interviewed on BBC One on Saturday morning, Labour MP Toby Perkins said that around 400 homes in his constituency of Chesterfield in central England had been flooded, and that many people now had "no idea where they're going to be living from now". Scotland was left reeling after two people died in the county of Angus, with First Minister Humza Yousaf warning on X for people to exercise caution in light of a red severe weather warning in the coastal county and parts of Aberdeenshire.

The chief executive of Aberdeenshire Council Jim Savege, however, adopted a reassuring tone on BBC Breakfast, saying "it's been quite quiet overnight in terms of a low level of incidents to respond to".

Almost all the 33,000 homes left without power in Scotland had been reconnected by Saturday morning, according to the Scottish and Southern Electricity Network.—AFP

India launches trial run for unmanned orbital mission

NEW DELHI: India on Saturday successfully launched the first unmanned trial run of its upcoming crewed orbital mission, in the latest milestone for its spacefaring ambitions.

The Gaganyaan ("Skycraft") mission is slated to send three astronauts into Earth's orbit in 2025, an important yardstick of the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) technical capabilities.

Saturday's rocket tested the emergency escape system of its crew module, which separated from the thruster and made a soft sea landing about 10 minutes after the launch. "I am very happy to announce the successful accomplishment of the mission," ISRO chief S. Somanath said afterwards.

The lift-off was postponed for two hours after bad weather and a glitch in the engine.

ISRO will conduct a series of 20 major tests, including carrying a robot to outer space, before the final manned mission takes place in 2025.

Gaganyaan is the first mission of its kind for India and comes with an estimated price tag of $1.08 billion, according to ISRO. India plans to send astronauts beyond the reaches of Earth's atmosphere for three days before they are brought safely back with a soft landing in Indian territorial waters.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced plans to send a man to the Moon by 2040 following a year of triumphs for India's space programme.

India became in August just the fourth nation to land an unmanned craft on the Moon after Russia, the United States and China. The following month, India launched a probe to observe the outermost layers of the Sun from solar orbit.

India's space programme has grown considerably in size and momentum since it first sent a probe to orbit the Moon in 2008, and it has steadily matched the achievements of established spacefaring powers at a fraction of their cost.

India also plans a joint mission with Japan to send another probe to the Moon by 2025 and an orbital mission to Venus within the next two years.

Experts say India can keep costs low by copying and adapting existing technology, and thanks to an abundance of highly skilled engineers who earn a fraction of their foreign counterparts' wages.—AFP

CAIRO: This handout picture released by the Egyptian Presidency shows Egypt's President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi (C) flanked by regional and some Western leaders, posing for a family picture during the International Peace Summit here on Saturday. *—AFP wirephoto*

Qatar emerges as centre of hostage release efforts

PARIS: Boasting good relations with both Western governments and Hamas, the emirate of Qatar has emerged as the key power in efforts to release the hostages seized by the Palestinian militant group from Israel even as other states show readiness to help.

French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday lauded the key role played by Qatar in the release by Hamas of two American hostages held since its attack against Israel on October 7, adding he was confident of further releases.

The West is increasingly using the influence of the small but gas-rich Gulf Arab state, a key global investor, in such situations, with the role of Qatar also crucial to the release last month of five Americans held by Iran.

While Egypt has traditionally in recent years served as the main mediator between Israel and Palestinian groups and Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also makes no secret of its desire to be involved, the focus is on Qatar helping to return the hostages safely.

"The most accommodating mediator is Qatar," said Hasni Abidi, director of the Geneva-based Center for Studies and Research on the Arab and Mediterranean World (CERMAM). "It knows Hamas well and is its loyal financial backer," he said, in referring to Doha's financing of the salaries of civil servants in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip.

Qatar, which has hosted Hamas's political office for more than 10 years, is also respected by the United States, Israel's chief ally. It is home to the largest US military base in the region.

Israel says 203 people -- Israelis, dual nationals and foreigners -- were abducted by Hamas gunmen when they launched the deadliest attacks in Israel's 75-year history. At least 1,400 people were killed, mostly civilians, according to the government.

US hostages Judith Tai Raanan and her daughter Natalie Shoshana Raanan were back in Israel late Friday, the Israeli government said. "This is a very good outcome obtained by the negotiators, in which Qatar played a very important role," Macron told a group of reporters Friday.

Macron said France wanted similar operations to go on in the next "hours and days" to continue "allowing hostages, in particular our hostages, to get out." "We are confident: the channels we have are the right ones and are useful," he added. In a later message on X, formerly Twitter, Macron said Qatar played a "decisive role" in securing the release of the two American hostages.

Qatar is a "specialist in the release of hostages", said Etienne Dignat of Sciences Po university in Paris and an expert on hostage situations.

It was with Qatar that $6 billion of frozen Iranian funds from South Korean banks was parked pending the release in a hugely complex and sensitive swap deal of the five American citizens held by Iran.

It appears to have been no coincidence that Macron's envoy for Lebanon, the former foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, a trusted confidant of the president on security issues, was in Qatar this week, according to diplomatic sources.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also paid a visit to Qatar on his marathon trip to the region this week.

"Qatar plays a double game: it maintains both relations with terrorist groups and certain Western nations which are indebted to it," said Dignat. The emirate had invited the Taliban to open an office in Doha with the approval of the United States, making it possible to negotiate the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan in 2021, although this was then followed by the return of the Taliban to power. Other heavyweights in the region are simultaneously trying to intervene.

Turkey has received "requests from several countries" to help, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, his country's ex-spy chief, said on Tuesday in Beirut. Erdogan has in recent months sought to warm relations with Israel which have suffered in the last years after a string of bitter disputes. But this risks having the consequence that Ankara is trusted by neither side.

And it was Egypt which helped secure the release in 2011 of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who had been held by Hamas for over five years. Potential actors are "only those who have established long-standing relationships with Hamas and therefore the only ones authorised to make contact with its leaders," said Abidi.

But in this case, the unprecedented number of hostages held and the number of nationalities represented among them means that there will be no single solution and the diplomacy is likely to be painstaking.

"There will be no collective negotiation," said Abidi. Each state will be called upon to negotiate the release of its own hostages."—AFP

Six killed in Somalia suicide bombing

MOGADISHU: Six people including two civilians were killed and nine others wounded in a suicide attack on a military outpost in the outskirts of the Somali capital Mogadishu Saturday, police said.

The attack was claimed by the radical Islamist group al-Shabaab. Witnesses told AFP a suicide bomber drove a vehicle loaded with explosives to the Ceelasha-Biyaha military post in the western suburbs of Mogadishu. The subsequent powerful blast caused extensive damage, including to nearby homes, they said.

The Kharijites (al-Shabaab), as they usually do, tried to bring a vehicle loaded with explosives and metal into Mogadishu, and detonated the vehicle on the base of the security forces at the Ceelasha-Biyaha, he added. "The number of the casualties recorded is six dead – four of them from the security forces and two civilians – and nine wounded, four of them civilians." —AFP

Repeated Versailles evacuations frustrate tourists

VERSAILLES, France: Another day, another evacuation at the Palace of Versailles.

"For security reasons, the Palace of Versailles is evacuating visitors and will reopen as soon as the checks have been completed. Thank you for your understanding," the great former royal residence outside Paris said Saturday in a now all-too-familiar message. Saturday's evacuation after a bomb threat which turned out to be false was the sixth such one in a week.

The situation is now starting to agitate not just tourists but also local officials and tourism sector players, who see the risk of a key income source dwindling.

France upped its attack alert level in the wake of a fatal stabbing of a schoolteacher earlier this month by a man who claimed the act in the name of the Islamic State extremist group.

The attack in the northern city of Arras also came amid heightened concern over security after the attack by Palestinian militant group Hamas against Israel which has been followed by retaliatory air strikes on the Gaza Strip.

Against this background, France has over the last days been plagued by false bomb threats not just against the Palace of Versailles but also the Louvre museum and a host of regional airports just as autumn holidays are under way. After being banished from the palace due to the security alert, tourists had to content themselves with selfies in the rain with the statue of the sun king Louis XIV in the vast outer courtyard.

There were some 5,000 people inside the palace at the time of Saturday's evacuation, said a police source. The palace reopened later in the day following checks. "I'm from California. It's the one thing I wanted to do in Paris. It's frustrating," said Juliette Harris, who was visiting with her husband and two children.

Preferring not to stay in Versailles, which is half an hour's train ride west of Paris, her family then headed to the Louvre museum in the centre, in the hope that it would not be shut down too.

Most of the false bomb threats, which are posted on French police website moncommissariat.fr are hard to track down.

"I was worried that there would be an alert, but thought it might come in the afternoon," said Camille Froment from the Tarn region of southern France who is visiting for two weeks with her son.

"I am leaving on Monday and it will be tough" to reschedule with a visit to Versailles, she added.

Even at this time of year, up to 15,000 people can visit the palace every day, a spokeswoman said, adding that "for now, we have not observed any trend of cancellations by visitors."

Each cancelled visit can be refunded. But the mayor of Versailles, Francois de Mazieres (LR), on Friday told Franceinfo radio that visitors "are hesitant to come now", and that if the alerts continue to multiply, "it could have consequences on attendance". —AFP

Led by Donkeys UK political agitators reaching millions online

LONDON: A persistent irritant to Britain's ruling Conservatives since its creation after Brexit, campaign group Led by Donkeys has built a big online audience with its largely humour-led attempts at political accountability.

Founded by four friends in a pub in 2018, the collective's campaigns and stunts skewering politicians and spotlighting issues get millions of views online – and often generate mainstream media coverage.

They remain best known for their light-hearted early efforts, like plastering ex-prime minister Boris Johnson's optimistic tweets about the joys of life after Brexit to contrast them with the reality.

More recent ploys, involving stings by fake companies and covert filming, have had a more serious undertone.

After five years and hundreds of initiatives, the group said it still has "plenty of ideas" before the next general election, expected next year. "It's more than just an anti-Tory campaign," Oliver Knowles, one of its four founding fathers, told AFP.

He said there is "a bigger mission" for "accountability" across the political spectrum while pushing "more progressive ideas". "For me, the broader mission is: counter the populist narrative of the country," said 44-year-old fellow co-founder James Sadri.

Led By Donkeys takes its name from a World War I expression used to describe the incompetent leaders who led British soldiers to their deaths. The four friends formed the collective while they all worked for environmental pressure group Greenpeace, in shared frustration at Britain's dysfunctional politics in the aftermath of the 2016 Brexit referendum. "We were having a pint in a pub. We started looking at some of the tweets that the Brexiteers have made," recalled another of the quartet, Ben Stewart, 49. "We just burst out laughing, (at) how chaotic the situation was."

Stewart was referring to a now-infamous 2015 post by then-prime minister David Cameron as he campaigned for re-election against Labour leader Ed Miliband. "Britain faces a simple and inescapable choice -- stability and strong Government with me, or chaos with Ed Miliband," he had posted.

Little over a year later, Cameron lost the referendum he had ordered on Britain's European Union membership, and the country tilted into several years of political crises. "There was a six-metre by three-metre billboard outside the window. And we said, 'That's the shape of a tweet, why don't we print it out and just put it up there?'"

They soon pasted other tweets on other billboards before photographing them and posting the images online. The campaign quickly went viral.

They then launched a crowd-funding operation, which exceeded expectations and allowed them to rent more and more billboard spaces. "For us it was deeply cathartic because we spent so long moaning," said Knowles.

The group's last stunt in September targeted the British government's controversial deal with Rwanda to take migrants who arrive in the UK "illegally" without prior authorisation.

Interior minister Suella Braverman insists Rwanda is "a safe country" for asylum seekers, but the policy has been stalled by court challenges.

Using undercover cameras, Led By Donkeys captured Rwanda's ambassador in London trivialising the previous killing of refugees there, allegedly by police.

"Yes, it might have happened, but so what?" the Rwandan diplomat said on camera.

He also branded Braverman as "absolutely wrong" about migration. The video has been viewed nearly six million times on X, formerly Twitter. —AFP

Climate loss and damage talks fail to establish fund

PARIS: A crucial meeting on climate "loss and damages" ahead of COP28 ended in failure Saturday, with countries from the global north and south unable to reach an agreement, according to sources involved in the talks.

The agreement to set up a dedicated fund to help vulnerable countries cope with climate "loss and damage" was a flagship achievement of last year's COP27 talks in Egypt.

But countries left the details to be worked out later. A series of talks held this year have tried to tease out consensus on fundamentals like the structure, beneficiaries and contributors – a key issue for richer nations who want China to pay into the fund.

A transition committee on the establishment of the fund met late Friday and into Saturday in Aswan, in southern Egypt.

But the delegates were unable to reach an agreement and deferred the decision to another meeting due November 3 to 5 in the United Arab Emirates, according to a webcast of the debate on the official YouTube channel of the United Nations.

Ahead of the breakdown, the discussion hit a hurdle over where the funds should be held.

There was a divide over it being managed by the World Bank, accused of being in the hands of the West, or in a new independent structure, called for by many developing nations, but would be time consuming and complex to replenish with new funds.

The failure "is a clear indication of the deep chasm between rich and poor nations", Harjeet Singh, head of global political strategy for Climate Action Network International, said in a statement to AFP on Saturday.

"Developed countries must be held accountable for their shameless attempts to push the World Bank as the host of the fund, their refusal to discuss the necessary scale of finance, and their blatant disregard for their responsibilities" under the terms of already established international climate agreements, he said.

Rachel Cleetus with the Union of Concerned Scientists said that "today's disappointing outcome is a blow to communities... facing an unrelenting onslaught of climate impacts".

"The United States and other rich countries seem more focused on evading or minimizing their responsibility than engaging in good faith negotiations," she added.—AFP

Myanmar orders airstrikes to recover lost outposts

YANGON: Myanmar's ruling junta ordered air strikes and troop reinforcements as it tried to recover lost outposts near the Chinese border from rebels, the military said.

The toppling of Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government in a 2021 coup sparked a huge backlash and the military junta is now battling opponents across swaths of the country.

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) attacked Myanmar military positions around Muse district in northern Shan state on Thursday and near the remote town of Laiza in Kachin state on Friday.

The military was forced to retreat on Friday afternoon and ordered air strikes, as well as artillery and troop reinforcements, the junta said in a statement shortly before midnight Friday.

The KIA said Saturday that the military had counter-attacked with air strikes and ground artillery.

It added that the junta had suffered some fatalities in the latest clashes this week but did not provide a death toll.

"We seized a lot of guns and other equipment from the military," KIA Colonel Naw Bu told AFP.

The KIA controls large parts of the Christian-majority Kachin state and has clashed with Myanmar's military for decades.

The region has seen intense fighting since the coup, and the junta accuses the KIA of training People's Defence Forces that have sprung up in resistance.

Muse lies on the path of a proposed $8.9 billion high-speed rail link from China's landlocked Yunnan province to Myanmar's west coast, a key part of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative.

The junta has been accused of carrying out multiple bloody attacks on civilians as it struggles to crush resistance to its 2021 coup.—AFP

Casualties as Israel trades fire with Hezbollah

JERUSALEM: Casualties were reported along the Israel-Lebanon border Saturday as the army traded fire with Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah amid fears of a new front opening as Israel battles Hamas.

Israel already ordered the evacuation of Kiryat Shmona, a border town which is home to some 25,000 people, as the border area has come fire from Hezbollah and allied Palestinian factions.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah said one of its fighters had been killed while in Israel, two Thai farm workers were wounded, emergency services said. A senior Hezbollah official warned that the movement stood ready to step up its involvement as Israel masses troops on the Gaza border, vowing to destroy Palestinian militant group Hamas in response to its shock cross-border attacks on October 7. "Let's be clear, as events unfold, if something comes up that calls for greater intervention by us, we will do so," said Hezbollah number two Naim Qassem.

In northern Israel, a strike in the Margaliot area of the border wounded two Thai farm workers, Israel's Magen David Adom emergency medical service said. One was wounded in the chest, the other sustained a limb injury, the service said. There are around 30,000 Thai labourers in Israel, many working in the agricultural sector.

Since October 7, exchanges of fire across the border have killed at least four people in Israel -- three soldiers and one civilian. In southern Lebanon, at least 23 people have been killed. Most have been combatants, but at least four civilians, including a Reuters journalist, have also been killed.

Saturday's exchanges came as Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant visited the northern border, where he called on troops to remain "vigilant". "Hezbollah has decided to participate in the fighting, and is paying a price for it. We must be vigilant and prepare for every possible (scenario).—AFP

LONDON: People take part in a 'March For Palestine' here on Saturday to "demand an end to the war on Gaza". The UK has announced that humanitarian aid to the Palestinians will be increased by an extra £10 million pounds. —AFP wirephoto

Delays in calming Kosovo-Serbia tensions unacceptable: EU envoy

PRISTINA: An EU envoy warned Saturday that any delays in calming tensions between Kosovo and Serbia -- which he described as more urgent than ever -- were "unacceptable".

A shooting in Kosovo's volatile north last month near the border with Serbia that killed a police officer triggered one of the worst escalations in years in the ethnic Albanian-majority former Serbian breakaway province.

On Saturday, the European Union's envoy for the Serbia-Kosovo talks Miroslav Lajcak, as well as diplomats from the United States, France, Germany and Italy, visited the capital Pristina.

Later on, the five diplomats travelled to the Serbian capital Belgrade for a meeting with President Aleksandar Vucic. "Both the de-escalation and normalisation are now more urgent than ever," Lajcak told reporters in Pristina after meeting Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti. "Any conditions or delays are unacceptable."

Both Kosovo and Serbia are expected to fully meet their obligations under EU-sponsored talks, which is a condition for their progress on the path towards membership of the bloc, Lajcak said.

He stressed the urgent need to make progress on setting up an association of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo that would operate with some autonomy. "Without this, there will be no progress in Kosovo's European path." Kurti said that the five diplomats had presented him with a "new plan for moving forward". "Discussions must continue intensively," he said in a statement.

Earlier this week, French President Emmanuel Macron called on both sides to "show responsibility", warning Paris could otherwise review Kosovo's visa-free travel for the EU next year. A close Vucic ally had at first admitted to leading the Serb commando that ambushed a Kosovo police patrol in September, but then denied it when questioned by prosecutors in Belgrade. Tensions had been high in Kosovo's north for months, after Pristina's decision in May to install ethnic Albanian mayors in four Serb-majority municipalities.

That followed a Serb boycott of the local elections a month earlier.

The September 24 clash in the north was the latest of a series of incidents since Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008. Belgrade -- and key allies China and Russia -- still refuse to recognise the move.

Animosity between Kosovo and Serbia has persisted since a war between Serbian forces and ethnic Albanian insurgents in the late 1990s that drew NATO intervention against Belgrade.—AFP

Switzerland opens probe into Hamas financing

GENEVA: The Swiss judiciary is investigating possible financing of Hamas from Switzerland despite the country not classifying the group as a terrorist organisation, its attorney general said Saturday.

The investigation was opened "several weeks" before the October 7 attacks by Hamas on Israel, Stefan Blaettler said, on Swiss public radio station SRF, without revealing further details.

The Attorney General's office later told AFP that the investigation was launched "on suspicion of financing Hamas from Switzerland".

The investigation is expected to be laborious because, unlike the European Union and United States, Switzerland has not placed bans on Hamas.

Four days after the attack, the government said it was "of the opinion that Hamas must be classified a terrorist organisation".—AFP

INTERNATIONAL
THE NEWS
ON SUNDAY

Russia seeks new Security Council meeting on Gaza war

MOSCOW: Russia intends to hold another UN Security Council meeting on the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the war between Israel and the militant group Hamas, Russia's deputy UN envoy said Saturday.

Russia convened a meeting on the war on Monday but its ceasefire resolution failed due to opposition from four council members including the US, which criticised its draft for not mentioning Hamas.

"We will definitely convene a new meeting of the Security Council. As practice has shown, no one but us dares to do so," Russia's deputy permanent representative to the UN Dmitry Polyansky said.

He did not say when Russia, one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, would hold the meeting.

"Regarding a resolution, I don't know how fast we'll get to the next stage of trying to pass a resolution," he added.

He was speaking in an interview on the Solovyov Live TV channel.

Russia has repeatedly called for talks on ending the conflict, which has risked undermining its growing ties with Iran and complicated its relations with long-time partner Israel.

President Vladimir Putin spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as well as Iranian and Arab leaders earlier this week in the hope of launching peace talks.—AFP

Russian strikes kill three in southern Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine: Russia struck areas of eastern and southern Ukraine with artillery and missiles on Friday and Saturday, killing at least three people and wounding four others, officials said.

The strikes come as both sides prepare for a gruelling winter of fighting and as Russia tries to suppress a Ukrainian counteroffensive to regain occupied territory.

Russia fired hundreds of shells into Ukrainian-controlled parts of Kherson region in the south on Friday, local governor Oleksandr Prokudin said.

"The Russian military hit residential areas of the region's settlements. As a result of Russian aggression, one person was killed and one more was wounded," he said Saturday morning. In

Continued on page 9

PSO resumes fuel supply to PIA aircraft

News Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan State Oil (PSO) has resumed fuel supply for 39 Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) aircraft after it received advance payment of Rs220 million ($789,804) from the airline, a PSO spokesperson confirmed on Saturday according to a report.

On Tuesday, the PIA announced it had canceled 14 international and domestic flights because of fuel shortages after the state-owned PSO canceled its supply over unpaid dues. The national carrier, slated for privatization by the government, has amassed substantial losses and unpaid dues amounting to hundreds of billions of rupees. The airline's request for Rs23 billion ($76 million) in operational

Continued on page 9

Nearly 100,000 pro-Palestinians march in London: police

LONDON: Police in London said nearly 100,000 people marched in the capital Saturday in an event organised by pro-Palestinian groups calling for "an end to the war on Gaza".

Marchers held signs reading "Freedom for Palestine" and "Stop Bombing Gaza" and "End Israeli Apartheid". Many waved Palestinian flags and some chanted "5, 6, 7, 8, Israel is a terrorist state" and "Free Palestine".

Hamas militants stormed into Israel from the Gaza Strip on October 7, and killed at least 1,400 people, according to Israeli officials. More than 4,300 Palestinians, mainly civilians, have been killed across the Gaza Strip in relentless Israeli bombardments in retaliation, according to the latest toll from the Hamas health ministry in Gaza. The march brought traffic at the Marble Arch landmark to a standstill, and

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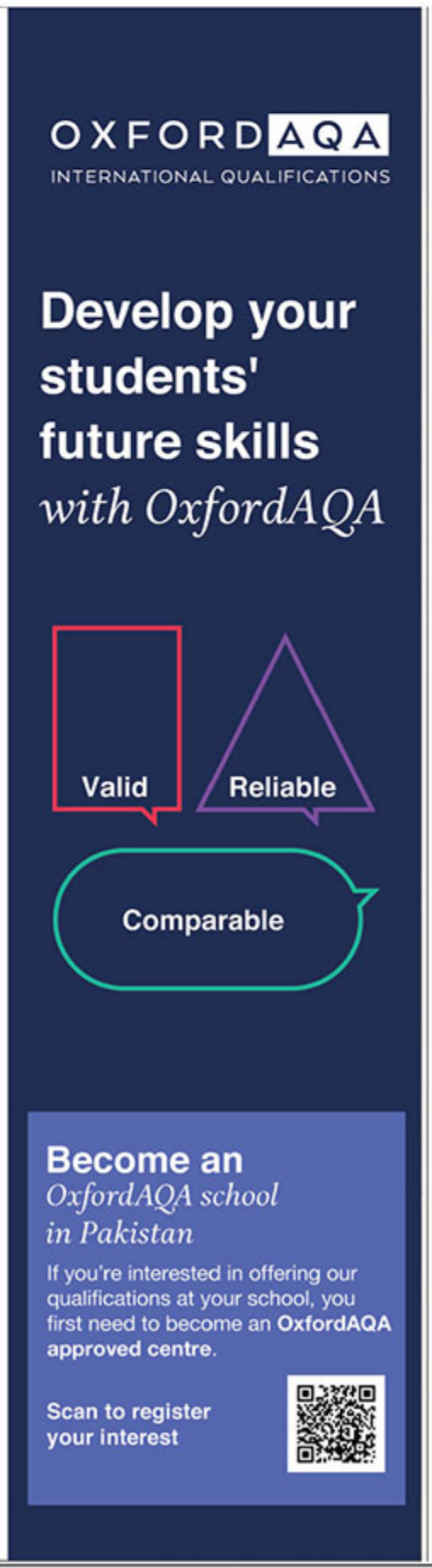

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CITY NEWS

Karachi Edition

The band Ensemble 4.1 plays chamber music, composed by Beethoven and Walter Gieseking, during a concert organised by the Goethe-Institut and the German Consulate General at the Arts Council — *The News photo by Shoaib Ahmed*

Interim CM directs works dept to study viability of plastic roads in Sindh

Baqar wants officials involved in substandard work taken to task

By our correspondent

Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (retd) Maqbool Baqar has directed the provincial works and services department to study viability of the concept of roads made from recycled plastic waste as this has become the world's one of the best construction practices.

He issued the directive while presiding over a meeting of officials of the works and services department at the CM House on Saturday.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Dr Fakhre Alam, Planning & Development Board Chairman Shakil Mangnejo, Principal Secretary to CM Hassan Naqvi, Finance Secretary Kazim Jatoi, Works and Services Secretary Nawaz Sohoo and others.

The works and services secretary informed the CM that in the 2023-24 Annual Development Programme, there were 956 development schemes in the province with an allocation of Rs89,500.5 million against which Rs39,026.73 million had been released and the expenditures made so far were Rs18,089 million. About the inspection of the development schemes, the secretary said his department had submitted its observations and findings along with recommendations for development works in various districts of Sindh.

He also showed the CM a new inspection pro forma, and its parameters developed by his department. The CM directed the works and services department to add a new column in the inspection report pro forma to give information about the "causes and details about the revision of the scheme/project."

The interim CM also directed the works department to include a column in the inspection pro forma about the performance of the contractor and officers involved in the project. He said the services of any renowned engineering university could be hired for third-party inspection and validation of any chosen development scheme.

Justice (retd) Baqar directed the works department to take stern departmental action against the delinquent officers involved in corrupt practices and causing poor work on different development projects.

He also directed the department to rationalise the proposed inspection mechanism, allowing the secretary to visit schemes categorised as of high importance so that the efficiency and effectiveness of the inspection mechanism might be increased.

Justice (retd) Baqar categorically told the department that there would be zero tolerance for substandard work and those involved in substandard work must be taken to task.

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Swat couple shot dead in Baldia house over 'honour'

By our correspondent

A couple became victims of brutal honour killings at their house near Bismillah Chowk in Baldia Town's Hazaara Colony on Saturday.

Ibrahim Jamshed, 42, and his wife Shakila, 36, were fatally shot in the Ittehad Town police jurisdiction. ASI Shah Hassan reported that they received information about gunfire in the area. A patrolling mobile unit arrived at the scene, where they apprehended a suspect attempting to flee.

Upon entering the house from which the suspect was fleeing, the police discovered the couple in a critical condition, with their children in distress. With the assistance of rescue teams, Ibrahim and Shakila were rushed to a hospital but they were pronounced dead. They had suffered gunshot wounds to their torsos and faces.

During the course of the investigation, the suspect was identified as Hussain, elder brother of the deceased Ibrahim. It was revealed that Ibrahim, originally from Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, had fallen in love with Shakila over a decade ago and had decided to marry her. However, their families vehemently opposed the union. In response, the couple fled to Karachi and began a life together in Hazara Colony.

The police further revealed that during their marriage, Shakila gave birth to six children, and Ibrahim worked as a technician at a copper wire manufacturing factory in Baldia Town.

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An evening of chamber music performed by German band

Ensemble 4.1 plays Beethoven and Walter Gieseking's compositions to the delight of lovers of Western classical music

By Bilal Ahmed

Karachi rarely gives an opportunity to listen live to a performance of Western classical music. Thanks to the Goethe Institut and German consulate, lovers of Western classical music were able to enjoy on Saturday evening the performance of German instrumentalists under the band Ensemble 4.1, who played chamber music compositions by Beethoven and 20th century German composer Walter Gieseking.

For the general readers, chamber music is a composition written for a few instruments instead of a large-scale orchestra. Due to the limited number of instruments involved, the chamber music can be played in a relatively small place for a small audience as it does not require a huge space for orchestra.

Since Ensemble 4.1 comprises five instrumentalists, they played quintets — chamber music composed for five instruments.

The band calls itself the only 'piano windtet' worldwide. The term 'piano windtet' signifies the instruments played by the five musicians in the band, which are piano and four wind instruments — oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn. Of these four wind instruments, horn (also called French horn) is part of the sub-family of brass instruments and the other three belong to the woodwind instruments sub-family.

According to the Ensemble 4.1 website, the band includes Thomas Hoppe, who is the pianist, Jörg Schneider who plays the oboe, Alexander Glucksmann, who plays the clarinet, Sebastian Posch, who is the horn player, and Christoph Knitt who plays the bassoon. However, Knitt was not there at the group's performance in Karachi and the bassoon was played by Paul Gregor-Straka.

The performance was hosted by the Arts Council of Pakistan (ACP). In his welcome speech, ACP President Ahmed Shah heaped praised on the Goethe Institut for arranging a variety of cultural events in the city.

German Consul General Rüdiger Lotz also spoke. He said the Ensemble 4.1 had come to Karachi after 10 years.

Later, one of the band members explained that it was in fact Karachi where the band gave its first performance in 2013. He said that as they formed their group, they received an invitation from the Goethe Institut Karachi to perform in the city. They accepted the invitation and Karachi hosted their very first public performance. During the following 10 years, they toured various parts of the world and finally returned to Karachi.

The first quintet they played was legendary composer Ludwig van Beethoven's quintet in E-flat for piano and winds, Op. 16. The composition had three movements. The first and the last movements were relatively faster. The middle movement was slow and had some beautiful pieces where each individual wind instrument was allowed to shine with the piano's support.

The last movement was cheerful and full of surprising turns. As it ended, the musicians received a deserving applause.

The band announced that after Beethoven, they would play a quintet composed by Gieseking. A musician explained that Gieseking was a renowned pianist particularly famous for his interpretations of Debussy. He also had a few original compositions to his credit, one of which was played by the Ensemble 4.1.

The composition had various themes coming one after another. Some were cheerful and others sombre. It sounded like a film score having pieces describing various situations of a movie.

The ACP must be praised for hosting such an event. However, it appears that in order to fill the entire auditorium, some youths, who included music students which was evident from their guitar cases, were forced to attend the event. As they had not come of their free will, they chattered, used their phones and continuously produced distraction on the back rows. If the ACP had ensured their presence, it should not employ such tactics next time. A half-filled auditorium with true enthusiasts is better than a full auditorium with distractions.

Ali Gohar Mahar meets Bilawal, announces PPP rally

By our correspondent

Senior Ghotki-based politician Sardar Ali Gohar Khan Mahar, who recently left the Grand Democratic Alliance and joined the Pakistan Peoples Party, has announced that a grand rally will be held in his native Khangarh town very soon, which will be attended by the top leadership of the PPP.

A statement issued on Saturday quoted Mahar as saying that after meeting former president Asif Ali Zardari recently, he along with his family, friends, and supporters had joined the PPP.

Mahar said that he met PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at the Bilawal House on Saturday.

He said that his entire family stood united as all its members would work together to strengthen the Peoples Party in their native area.

The PPP is trying to strengthen its political force in the stronghold of Sindh by attracting influential political leaders of of other parties. Earlier, GDA leader Ghous Bux Mahar also joined the PPP.

Separately, former National Assembly member Sardar Ahmed Khan Lund, along with his son Sardar Khan, met Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at the Bilawal House and discussed the political situation of the Ghotki town.

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Women marchers demand United Nations act to end Israeli atrocities

Aurat March, Pakistan Maholiati Tahaffuz Movement and Palestine Foundation Pakistan organise marches to voice support for Palestinian people

By our correspondents

Aurat March and Pakistan Maholiati Tahaffuz Movement held a march from Do Talwar to Teen Talwar to show solidarity with the Palestinian people on Saturday.

"This is a genocide and the genocide is against the people of Gaza," said advocate Abira Ashfaq, adding that they are united with the people of Gaza. From Rafa to Karachi, she said, they all are united with the people of Gaza.

She said that they would always speak up against American colonisation and imperialism, which has given millions and billions of dollars to empower a genocidal regime. "What they've done is just not a war crime. It is inhumane. It is not a ceasefire or conflict. This is a siege and an occupation," she said and urged that measures should be taken to end the genocide immediately.

Aurat March member Zoha Alvi said that their protest against Israel and America is proof that they are not foreign-funded. She said that if they don't speak up against injustice today, they would face it as well tomorrow.

Another activist Faryal said that she was at the protest to show solidarity with Palestinian people and to advocate for the end of the occupation. She said that Israel has to stop committing genocide and war crimes. She said Palestinian people have been suffering from 75 years and world leaders need to come together.

Meanwhile, the Palestine Foundation Pakistan (PLF) organised a "Women March for Palestine" in Karachi to express solidarity with the people of Palestine and victims of the Israeli bombing on Gaza.

Demonstrators, including women and children, were carrying placards and banners in their hands, on which the slogans of "Stop the Genocide of the Oppressed Palestinians", "Israel is an illegitimate state", and "Death to America" were written. The protesters also made an effigy of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and burned it at the end of the rally.

A rally organised by the Palestine Foundation Pakistan marches from Numaish to the Sea Breeze Plaza as they shout slogans against Israeli bombing on Gaza.

Social activist Sheema Kermani addresses the participants of a march that was held from Do Talwar to Teen Talwar to express solidarity with Palestinians — Online photo

Addressing the participants of the rally, Palestine Foundation Secretary Dr Sabir Abu Maryam said that the Palestinian resistance's response to Israeli occupation was an appropriate act and we the Pakistani nation supported the resistance of Palestine. This act changes the international politics and balance of power in the region.

He added that all the imperialist powers, including the US and the UK, had failed to crush the resistance of Palestine. The mothers, sisters and children of Pakistan are feeling the pain of Palestinian mothers, sisters and children, he remarked.

Dr Sabir said strongly supported the rally to be staged on October 22 and that would go towards the American Consulate in Karachi. He urged the people of the city to participate in this rally.

Addressing the participants of the rally, Dr Sara Syed said that we are weak even though we are a nuclear power. Dr Sara said we will be united for the cause of Palestine and ensure all possible assistance.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Umme Rabab said that the we will not hesitate to make any sacrifice in support of Palestinian brethren.

Dr Sara presented a resolution and said that we will support the oppressed Palestinians, Palestine is the homeland of the Palestinians, and Israel is an illegitime state.

The resolution said the people of Pakistan stand by the principled stand of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah for the cause of Palestine. We demand the international organisations provide aid to Gaza as soon as possible, the government of Pakistan should continue its aid activities, a Palestine Fund should be established at the national level, and the United Nations and the international community should end the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Interim CM directs works dept to study viability of plastic roads...

Continued from page 13

Video recordings

The works and services secretary also informed the interim CM about the monitoring mechanism of various projects. To this, Justice (retd) Baqar said that for every major development project, there should be digital recordings, images or videos at every stage of the project.

The recorded data could be stored in the shape of DVDs or USBs, he added.

The secretary briefed the CM about his field visits to inspect development schemes of roads and buildings in Badin, Tharparkar, Umerkot, Tando Muhammad Khan, Tando Allahyar, Matiari, Hyderabad and Sanghar districts.

To a question, he told the CM that he had observed during the visits that no milestone was installed on the completed scheme, road marking paint was not applied in some schemes, quality of roads, particularly in Sanghar, was not good, in almost all schemes bridges had not been taken care of properly, shoulders of most of the schemes were not compacted properly, visits were not carried out by XENs and other relevant field officials and record of completed schemes was not readily available on the site.

He said he issued necessary instructions to all the officials concerned to improve the standard of their work. He added that departmental action would also be initiated against the delinquent officials.

The works and services secretary also briefed the meeting about the road research lab and monitoring unit within the department. He also proposed certain recommendations for improving the role of the monitoring unit at different levels, especially appointing DG monitoring from cadre services.

To this, the interim Chief Minister said the post of DG monitoring could be filled through a competitive process which could either be carried out from the market or the existing cadre of engineers. He directed the officials concerned to maintain the proper logbooks of official vehicles where all the necessary information must be included. He also directed the officials concerned to start road safety research and programmes, especially on the Indus Highway.

'Nutrition problem of Pakistan worsening due to climate change'

Experts call for switching to biofortified crops to deal with growing malnutrition across country

By M. Waqar Bhatti

Unexpected temperature variability and extreme weather events are resulting in reduction of nutritional value of staple crops in Pakistan, experts have warned, and called for switching to biofortified crops to deal with growing malnutrition in the country.

"Yield of rice reduced drastically in rice-growing areas of upper Sindh in 2020 and 2021," Ghulam Mustafa Nangraj, director at the Agriculture Extension Sindh told The News on Saturday.

"The produce also lacked the required nutrition value due to extreme weather variability. Last year, floods and heavy rains destroyed most of the standing crops in Sindh, further worsening the nutrition crisis in the province."

Claiming that climate change has multifold effects on nutrition in Sindh and South Punjab, Nangraj said that on the one hand, unprecedented floods destroyed most of the standing crops.

On the other hand, he added, extremely high and sudden drop in temperatures affected the yield and quality of grains, reducing their nutritional value and adding to the ongoing malnutrition in these areas.

The Planning Commission of Pakistan claimed in a recent report that the agriculture, food, livestock and fisheries sectors suffered a loss of Rs800 billion in the devastating floods that hit Pakistan between June and August 2022.

They also affected 33 million people and displaced at least eight million of them. The report estimates the long-term losses to these sectors at around Rs1.98 trillion.

Nangraj said that in the wake of back-to-back natural calamities and weather-related disasters, they are trying to convince local farmers to switch to biofortified crops such as zinc wheat, which are more nutritious with adequate amounts of zinc, iron and other micronutrients.

He said experts are also trying to come up with new varieties of wheat and rice that are not only nutritious but their yield is also high when compared to traditional varieties.

"Right now farmers in Sindh are growing traditional varieties of wheat since they don't know that biofortified varieties are more nutritious and better for their families' health. Awareness needs to be spread among farmers in Sindh, like in Punjab, to switch to biofortified crops, which are also heat- and drought-resistant."

Five biofortified zinc wheat varieties have so far been developed and released by the federal government, and the provincial governments of Punjab and Khyber Pahktunkhwa with the support of HarvestPlus: Zincol-2016, Akbar-2019, Nawab-2021, Tarnab Rehbar and Tarnab Gandum-1.

Former federal minister for climate change Sherry Rehman also called for adopting adaptive measures and sustainable agricultural practices to ensure the well-being of the people, saying Pakistan is grappling with a pressing nutrition emergency, which is closely linked to the challenges posed by climate change.

"Pakistan currently ranks 99th out of 126 countries on the Global Hunger Index, indicating a severe food insecurity issue. One out of every five children below the age of five in Pakistan is currently grappling with acute malnutrition. Shockingly, approximately 10.5 million individuals are currently experiencing food insecurity across 43 highly vulnerable districts."

According to Sherry, the impact of the nutrition crisis echoes across the nation, with over 3.5 million children bearing the severe burden of malnutrition within the 84 districts affected by the devastating floods.

Pakistan is experiencing more frequent and intense extreme weather events, which are disrupting food production, damaging crops and displacing populations, leading to food shortages and increased malnutrition, the former federal minister added.

Dr M Yaqub Mujahid, country manager, HarvestPlus Pakistan, said that combating hidden hunger requires a range of context-specific combinations of evidence-based interventions that complement each other, including dietary diversification, supplementation, commercial food fortification, biofortification and other public health measures.

"Enriching nutrients into staple crops that farmers are already eating provides a safety net against severe levels of micronutrient deficiency and helps mitigate challenges of nutritional insecurity due to climate change."

Sharing the progress on biofortification, Mujahid said that over four million tonnes of biofortified wheat grain was harvested in Pakistan in the cropping season of 2022-23.

He said that over 2.1 million farming households are consuming zinc wheat, with millions other purchasing from the open market. Moreover, he added, over 80,000 tonnes of certified seed of zinc wheat was produced for the cropping season of 2023-24.

He maintained that the catalyst to scale is development of quality nutritious wheat varieties, government support in early generation seed production, demand creation, working closely with the value chain actors and end users, and building their capacity to effectively grow biofortified crops.

'Greater effectiveness, lower cost should be main goals for vaccine-makers'

Dr Altaf Hussain tells seminar Expanded Programme on Immunisation can play a vital role in fight against antimicrobial resistance

News Desk

Vaccines have been part of the human fight against disease for more than 200 years and are a simple, safe, and effective way of protecting you against harmful diseases, before you come into contact with them. It uses your body's natural defences to build resistance to specific infections and makes your immune system stronger.

These views were shared by Prof Khalid Shafi, renowned consultant paediatrician and general secretary of the Pakistan Paediatric Association, at a public awareness seminar titled 'Future of Vaccines', which was held recently.

"When you think of vaccination, you probably think of a doctor or nurse administering a shot, future immunization delivery methods, however, may differ from what we use today. Inhaled vaccines, for example, are already used in some cases: influenza vaccines have been made in a nasal spray. One of these vaccines is available every year for seasonal flu," he said while addressing the seminar held at Dr Essa Laboratory & Diagnostic Center, DHA.

"Other possibilities include a patch application, where a patch containing a matrix of extremely tiny needles delivers a vaccine without the use of a syringe. This method of delivery could be particularly useful in remote areas, as its application would not require a trained medical person, which is generally needed for vaccines delivered as a shot by syringe, multiple respiratory infections called tripledemic, could be covered by a single injection, allowing vulnerable people to be protected against Covid, flu and respiratory syncytial virus," explained by Prof. Khalid Shafi.

Guest speaker Dr Altaf Hussain, consultant paediatrician and neonatologist, highlighted the benefits and future directions of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI). According to the expert, EPI covers vaccination services implemented in order to ensure the immunization of all vulnerable age groups by preventively reaching out to them before they contract and develop infectious diseases, notably pertussis, diphtheria, tetanus, measles, rubella, mumps, tuberculosis, polio, chickenpox, and hepatitis A and B.

Rota vaccine was introduced in 2017 and typhoid conjugated vaccine (TCV) in 2019 in Sindh and was introduced in Punjab and Islamabad in 2021. The measles vaccine is being replaced by Measles Rubella (MR), which also protects against rubella and congenital rubella syndrome (CRS).

"EPI can have a vital role in the fight against antimicrobial resistance. If you can stop people from catching infections, you can reduce the number of antibiotics being used. And the fewer antibiotics are used, the lower the chance of resistance developing," Dr Altaf Hussain said.

Earlier, addressing the inaugural session, Dr Farhan Essa Abdullah, infectious disease specialist and CEO of Dr Essa Laboratory, said millions of lives could be saved by a groundbreaking set of new vaccines for a range of conditions, including deadliest diseases like cancer, cardiovascular and autoimmune diseases, which will likely be ready by 2030, while recent studies into these vaccines are also showing tremendous results.

Currently, an estimated 19.3 million new cancer cases have been diagnosed worldwide, with around 10.0 million cancer deaths annually.

"When you have rheumatoid arthritis (RA), you face more than sore and swollen joints. The autoimmune disease can affect your whole body, including your organs, and make you feel lousy all over. In the future, an RA 'vaccine' and other drugs that affect your immune system may be an option, 18 million people worldwide were living with rheumatoid arthritis & 70% of them are women," added by Dr Farhan Essa.

The seminar was told that while we can attribute many public health successes to vaccination, the future presents continued challenges. Diseases remain for which researchers have been unable to find effective vaccines such as HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and leishmaniasis remain a tough task. One of the primary reasons for this is that the viruses, bacteria and parasites causing these infections hide from the immune system inside the person's cells. To overcome this, a different kind of immune response involving T cells is required instead of, or in addition to, an antibody response.

There are some infections associated with serious long-term complications that we don't yet have a vaccine for. For instance, infection with the bacterium Helicobacter pylori means patients are more likely to develop stomach cancer, and group A streptococcus infection is responsible for rheumatic fever, which is still a significant cause of death and disability in developing countries.

Based on experience with emerging infections like Ebola and Zika, progress has been made in developing vaccines that can stimulate some of our own cells to temporarily produce antigens.

In the case of tumors, the vaccine can either be directed against the tumour itself or be designed to amplify the anti-tumour immune response. For autoimmune or allergic disorders, vaccines are being designed to switch off unwanted immune responses rather than switching on the useful immune response needed for infections and cancer, while promising trials are in progress for vaccines to treat nicotine and cocaine addictions.

"Although many current vaccines are highly effective, efforts continue to develop vaccines that are more effective than those available today. Thus, researchers continue to explore new possibilities. Greater effectiveness, lower cost, and convenient delivery are some of the main goals; another issue researchers are trying to address is the so-called cold chain problem. Many vaccines require cool storage temperatures to remain viable. Unfortunately, temperature-controlled storage is often unavailable in parts of the world including Pakistan where vaccination is vital for disease control. One of the reasons smallpox eradications was successful was that the smallpox vaccine could be stored at relatively high temperatures and remain viable for reasonable periods," Dr Farhan elaborated.

NAMAZ TIMINGS

FOR KARACHI ONLY

Fajr	05:17 am
Zohr	12:17 pm
Asr	04:23 pm
Maghrib	06:00 pm
Isha	07:17 pm

CITY PULSE

Khoya Hua Aadmi

The National Academy of Performing Arts is hosting 'Khoya Huwa Aadmi', a play written by Kamal Ahmed Rizvi and directed by Sibtain Ali. The event will be held every day at 8pm from October 25 to October 29. Contact 0315-4560220 for more information.

The Penwith Portfolio

The VM Art Gallery is hosting an art exhibition featuring a remarkable selection of original prints by 12 renowned British modernists: Robert Adams, Alan Davie, Merlyn Evans, Duncan Grant, Barbara Hepworth, Peter Lanyon, Bernard Leach, FE McWilliam, Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson, John Piper and Micheal Rothenstein. Titled 'The Penwith Portfolio', the show will run at the gallery until October 28. Contact 0345-7787663 for more information.

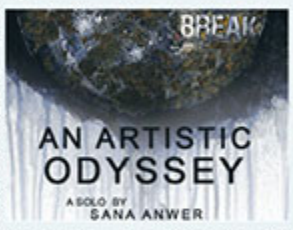
Homegrown

The Full Circle Gallery is hosting an art exhibition featuring works by Alishba Memon, Amna Qamar, Axel Lucas, Bilal Ahmed, Fatima Jawed and Schajya Siddiqui. Titled 'Homegrown', the show will run at the gallery until October 26. Contact 0303-2239038 for more information.

Filmi Yaadein

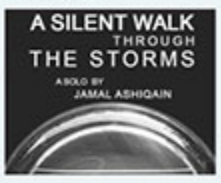
The ArtOne62 gallery is hosting an art exhibition featuring works by Abbas Kamanger, Mehtab Ali, Nisar Bashier, Rustam Khan, Prof Rahmat Khan, Saeed Naqvi, Zafer Siddiqui and Zahid Hussain. Titled 'Filmi Yaadein', the show will run at the gallery until October 27. Contact 0302-8293492 for more information.

An Artistic Odyssey



ArtChowk the Gallery is hosting an art exhibition featuring works by Sana Anwer. Titled 'An Artistic Odyssey', the show will run at the gallery from October 24 to November 2. Contact 021-35856030 for more information.

A Silent Walk Through the Storms



ArtChowk the Gallery is hosting an art exhibition featuring works by Jamal Ashiqain. Titled 'A Silent Walk Through the Storms', the show will run at the gallery from October 24 to November 2. Contact 021-35856030 for more information.

KOSMOS: Material Metamorphosis

The Koel Gallery is hosting an art exhibition featuring works by Muhammad Umar and Rabia Ali. Titled 'KOSMOS: Material Metamorphosis', the show will run at the gallery from October 24 to November 8. Contact 021-35831292 for more information.

Angst: Portrait of an Afterthought

The Sanat Initiative is hosting an art exhibition featuring works by Haya Zaidi. Titled 'Angst: Portrait of an Afterthought', the show will run at the gallery until November 26. Contact 0300-8208108 for more information.

Foreign currencies, smuggled and stolen phones seized during raids

By Salis bin Perwaiz

The Federal Investigation Agency's State Bank Circle (SBC) and Anti-Corruption Circle on Saturday led an operation against mafias involved in the illegal hawala and hundi business.

Officials said that in the continuation of the national policy against the smuggling and illegal purchase of dollars and hawala and hundi transfers and on directions of FIA Director Zaim Iqbal Sheikh, the FIA was conducting operations.

Under the supervision of Deputy Director Anti-Corruption Circle Javed Baloch, an FIA team raided the city's main electronic market located in Saddar, seized 250 smuggled and stolen mobile phones worth more than Rs10 million and arrested two people.

They added that the IMEI numbers of smuggled and stolen mobile phones are replaced by an innovative software purchased from abroad and the data of mobile phone numbers already registered in PTA's system has also been recovered from the suspects.

Officials said the suspects caused a loss of more than Rs50 million to the PTA through forgery. Moreover, among the mobile phones recovered are those stolen from the United Kingdom and the Anti-Corruption Circle has registered a case against the suspects and started an investigation.

The officials said the FIA's SBC formed a raiding party against hawala operators. Subsequently, a team conducted a raid on Wahab Arcade on MA Jinnah Road, arrested three suspects and seized $32,700, 15,000 Saudi riyals, 800 United Arab Emirates dirhams, Rs98,882,500, five mobile phones containing evidence of hawala transfers and several registers and ledgers that had hawala entries.

An FIR under the amended Foreign Exchange Regulation Amendment Act 2020), read with sections 34 and 109 the PPC is being registered against the suspects, named as Mohammad Shahid, Muhammad Hussain and Abdul Rasheed. Further investigations are underway.

Pressure tactics employed to ensure Wahab's unopposed victory in LG by-polls, alleges Naeem

JI leader says party will approach judiciary against Wahab's election

By our correspondent

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) employed unfair means and pre-poll rigging with the support of the interim setup and Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to get Murtaza Wahab elected unopposed as a union committee chairman from Ibrahim Hyderi area of Karachi.

Karachi Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Emir Hafiz Naeemur Rehman made this allegation on Saturday as he reacted to Wahab's victory in the local government by-elections.

He said the ECP and the caretaker government were hands in gloves with the PPP against democratic norms and values.

Declaring the caretaker government as an extended version of the previous regime, he said the PPP was not able to go that far in fascism without the support from the interim government.

He alleged that the PPP's men made the proposer and seconder of the JI's candidate in the UC withdraw their support under duress.

He added that the PPP had once again used feudalism to defeat Karachi and Karachiites.

He maintained that the PPP had hijacked the electoral process since long ago and the situation was still the same as all the candidates contesting UC elections against Wahab had been expelled from the race through fascist tactics.

Rehman maintained that all rules and laws had been moulded to facilitate Wahab's victory. He highlighted that as per the rules, any chairman or vice chairman, or mayor or deputy mayor would not take part in electioneering.

Ironically, he added, the mayor was running his election campaign in three union committees. He said the JI had challenged the permission granted to Wahab in the ECP and later the election tribunal but all went in vain so the JI challenged those unconstitutional steps in the Sindh High Court.

The JI leader announced that the party would challenge the unopposed election of Wahab in a court of law.

He added that the JI had always challenged the PPP's fascism and the ECP's support for the PPP, and would continue to do so in the future as well.

On Friday, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and JI candidates for local government by-polls challenged in the Sindh High Court the acceptance of nomination papers filed by Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab to contest by-polls for the slot of chairman of the union committees of Ibrahim Hyderi and Mauripur's town municipal corporations.

Petitioners Mohammad Sabir Khan Abbasi and Mohammad Hussnain and others submitted that they were candidates for the office of UC-8 Ibrahim Hyderi and UC-3 Mauripur chairmen where Pakistan Peoples Party candidate and Mayor Murtaza Wahab had also filed his nomination papers.

They said Wahab is a voter registered in Union Committee, Gizri, Saddar Town, District South, and he had also submitted his nomination papers for contesting elections in that union committee.

They further submitted that Wahab is a resident of neither these UCs nor of Saddar Town and in fact he is a voter registered in Mohallah Bagh Colony, Gizri.

The petitioners said that in view of his ineligibility for contesting the by-elections being not a voter of the said UCs, they had filed objections before the returning officer and the appellate tribunal; however, the latter dismissed their objections.

They further submitted that the returning officer and the appellate tribunal did not apply their judicial mind and even could not differentiate between the municipal and town municipal corporation, union committee and the union committee and union council, while disposing of the appeals against the acceptance of Wahab's nomination papers.

They said the election tribunal did not consider the qualification criteria for election of the candidate to the office of the union committee's chairman, which says that a person shall not be qualified to be elected or chosen as member of the council unless he is enrolled as a voter in the electoral rolls of the concerned council or ward.

The Supreme Court, while examining the issue, had categorically said that the very purpose of establishing the local government system is to ensure representation of the people in the governance at the grassroots level.

They submitted that superior courts have categorically decided that the person contesting the election directly should be a voter of the concerned council as per Section 35© of the local government law.

They said the purpose of the direct election is as simple as that the person contesting the election should be amongst the residents of the area, whereas the respondent who has shown his address in Gizri but is contesting election for chairman of union committees of Ibrahim Hyderi, and Mauripur cannot be said to be a person amongst the residents of the locality.

Cyclone Tej likely to hit Oman, Yemen coast

PDMA says system may intensify into very severe cyclonic storm in 24 hours

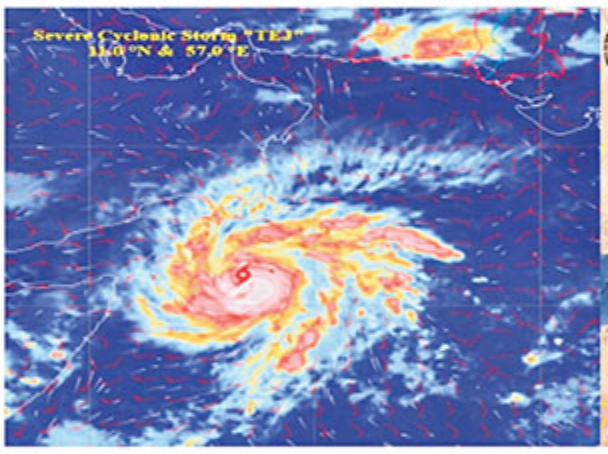
By our correspondent

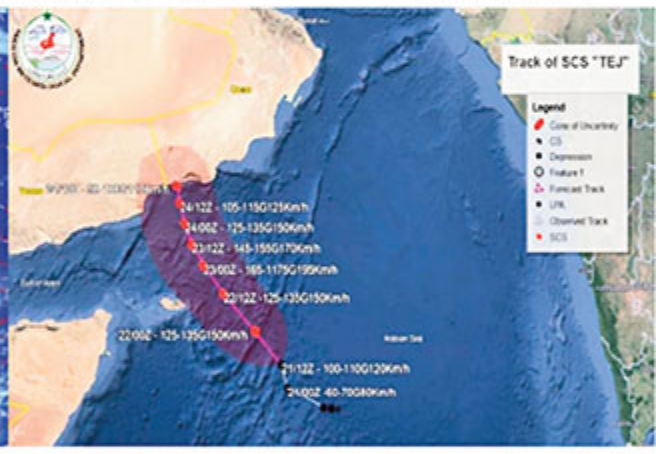
A low wind pressure in the Arabian Sea has turned into a severe cyclonic storm, Tej, which is likely to hit the Oman and Yemen coasts. As per information, the system will not impact Pakistan's coastal region.

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) in a warning to all the deputy commissioners of Karachi has said that the cyclone over the southwest Arabian Sea moved further west-northwestward and has turned into a severe cyclonic storm and lies around Latitude 11 degrees north and Longitude 57 degrees East at a distance of about 1,880 kilometres southwest of Karachi, 1,670 kilometres south and southwest of Gwadar and 750 kilometres south and southeast of Oman.

Maximum sustain surface winds are 100 to 110 kilometres per hour. The maximum wave height is 25 feet around the system centre.

Due to favourable environmental conditions, the system is likely to intensify further into a very severe cyclonic storm in the next 24 hours and keep moving in the west and northwest directions towards the Yemen-Oman coast.





Swat couple shot dead in Baldia house over 'honour'

Continued from page 13

On Saturday, Hussain visited their residence and engaged in a heated argument regarding the marriage. The altercation turned violent, during which Hussain producing a .30 bore pistol opened fire.

ASI Hassan stated that the police had arrested the suspect and recovered the murder weapon. A case has been registered against the accused, and further investigations are ongoing.

Lyari 'gangster' caught in injured state

By our correspondent

Police on Saturday reported the arrest of an alleged member associated with the Wasiullah Lakhu group of Lyari gangsters.

The suspect, identified as Asif, alias Pakora, was apprehended in an injured condition following an exchange of gunfire with the police in the Baghdadi area. Additionally, a pistol was recovered from his possession. Initial information, as well as intelligence-based reports, indicated that the suspect had previously and presently engaged in extorting money on the directives of the notorious Lyari gangster commander, Wasiullah Lakhu. Furthermore, the suspect was wanted by the police in connection with multiple cases.

The police disclosed that the arrested suspect's criminal record and further information were being compiled. He was taken to the hospital for necessary medical treatment.

Cases have been registered in relation to his apprehension, and a comprehensive investigation into the matter is currently underway.

Four unconscious after inhaling toxic gas

By our correspondent

At least four people fell unconscious after inhaling toxic gas at the Al-Mustafa warehouse in the fishery area of District Keamari on Saturday.

They were subsequently transported to the Civil Hospital, Karachi, for medical treatment. The injured persons were identified as 35-year-old Nabi Buksh, 25-year-old Bilawal, 25-year-old Mehtab, and 30-year-old Badshah.

Police arrived at the warehouse and initiated an inquiry to determine the facts surrounding the gas leak. An investigation is currently underway, with further details to follow.

Training programme launched for fresh pharmacy graduates

Welfare organisation also announces plan to establish IT university and 200 pharmacies in Karachi

By M. Waqar Bhatti

Announcing the launch of the Bano Qabil Pharmacists programme to enhance the capacity of fresh pharmacy graduates, Al-Khidmat on Saturday said they are going to establish 200 more pharmacies across Karachi to provide quality medicines on subsidised rates to residents and to provide employment to as many pharmacists as possible.

The announcement was made by Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi chief Hafiz Naeemur-Rehman while addressing the launching ceremony of the Bano Qabil Pharmacists programme at a local hotel.

Under the programme, fresh graduates of pharmacy will be offered free technology-based courses to enable them to enhance their skills in the field and make them valuable in the pharmaceutical industry.

Rehman also announced the establishment of an IT university in the city under the JI's welfare and social development arm, Al-Khidmat, following its Bano Qabil programme.

The Bano Qabil programme is a youth education initiative aimed at empowering Karachi's youngsters through latest technologies by offering them 100 free advanced IT courses to prepare them for employment and freelancing.

"Our first batch of Bano Qabil has already graduated, and many of them are now in the field. During the last one and a half years since we envisaged this idea, we've realised this city and its youngsters have immense potential," said the JI chief.

"But majority of the youngsters can't afford quality education because public universities don't offer quality education any more, while the private ones are just too expensive," he lamented.

"So we, under the banner of Al-Khidmat, are going to set up an advanced IT university in Karachi which will offer quality education for nominal fees, while a major percentage of the students will be offered scholarships."

He said that over 117,000 male and female youngsters took the entry test for the second batch of Bano Qabil last month, and courses for those who qualified would begin very soon.

He also said that after meeting industry people and field experts, he and the Al-Khidmat team decided to start a separate Bano Qabil programme for fresh pharmacy graduates to address the needs of the pharmaceutical industry and the employment needs of the young graduates.

"We have faith in the abilities of our youth. We have 6.5 million people here in our city who are aged between 14 and 25 years, and 40 to 50 per cent of them are educated. They're our assets. We'll empower them."

The IT courses in Bano Qabil 2.0 have been increased from the six courses that were offered in Bano Qabil 1.0 to 15 courses, resulting in a two-year diploma.

Syed Jamshed Ahmed, director pharmacy of Al-Khidmat, shared the brief details of the Bano Qabil Pharmacists programme, explaining how the young trained graduates under the initiative would help reform the basic needs of the health system.

"Currently there are 11 pharmacies of Al-Khidmat in Karachi which are offering medicines at very nominal rates. Only last month we sold medicines worth Rs550 million from these 11 pharmacies," said Ahmed.

"This reflects the need for more such facilities that can help the poor, lower and lower-middle classes so they can meet their crucial health related needs. So we're hoping to expand our network and set up some 200 pharmacies across Karachi over the next few years."

Al-Khidmat CEO Naveed Baig said people have so much faith in the welfare activities of Al-Khidmat that well before an appeal for the collection of donations for the people of Gaza, they have started sending in donations, adding that Al-Khidmat has been working in the occupied territory for the past several years.

Representatives of the local pharmaceutical industry, including Tauqeer-ul-Haq, Shaikh Qaiser Waheed and PharmEvo Managing Director Haroon Qassim, said they are looking for trained and qualified graduates to work for them in their factories as well as in sales and marketing teams.

They said the Bano Qabil Pharmacists programme would not only provide the required workforce to the local pharmaceutical industry but would also help overcome unemployment in the city.

Pakistan Society of Health-System Pharmacists President Abdul Lateef Shaikh, National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases Chief Pharmacist Jibran Yousuf, Umaima Muzammil and others also spoke on the occasion.

Baqar to ask federal govt to relax visa regime for Iranian students

Iranian Consul General Hassan Nourian laments there are just 10 to 15 Iranian students in Pakistan due to strict visa regime

By our correspondent

Consul General of Iran in Karachi Hassan Nourian confers with Sindh caretaker chief minister Justice (retd) Maqbool Baqar at the CM House on Saturday — *NNI photo*

Merely 10 to 15 foreign students from Iran have been studying in Pakistan as compared to 4,500 Iranian pupils present in South India as the Indian government offers an easy visa regime to them in addition to other incentives to study in the country.

This was stated by Iranian Consul General in Karachi Hassan Nourian, who met Sindh Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (retired) Maqbool Baqar at the CM House on Saturday.

The meeting took into consideration issues of mutual interest. The Iranian consul general told the CM that the diplomatic mission of Iran in Karachi alone issued 80,000 visas to Pakistanis who intended to visit Iran every year.

He complained that there was a very strict regime in place for issuing Pakistani visas to Iranian students intending to study at the educational institutions of Pakistan. He said the Iranian students were not allowed to open bank accounts in Pakistan.

The CM said that he would talk to the relevant federal authorities to relax the visa regime for prospective Iranian students. He said he would also talk to the federal government about extending the facility of opening bank accounts to the Iranian students.

The Iranian diplomat told Baqar that the Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Tehran and Isfahan in Iran had signed memorandums of understanding with the Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry. The MoUs would open new prospects for trade, and there would be trade of vegetables, fruit, and petroleum products between the two countries.

The Iranian consul general said the construction of land routes would provide tourism opportunities for exploring sites worth visiting in Iran, Iraq, and Oman.

He told the CM that a ferry service could be launched between Iran and Pakistan if any prospective investors from both countries came forward to invest in this communication project.

Baqar mentioned that all the Islamic countries had brotherly relations with each other. "You shouldn't have considered yourself an alien while staying in Sindh," said the CM to the Iranian diplomat.

The CM and the Iranian diplomat in their meeting unanimously condemned Israeli aggression against the innocent Palestinian people in Gaza.

Ghani says he stands vindicated after Haleem withdraws allegations against him

PPP leader takes defamation cases back after PTI leader withdraws his accusations

By our correspondent

Karachi Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) President Saeed Ghani, who served as the labour minister in the last elected Sindh government, has said that his stance has been vindicated that the allegations levelled against him by former leader of the opposition in the Sindh Assembly Haleem Adil Sheikh were utterly false and fabricated as the latter withdrew those allegations in a court.

Ghani said this in a video message issued on Saturday after the former Sindh Assembly opposition leader withdrew his allegations against him in a South district and sessions court.

Sheikh, who belongs to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), had alleged while speaking at a press conference some three years back that Ghani was involved in land grabbing, drug dealing and other unlawful activities in the city.

After those allegations, Ghani lodged civil and criminal defamation cases against the former opposition leader.

A statement issued by a spokesman for Ghani said the judge hearing the case on Saturday advised both parties to reconcile with each other.

Ghani said the honourable judge had earlier also suggested to both parties to mutually resolve their dispute as he had come up with the clear stance that the former opposition leader should first withdraw his allegations.

Ghani said that on Saturday, Sheikh appeared before the judge and withdrew his allegations.

The PPP leader said that afterward, he undertook his moral duty of withdrawing the cases he had filed against the PTI leader. "By the grace of Allah, I once again stood vindicated as those who levelled allegations against me admitted that they were wrong accusations," he said.

Experts call for empowering next generation of nurses with knowledge and skills

News Desk

Ziauddin University Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery hosted a three-day International Nursing Research Conference 2023 (INRC-2023), themed "Reshaping the Nursing Profession Through Research & Innovation". The Conference served as a pivotal platform uniting healthcare professionals, researchers, and educators from across the globe.

The INRC-2023 was organized in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC), the Professional Relief Organization, and the Health Research Advisory Board.

The purpose of this conference was to be dedicated to advancing the field of nursing by promoting research, collaboration, and knowledge dissemination. It is a collective effort to ensure that nursing remains at the forefront of healthcare innovation and patient-centered care.

In his inaugural speech, while highlighting the importance of the nursing profession and the integral role nurses play in medical treatment, Vice-Chancellor Ziauddin University Prof Dr Syed Irfan Hyder said: "Today, as we inaugurate the International Nursing Conference, we are not just celebrating an event; we are paying tribute to the heart and soul of healthcare. Nurses are the unsung heroes who bring compassion, care, and competence to every bedside. Without nurses, medical treatment remains incomplete, for they are the guiding light in the often-complex journey to healing."

"This conference is a testament to our unwavering belief in the vital role that nursing plays in shaping the landscape of healthcare. It's a reminder that no medical advancement, no technological breakthrough, and no treatment protocol can replace the significance of a nurse's touch, empathy, and expertise. The work of nurses transcends boundaries and cultures, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that they receive the recognition and support they truly deserve," he added.

Dr Pamela Marshall, the Dean of the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, extended a warm welcome to all participants, expressing gratitude to the speakers for their valuable insights. She underscored the significance of vital science in nursing and praised students for their enthusiasm.

"Nursing is not just a profession; it's a calling to care, a commitment to compassion, and a dedication to excellence. In our ever-evolving healthcare landscape, it is our duty to empower the next generation of nurses with the knowledge, skills, and vision to lead the way," she added.

Appointments of educational boards' chairmen suspended

SHC told appointments made without security clearance or competitive process and in clear violation of law

By Jamal Khurshid

The Sindh High Court (SHC) has suspended the appointment notifications of the chairmen of the matriculation and intermediate education boards of Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana and Mirpurkhas.

The interim order came on a lawsuit filed by Hafeezullah Abdul Rehman against the issuance of notifications by the provincial universities & boards department for the appointments of the education boards' chairmen.

The plaintiff's counsel said that the recruitment process for the chairmen of the boards was initiated by the universities & boards department, and his client and three others were shortlisted for the posts, while they were also cleared by the intelligence agencies.

He said that despite the completion of the entire process, the defendant boards did not issue notifications with regard to the appointments of the plaintiff and the three other selected candidates for the posts.

Instead, he added, notifications were issued for the appointments of the defendants without any security clearance or competitive process and in clear violation of the law. The counsel said the defendants were either retired government officers or had chequered pasts with dubious appointments and promotions or multiple tenures.

He said the defendant boards have blatantly violated the doctrine of legitimate expectations, and the plaintiff, despite deserving of the appointment, was not considered, but instead blue-eyed boys were selected and appointed on these posts.

He requested the court to declare the search committee's decision liable to be implemented and enforced in accordance with the law, and to set aside the appointment notifications as unlawful because the candidates were appointed without any competitive process and in violation of the law.

After the preliminary hearing of the lawsuit, a single SHC bench headed by Justice Salahuddin Panhwar said that glaring illegalities and irregularities, and non-compliance with court orders have been prima facie made that require indulgence.

The bench said that the points raised by the plaintiff require consideration, and issued notices to the universities & boards department and other defendants, including the chairmen. The court also suspended the impugned notifications until further orders.

SIU arrests four suspected criminals in raids

By our correspondent

The Special Investigation Unit (SIU) of the Karachi police on Saturday announced the arrests of four suspects in separate operations, each allegedly involved in street crimes, robberies, and drug peddling.

According to the SIU spokesperson, the arrests were made following tip-offs. The first suspect, identified as Danish Akhtar, son of Naeem Akhtar, was apprehended in the Burnes Road area of Karachi. He had a history of involvement in multiple criminal cases and had previously served time in jail.

In another operation, the SIU police conducted a raid in the Khawaja Ajmair area, resulting in the arrest of two suspects associated with weapons and narcotics offenses. These suspects were identified as Nawab Khan, son of Umeed Khan, and Mir Hassan, son of Mian Bakhsh. They were also found to have been involved in cases in Manghophir, Karachi, and District Dera Bugti.

The police arrested Asif, son of Qadir Bakhsh, in the Kalakot area. During the arrest, three pistols and 1045 grams of hashish were recovered from the suspect. Asif confessed to his involvement in street crimes, robberies, and drug distribution in various areas of Karachi.

Cases against these suspects for the possession of illegal weapons and narcotics have been registered, and further investigation is currently underway.

MoU signed to promote renewable natural gas

News Desk

The SSGC Alternate Energy (Pvt.) Limited (SSGC-AE) and Pakistan Machine Tool Factory (PMTF) have entered into a Memorandum-of-Understanding (MoU) meant to unlock the potential of "Green Molecules" renewable natural gas. As a result of this strategic understanding, the PMTF will supply biogas/biomethane, a renewable natural gas, to the SSGC-AE.

The MoU was signed by Imran Maniar, chairman, SSGC-AE and MD, SSGC, and Major General (retd) Abid Mumtaz Malik, MD, PMTF, in a simple ceremony held at SSGC Head Office on October 20. The ceremony was witnessed by Acting DMD (Operations and UFG) SSGC, Mr. Saeed Rizvi and his team members and Hamid Ali, Business Development Manager, PMTF.

The SSGC-AE, SSGC's wholly-owned subsidiary, was established in 2022 with the primary goal of addressing energy challenges in the country. The SSGC-AE's core mission revolves around the implementation of alternative energy projects, including renewable and eco-friendly fuel ventures such as biogas and biomethane, thermal energy-based electricity generation and forward-looking initiatives like coal-to-gas conversion with carbon capture and storage capabilities, as well as green hydrogen production.

The SSGC-AE is spearheading the promotion of Green Molecules endeavors by urging investors and project developers in the market to engage in the production of biogas and biomethane.

Woman among four acquitted of charges of honey-trapping citizen for extortion

By our correspondent

An anti-terrorism court (ATC) has acquitted four accused, including a woman, for lack of evidence in a case pertaining to the kidnapping of a citizen through honey-trap techniques for extortion.

Sajjad Khan, Muhammad Arbaz, Muhammad Salman and Shannu, alias Shahana, were charged with keeping a citizen in wrongful confinement to extort money in December last year.

The ATC-IX judge, who conducted the trial in the judicial complex inside the prison, pronounced his verdict reserved after recording evidence and arguments from both prosecution and defence sides.

The judge ruled that the prosecution failed to prove the charges against the accused, ordering the jail authorities to release them forthwith if they were not required in any other case.

According to the prosecution, the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of the Sindh police had apprehended four accused for allegedly using honey-trap tactics to abduct people to extort money. Shannu, female member of the gang, would make friends with men via phone and then arrange meetings at specific locations.

Upon the individual's arrival at the designated spot, Shannu's associates would abduct him.

The prosecution further asserted that the abductors falsely posed as CTD personnel to blackmail their victims.

An FIR was registered under sections 342 (wrongful confinement), 384 (punishment for extortion), 385 (putting person in fear of injury in order to commit extortion), and 34 (common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) read with Section 7 (terrorism-related offenses) of the Anti-Terrorism Act at the Al-Falah police station.

The complaint was lodged by Shumail, one of the victims, who disclosed being targeted by the alleged gang. According to Shumail, the accused extracted a ransom of Rs200,000 from him after his abduction.

Subsequently, the CTD police arrested the gang as they converged at a rendezvous point to obtain an additional Rs700,000 from the victim.

Poet Naina Adil's debut novel is quite engaging, a serious achievement

'Muqaddas Gunah' can be termed a family saga, a flurry of disasters that ends on a note of hope

By M. Salim-ur-Rahman

There are writers who circumambulate their novels, looking at the characters and events from different angles and vantage points – a sort of clinical detachment which is often unconvincing.

At the other end of the spectrum are novelists who appear to be entangled with their characters, so much so that they fall in rapport with the persons and mise en scene they have created.

If the novels themselves are forceful enough, the difference hardly matters. Whether a gloved or masked approach or a symbiotic intimacy, the novels, even if ironical in intent, are always charged with direct or indirect sympathy.

Naina Adil, in her first novel 'Muqaddas Gunah' (holy sin), obviously belongs to the second category, constantly suffering and empathising with her characters. As her first foray in the field of fiction, her work is quite engaging, an achievement not to be sneezed at.

The locale is mostly Karachi, a mega metropolis riven by political, sectarian and ethnic violence: a vibrant place teetering on the brink of anarchy.

The novel can be termed a family saga, with some of its members possessing an artistic and humanitarian bent, in love with music, dance, painting and poetry, and altruistically interested in educating the young.

Here I will, in the context of the novel, dispense with Tolstoy's famous dictum about happy and unhappy families, and conclude that essentially all families are unhappy.

Each family is a network, bringing together, for better or worse, lots of persons who have little in common, and perhaps find it demeaning to see eye to eye.

The novel covers generations, though not in detail, but the complexity and interplay of familial relationships make it difficult to come up with a neat summary.

The central character is Mahvesh, also known as Dia. Her mother committed suicide when Dia was only two months old, and her father found his in-laws averse to seeing him and vice versa. So Dia is literally an orphan, naive and vulnerable. Being a gifted painter does not make her worldly-wise.

An unscrupulous cousin, Nabeel, seduces her, has sex with her, takes photos of her in disarray. The intent is to blackmail her and her family, so that they, in order to avoid a scandal, will agree to let him have Dia as his wife.

It actually comes to nothing as Nabeel is shot dead soon afterwards, an occurrence so common in Karachi that it precludes any serious investigation.

Meanwhile, Wajahat, another cousin, but one she is in love with and wishes to marry, disenchanted by the scandal and the suspicion that he might be responsible for Nabeel's murder, goes away to the US and becomes a skilled physician.

Dia is married off to a man she does not like and who simply cannot make any sense of her. Finally, Wajahat comes back, makes Dia's husband divorce her.

Dia and Wajahat get married, a short period of bliss, then another murder takes place, again it is assumed that Wajahat might be implicated in it, so to avoid any further unpleasantness, he goes back to the US.

The axis of the novel, Dia, is a highly-strung, susceptible person, a talented painter and arachnophobic. The ambiguous wasteland within her unslaked being is rife with real or imaginary spiders, which seem to her like visitations from a privatised inferno.

That she holds on to her sanity, reveals her potential for survival. The novel which seems a flurry of disasters and disparagements ends on a note of hope, or perhaps a sense of ripening optimism. Naina Adil is also a poet, and may now be noted as a novelist of considerable promise.

There are streaks of rhetoric here and there in her prose, but within a novel so full of intensity and indignation, such wordslides are perhaps inevitable.

But what about the holy sin? Will mercy or forgiveness have any meaning if there was no sin? Human history began with Adam and Eve, who disobeyed God's command and partook of the forbidden fruit. The punishment: exile from paradise and regency of the world. So be holy sinners, and seek forgiveness.

The writer is an Urdu poet, author and critic. His creative output includes books for children and translations of Western classics into Urdu.

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BUSINESS NEWS

Karachi Edition

Interest rate

Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during a news conference following a Federal Open Market Committee meeting in Washington. US inflation is "still too high" despite a recent slowdown, Powell said, leaving the door open for a new interest rate hike. The Fed chair said more rate hikes may be needed if the economy doesn't cool. The Fed's next policy meeting is set for Oct. 31-Nov. 1, and financial markets hope Fed will again refrain from increasing rates, after leaving rates steady at its September meeting, at between 5.25 percent and 5.5 percent. —AFP

■ **HAVEN ASSET**

Gold surges 10pc amid Middle East crisis, breaks away from US bonds

LONDON: Gold prices have rallied sharply since the Hamas-Israel conflict broke out, further highlighting the divergence in its long-term relationship with US Treasuries as investors flee to the haven asset.

Prices of the precious metal have surged as much as 10 percent to $1,996 per troy ounce, hitting a five-month high, after Hamas launched attacks on Israel a fortnight ago.

With the region at risk of tipping into wider conflict, investors have bought gold, which is regarded as a store of value during times of geopolitical and market uncertainty.

"It's the geopolitical risk premium that has come in for gold," said Nicky Shiels, metals strategist at MKS Pamp, a Swiss precious metals refiner and trader.

However, gold's rise has also put further stress on its typical correlation with real yields — US bond yields adjusted for inflation — that has largely held since the 2008 financial crisis. Normally, higher yields on Treasuries push the price of gold lower by making the zero-yielding metal less attractive by comparison.

That relationship has broken during the huge rise in real yields over the past year, with gold having been supported by record central bank buying, as some countries aimed to reduce their reliance on the dollar after Washington weaponised its currency in sanctions against Russia.

Analysts said that gold was also likely to have benefited from the uncertainty in the Middle East because it added to the Federal Reserve's caution on the future direction of US interest rates. On Thursday, Fed chair Jay Powell said the geopolitical tensions sparked by the Israel-Hamas war "pose important risks to global economic activity".

The violence in the Middle East has reversed gold's recent slide, as rising bond yields pushed the yellow metal to $1,820 per troy ounce.

Others argue that the speed of the bond market repricing is actually pushing investors into gold.

"The other part of the story is having yields increase so much. That has probably frightened people on the fragility of the markets," said Ryan McIntyre, managing partner at Sprott Inc, a precious metals investor with more than $25bn in assets under management.

Marcus Garvey, head of commodities strategy at Macquarie, said that gold's rally was also in part down to traders who had bet on the metal's decline being forced to exit their positions. "A key aspect is that the starting point was that the market was quite short," he said.

Global prices have also been buoyed by strong demand in China, reflected by the price in Shanghai trading at a notable premium to its equivalent in London. In September, it reached a record difference after China's central bank imposed temporary curbs on gold imports in a bid to defend the renminbi.

However, some analysts are wondering whether support for gold prices is wider than an investor rush for safe places to park their cash. "The surge in real yields this week really should have pulled the rug under gold," said Adrian Ash, director of research at BullionVault, a precious metals marketplace. "The big question at the moment is who is holding up the price…I think it's the central banks." —News Desk

■ **275-285 PER DOLLAR**

Rupee to stay in narrow range until IMF review, rate decision

By our correspondent

KARACHI: The rupee is likely to trade in a narrow range of 275-285 per dollar until at least the next tranche of the International Monetary Fund's loan programme is finalised, analysts said on Saturday.

The rupee is probably going to remain range-bound, trading at 275-285 per dollar, until at least the next tranche of the International Monetary Fund's loan program is finalized, analysts said on Saturday.

The movement of the rupee in the interbank market this week was really unusual. After seeing an uninterrupted rise since September 6, the currency abruptly had a pullback and then seemed to consolidate at the level of 278 per dollar. The rupee closed at 276.83 against the dollar on Monday, but on Wednesday it dropped to 280.29. The local currency ended the week at 278.80 to the US dollar.

Analysts at financial services platform Tresmark said in a note that the foreign exchange market breathed a sigh of relief as it saw that the Goldilocks Zone for the rupee (275–285) was still intact.

"The rupee-dollar parity bounced off the 275 level and surged to 282 on the back of imports related to the public sector; although the real reason could be to break the monotony of 'a-rupee-a-day rise'," Tresmark' said.

"The rupee closed the week at 278.80, but it looks to remain range-bound till at least the next tranche of IMF is finalized. At the same time, there will be a wobble at the time of the upcoming monetary policy on October 30th."

In the last T-bill auction, the cut-off yields decreased by 30-45 basis points (bps) on three-, six-, and 12-month paper, and a rate cut could put some pressure on the rupee.

"Looking at the fact that if inflation reverses due to 'Stronger for Longer' Rupee policy, we may see the Goldilocks Zone put to the test," it added.

"If the IMF tranche moves ahead successfully (by early next month), we may see Rupee heading towards the 270 level by mid-November and may even see interest rates clipped by 100-200 bps before the end of this year."

The IMF is expected to review the country's $3 billion ongoing loan program next month. Pakistan secured $1.2 billion from the IMF in July and is expecting an additional $700 million upon the completion of the first review and release of the second tranche by December this year.

Traders also expect a range-bound movement in the currency next week ahead of the central bank's interest rate decision.

The rupee may trade below 280 per dollar in the coming week due to the relatively stable market, according to traders.

At its next monetary policy review meeting, which is scheduled for October 30, the State Bank of Pakistan is largely expected to keep its benchmark interest rate unchanged at 22 percent due to forecasts of reduced inflation amid a decline in fuel prices and the strengthening of the local currency.

Furthermore, the latest balance of payment data shows a notable improvement. Pakistan's current account deficit (CAD) shrank to $947 million in the first quarter of this fiscal year, down 58 percent from the same period last year. The decline in the trade gap is the reason for the reduction in the current account deficit.

■ **FRAUD PROBE**

Indian Adani secures $3.5bn refinancing deal from global banks

MUMBAI: Indian tycoon Gautam Adani has secured a $3.5bn refinancing package from 10 international banks, showing his industrial conglomerate retains the backing of lenders after it was the target of fraud allegations.

Lenders including Barclays, BNP Paribas and Deutsche Bank acted as arrangers and bookrunners on the refinancing, while DBS Bank, First Abu Dhabi Bank, Mizuho Bank and MUFG Bank also underwrote the three-year loan.

The Adani Group, an empire that includes India's biggest commercial port operator and seven airports, has managed to maintain good relationships with financiers after New York-based Hindenburg Research accused it of stock market manipulation and accounting fraud in late January.

The group strongly denied the allegations but lost $150bn of market value at the lowest point of a trading rout.

"This showcases Adani's robust access to the global financial market and strong liquidity position," the group said in a statement.

Adani and its bankers have spent months working out a deal to refinance a $3.5bn short-term loan it took as part of its $10bn acquisition of Swiss building materials group Holcim's two India assets last year, which made Adani one of the country's biggest cement producers.

That international loan was crucial to Adani beating bidders that included Kumar Mangalam Birla's UltraTech Cement and Sajjan Jindal's JSW Group.

Adani's expansion into cement comes as India's government increases capital spending to improve infrastructure from transport to logistics in the world's most populous country.

After the Hindenburg attack, the Adani Group moved to pay off $2.65bn of share-backed loans, which had been affected by the fall in prices at listed Adani businesses. It has also said it is working to bring down group companies' debt-to-earnings ratios.

Ambuja and ACC — the companies Adani bought from Holcim last year — are prized cash-generating assets. The group confirmed that dividends from the companies would be paid out to Mauritius-based vehicle Endeavour Trade and Investment, the holding company, which will service the loan.

Endeavour was used to buy Holcim's shareholdings. The entity's ultimate beneficial owner was disclosed in filings last year as Gautam Adani's brother Vinod and his wife Priti, who are not part of Adani's management. However, Adani also said in filings that Endeavour "belongs to the Adani Group".

The group added another asset to its cement portfolio this year, buying Indian company Sanghi Cements in a $600mn deal.

"Adani Cements is back on their growth path through organic and inorganic initiatives," said Satyadeep Jain, an analyst who covers the cement sector at Ambit Capital, citing the Sanghi deal and capacity expansion plans.

The refinancing comes in a heated political environment, with India's main opposition party Congress promising to investigate the Adani Group if it wins office next year.

"It appears the banks are supremely confident that there will be no political upheavals," said Hemindra Hazari, an independent analyst. —News Desk

■ **SITUATIONER**

Israel-Hamas war: What risks face the energy sector?

LONDON: The escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hamas could further strain global oil and gas supplies, already disrupted by Russia´s invasion of Ukraine, experts have warned.

Increases in oil prices in response to the conflict, triggered by the bloody attack by Hamas in Israel on October 7, have so far been relatively mild.

Brent, the European benchmark, has gained around 10 percent, while its American equivalent has gained around 9 percent.

Prices are around $90 per barrel, still far from their historical highs.

"Israel is not an oil producer and no major international oil infrastructure runs close to the Gaza Strip or southern Israel," Edoardo Campanella, analyst at UniCredit, told AFP.

However, investors are conscious of the "Middle East tinder box´s inherent risk to global oil supply. Hence they have been diving into contracts compounding matters," explained Stephen Innes, analyst at SPI AM.

The prospect of Iran, a supporter of Hamas and sworn enemy of Israel, being drawn into the conflict presents one of the main risks for the energy market.

The OPEC member has seen its production and exports damaged by years of international sanctions, but has nevertheless increased its production over the last year and is suspected of smuggling barrels onto the market.

This has helped contain global prices despite rising demand and tight supply, leading the Biden administration in the US to "turn a blind eye," according to Helge AndrÃ© Martinsen, analyst at DNB.

Even if Tehran stays out of the conflict, "the West might decide to tighten sanctions on Iran or simply to enforce existing sanctions more effectively," said Campanella.

Iran could respond by blocking the Strait of Hormuz, the most important oil transit zone in the world, with a daily flow of more than 17 million barrels – 30 percent of all oil traded by sea – , according to Seb Research.

Only Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have pipelines to bypass the Strait of Hormuz when shipping crude oil outside of the Gulf, explained Campanella.

The worst-case scenario, unlikely but not impossible according to analysts, would be stronger sanctions leading Iran to retaliate by attacking oil installations in Saudi Arabia, one of the world´s main producers and exporters.

Attacks on its infrastructure in September 2019, claimed by Yemeni Houthi rebels supported by Tehran, caused Saudi to temporarily halve production, leading the price of Brent to jump by almost 20 percent in one day.

Experts recall previous oil shocks, such as the OPEC embargo against Israel´s allies in the midst of the Yom Kippur War 50 years ago, and then in the wake of the Iranian revolution in 1979.

The shocks led to crude prices jumping within a few months, bringing developed economies to their knees.

But they are less exposed this time around given the rise of the US as a producer and an OPEC that claims to be less political. On the gas side, the effects are more immediate.

The price of TTF, the European benchmark for natural gas, was up by a third in mid-October compared to before the October 7 attack.

The war "seriously threatens the regional natural gas market and could impact Europe´s LNG (liquefied natural gas) supply as winter approaches," warned Innes.

"While European gas inventories are almost full, they are not sufficiently high to get through the winter in case all imports stop," said Giovanni Staunovo, of UBS.

US giant Chevron has suspended activities at its Tamar platform, off the Israeli coast, on instructions from the country´s authorities.

This gas field represents "around 1.5 percent of global LNG supply", said Innes, mainly supplying the domestic market, then Egypt and Jordan.

If Leviathan, Israel´s largest gas field, were to close, the consequences would be much more worrying, say analysts, who recall prices surging to a historic high of 345 euros per MWh at the start of the war in Ukraine. —AFP

■ **WEEK AHEAD**

Bullish stocks seen as gas price adjustment looms

By our correspondent

Stocks are expected to continue their bullish trend in the next week, as investors anticipate a positive outcome from the government's plan to adjust gas prices and tackle the circular debt issue.

The market settled on a positive note by breaching the 50,000 points level in the outgoing week.

The KSE 100 Index gained 2.5 percent on a week-on-week basis largely on account of news that the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) meeting has been summoned on Monday to give a nod for jacking up the gas rate.

The market gained in the "ongoing result session where earnings and payout are at the higher end given the absence of super tax impact on the bottom line of the companies in the quarter, T Bill auction during the week where yields declined indicating interest rates have peaked and overall appreciation of the rupee against the dollar even though some pressure was observed in the middle of the week on account of reported international payments," said Topline Securities in its note.

Other major developments during the week were the reduction in prices of petroleum products, the LSM number which clocked in at 8.4 percent month-on-month higher during August 23, and the current account deficit for the month of September coming in at $8.0 million as compared to the current account deficit of $164 million in August 2023, the brokerage said.

Increased participation was observed by the investors during the outgoing week as the average daily traded volume and value stood at 405 million shares (up by 7.7 percent week-on-week) and Rs13 billion (up by 18 percent week-on-week) respectively.

Arif Habib Limited (AHL) said during the week the market crossed 50,000 points, a milestone that has occurred after six years. The market maintained its bullish trend on the back of the economy gaining traction, interest rates and inflation peaking out, a strong currency, and robust results posted by companies. "On the economic front, the current account deficit for September 2023 amounted to $8mn, marking a significant 98 percent year-on-year decrease."

Also, the recent data published by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) indicates an uptick in the output of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) for August 2023, showing a 2.5 percent increase on a year-on-year basis. Furthermore, cut-off yields of 3-month, 6-month, and 12-month witnessed a decline of 30bps, 45bps, and 44bps, respectively, in the auction held this week.

On top of this, the SBP forex reserves rose by $67 million reaching $7.7 billion as at October 6, 2023. The rupee closed at 278.8 against the greenback, depreciating by Rs1.18 or 0.42 percent week-on-week.

Sector-wise positive contributions came from commercial banks (290pts), fertilizer (174pts), power (159pts), cement (106pts), and E&P (98pts). The sectors which contributed negatively were food & personal care products (7pts), and textile composite (5pts).

Scrip-wise positive contributors were HUBC (124pts), ENGRO (82pts), PPL (69pts), MCB (62pts), and PSO (61pts). Whereas, scrip-wise negative contributions came from UNITY (21pts), DAWH (10pts), PTC (9pts), MTL (9pts), and RMPL (9pts).

Foreigner buying was witnessed during this week, clocking in at $2.3 million compared to a net buying of $1.4 million last week. Major buying was witnessed in commercial banks ($1.9 million) and technology & communication ($0.9 million). On the local front, selling was reported by banks/DFIs ($3.9 million) followed by mutual funds ($2.6 million). Average volumes arrived at 405 million shares (up 8 percent week-on-week) while the average value traded settled at $45 million (up by 13 percent week-on-week).

■ 20TH HEALTH ASIA

Healthcare infrastructure needs locally-produced equipment, devices

By our correspondent

KARACHI: Healthcare experts have said there was need to locally-produce medicine devices and equipment for the development of stable healthcare infrastructure and meeting the demand of local hospitals and medical units.

Speaking at a seminar "Boosting Medical Devices Development in Pakistan" at the 20th Health Asia Exhibition recently, Dr Shahid Noor, Chairman, Saman-e-Shifa Foundation said Pakistan should set up a full-fledged sector for producing medical devices following international standards to ensure affordable treatment for the masses.

The local assembly followed by manufacturing of the medicine equipment and devices will reduce the country's import bill on a sustainable basis, while on the other hand, it will develop the infrastructure of healthcare sector at a better pace to provide quality treatment to the masses.

Noor shared that local manufacturers in collaboration with universities have developed more than 20 important equipment, including ventilators, cardiac stents, and glucometers, while a number of new devices are being produced at present.

"Our mission is to not only decrease the reliance on imported medical devices, but to develop our standard at par with global standards to export made-in-Pakistan brands to different countries with pride as similar to what we feel for the locally-made football, when it is utilised in international sports events," the chairman of the foundation said.

He urged the government to waive off duties on raw material of medical devices, which would also accelerate the production of this emerging sector in Pakistan.

Dr Abdul Bari, CEO, Indus Hospital said local production of healthcare devices will drastically decrease the cost of treatment of critical health issues in the country, which always goes up due to the impact of dollar-rupee disparity.

On the other hand, he added, the supply chain of local industry will be streamlined to ultimately benefit citizens.

Affordable medical devices can be utilised in small healthcare units due to affordability, which will ultimately improve the standard of health practices in Pakistan.

Renowned doctor Prof Tipu Sultan said Pakistan has capacity, talent and most importantly the political will mainly under the support of SIFC, which will attract local and foreign investment in this sector.

He urged the stakeholders to set up research and development departments in collaboration for focusing on innovation to produce medical devices and equipment for local and international markets.

Speakers also urged the government to set up a specialised regulatory body for this sector in collaboration with industry, academia, policymakers and members of civil society, so the development happens at a fast pace.

They also urged the government for upgrading the curriculum of the universities through industry and academia linkages, which should also include internship programmes in industrial units.

Other speakers were HEC Chairman Sindh, Tariq Rafi, NED University Vice Chancellor Sarosh Lodhi, Dr Farhan Essa, Prof Dr Murtaza Najabat, etc. During the 20th Health Asia, several seminars were also held on various topics. There are nearly 150 companies participating in the trade fair, including foreign companies from China, Hungry, Iran, etc.

■ ANALYSIS

China's graphite curbs will accelerate plans around alternatives

China's move to curb exports of graphite, a key electric vehicle battery material, will only accelerate efforts to develop alternative sources and materials, but that will take time, industry executives and analysts said.

China, the world's largest graphite producer and exporter, will require export permits as of Dec. 1 for some graphite products, including spherical graphite used by automakers. It refines more than 90 percent of the world's graphite into the material used in almost all EV battery anodes, which is the negatively charged portion of a battery.

China's decision may escalate trade disputes globally and spur other countries to prioritize research into alternative sources and materials, industry executives said.

"We see China's move as a potential catalyst to highlight the urgency of improving (U.S.) graphite supply," said John DeMaio, president of Graphex Group's graphene division.

Graphex plans to open a graphite processing facility in Warren, Michigan, by the end of 2024 to supply U.S. automakers with at least 10,000 metric tons per year of the key metal.

Graphex aims to be a refiner in the West, not a miner. It has graphite supply deals with Syrah Resources and is looking for other sources, DeMaio said.

Tesla, which did not respond to a request for comment, has been a leader in securing graphite and signing deals with Syrah and Magnis Energy Technologies.

New investments in the US and Europe aim to challenge China's stranglehold on graphite with a focus on developing synthetic graphite, but industry experts have said the effort will be an uphill battle.

Synthetic graphite could account for nearly two-thirds of the EV battery anode market by 2025, Benchmark Mineral Intelligence estimates.

However, China battery materials giants such as BTR (835185.BJE) and Shanshan (SSHOLG.UL) are also investing hundreds of millions of dollars to produce more synthetic graphite.

Vianode, an Oslo-based synthetic graphite startup, is starting small scale production in Norway next year, ramping up to full scale in Europe and the U.S. by 2030 with enough material to supply roughly 2 million EVs.

Chief Operating Officer Hans Erik Vatne told Reuters recently that developing synthetic graphite production is costly, but that is the price to pay to reduce reliance on China.

"Are we as consumers willing to pay more to have that sustainable materials in our batteries?" he said in August. "That's really what we need to hope for because we need a higher price because the capex of building such a plant with this advanced technology is higher."

Silicon solution?

Another anode ingredient is silicon, which enables an EV to drive longer distances before recharging.

The maximum amount of silicon added to batteries is about 10 percent because the material expands during use and can degrade the battery. But companies are working to push that share higher.

U.S. startup GDI, for instance, is developing 100% silicon anodes for batteries. GDI CEO Rob Anstey said his company is talking to most automakers about the technology.

"China is decades ahead in graphite and it's too late to try and catch up," he told Reuters on Friday. "We must move to the next level of lithium-ion and EV performance."

"This is our time to wake up and say, okay we need to start working on the next generation of battery and of materials," he added.

The curbs by China also could lower exports and raise prices, just like they did after a similar move in August for two chip-making metals, gallium and germanium.

"This regulation is expected to increase the scarcity of graphite, which in turn raises the cost of power batteries, leading to higher production costs for EVs," Canalys analyst Alvin Liu said.

Many automakers sell EVs at a loss, so higher costs would not be welcome. With rising EV sales, automakers are racing to lock in supplies from outside China, but shortages are looming.

The main use of graphite has been in the steel industry, but EV sales are due to more than triple by 2030 to 35 million from 2022, BMO Capital Markets forecasts.

Each EV on average needs 50 kg to 100 kg (110 pounds to 220 pounds) of graphite in its battery pack for the anodes, about twice the amount of lithium.

Automakers were largely quiet on Friday, studying the decision.

"We don't expect short-term effects on our supply situation, but will watch the issue closely," BMW said in a statement. "We could react quickly and flexibly in our risk management if necessary."

Volvo Cars and Renault said it was too early to comment, but they were following the situation closely.

Mercedes declined to comment, but said in June it was diversifying raw materials sourcing, including graphite. Stellantis and Rivian declined to comment. Officials with Volkswagen, General Motors, Ford, Lucid and Fisker could not immediately be reached to comment. —News Desk

Greece's credit rating returned to investment grade

WASHINGTON: The ratings agency S&P has returned Greece's credit rating to investment grade for the first time since 2010, citing the "significant progress" it has made in tackling economic challenges.

S&P is upgrading the country's credit rating to BBB-/A-3 from BB+/B for long- and short-term local and foreign currency sovereign credit ratings, it announced in a statement Friday.

Its decision makes it the first of the three major US ratings agencies to lift Greece's credit rating from speculative to investment grade.

"Greece's public finances are improving thanks to the budgetary consolidation efforts," it said, explaining its decision.

"Since the debt crisis in 2009-2015, significant progress has been made in addressing Greece's economic and fiscal imbalances," it added.

S&P expects the government to achieve a primary surplus of "at least" 1.2 percent of GDP this year, well above target, growing to 2.3 percent of GDP over the next three years.

The general election earlier this year that returned Kyriakos Mitsotakis to power "allows the government to continue to build upon past reform efforts" to make Greece internationally competitive, S&P said.

"We expect additional structural economic and budgetary reforms, coupled with large EU funds, will support robust economic growth in 2023-2026 and underpin continued reduction in government debt," it added.

Mitsotakis cheered the decision by S&P as "an important milestone."

"Proud of the recognition of what our country has achieved. We are determined to continue our reform agenda, a path that is attracting investment, creating jobs and achieving inclusive growth," he said in a post on X, formerly Twitter. —AFP

POMONA: Employees hoist a solar panel as they install no-cost solar panels on the rooftop of a low-income household in California. GRID Alternatives, a non-profit has installed no-cost solar for over 29,000 low-income households located in underserved communities which are most impacted by pollution, underemployment and climate change. —AFP

■ COMMENT

Spinning a yarn

By Mansoor Ahmad

LAHORE: Spinners are demanding various concessions claiming that the increase in power and energy tariffs have made them non-competitive, yet the 33.5 percent increase in yarn exports in the first quarter of this fiscal speaks otherwise.

This is the period when power and energy rates were jacked up. Pakistan exported 114,818 metric tonnes of cotton yarn worth $315.40 million during the July-Sept 2023 quarter compared with exports of 73,209 metric tonnes of yarn worth $236.26 million.

Energy and power is a major input for the spinning sector. During the month of September, yarn exports increased by 49.8 percent to 41,563 metric tonnes compared with the yarn exports of 22,545 tonnes achieved during September 2022.

Yarn exports in fact were the highest among all manufactured textile items during the first quarter of this fiscal. Textile exports declined to $4.12 billion in Q1 from $4.58 billion achieved during the corresponding period of last fiscal. This depicts a decline of 9.95 percent.

In September, the textile and clothing exports declined by 10.88 percent to $1.36 billion from $1.52 billion in the same month last year. Caretaker Commerce Minister Gohar Ejaz last month announced to offer regionally competitive energy prices to textile exporters and resolve their cash flow issues by releasing pending sales tax refunds. Nothing has been done in this regard.

The most disturbing aspect of decline in exports is the decline in value-added exports.

The fact that there was an increase in volumes of both Knitwear and readymade garments showed that our exporters did get higher orders, but were forced to lower the rates due to global recession.

With the global situation improving the value-added sector might recover per unit value.

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data showed the exports of readymade garments shrank 11.21 percent in value in July-September, but grew by 8.24 percent in quantity; while knitwear dipped 15.83 percent in value, but grew 34.14 percent in quantity; and similarly, bedwear posted a negative growth of 10.02 percent in value, growing 1.39 percent in quantity.

The exports of textile and clothing contracted by 14.63 percent to $16.50 billion in FY23. However, the total merchandise exports dipped 12.71 percent to $27.54 billion from $31.78 billion in the preceding year.

Towel exports slightly increased by 2.89 percent in value and 16.24 percent in quantity, whereas those of cotton cloth dipped by 18.15 percent in value and 7.50 percent in quantity.

Textile millers are demanding regionally competitive power and gas tariff, as well as return to zero-rating regime to compete globally.

The increase in exports in volume of cotton yarn, cotton cloth, knitwear and readymade garments depicts that that export volume has increased meaning that the exporters obtained higher orders, but the value in dollars declined in line with the rates quoted by our competitors.

Another depressing news was the decline in the import of textile machinery by 75.38 percent in July-September. Pakistan lags behind its competing economies in technology and quality of textile machinery.

But it looks like expansion or modernisation projects are not the priority of our textile players. Most of the spinning industry is operating on outdated spindles that consume more power and more man power.

■ ECONOMY

US budget gap soars to $1.7 trillion, largest outside Covid era

WASHINGTON: The U.S. government posted a $1.695 trillion budget deficit in fiscal 2023, a 23 percent jump from the prior year as revenues fell and outlays for Social Security, Medicare and record-high interest costs on the federal debt rose.

The Treasury Department said the deficit was the largest since a Covid-fueled $2.78 trillion gap in 2021.

It marks a major return to ballooning deficits after back-to-back declines during President Joe Biden's first two years in office.

The deficit comes as Biden is asking Congress for $100 billion in new foreign aid and security spending, including $60 billion for Ukraine and $14 billion for Israel, along with funding for U.S. border security and the Indo-Pacific region.

The big deficit, which exceeded all pre-Covid deficits, including those brought about by Republican tax cuts passed under Donald Trump and from the financial crisis years, is likely to enflame Biden's fiscal battles with Republicans in the House of Representatives, whose demands for spending cuts pushed the U.S. to the brink of default in early June over the debt ceiling.

A deal to avoid a government shutdown over deeper spending cut demands from Republican hardliners led to the ouster of U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy, and the party is still divided over who should lead them, which is expected to make negotiations ahead of a new fiscal deadline in mid-November more difficult.

For September, the final month of the fiscal year, the deficit fell to $171 billion from $430 billion in September 2022.

"Falling revenues are a significant contributor to the 2023 deficit, underscoring the importance of President Biden's enacted and proposed policies to reform the tax system," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Office of Management and Budget Director Shalanda Young said in a joint statement.

The fiscal 2023 deficit would have been $321 billion larger, but was reduced by this amount because the Supreme Court struck down Biden's student loan forgiveness program as unconstitutional. The ruling forced the Treasury to reverse a pre-emptive charge against fiscal 2022 budget results that increased that year's deficit.

The fiscal year 2022 deficit was $1.375 trillion.

Taking into account the two one-off adjustments, last fiscal year's deficit would have been closer to $1 trillion and this year's closer to $2 trillion, a Treasury official said.

Record interest costs

The 2023 deficit marks an abrupt end to two years of falling deficits for Biden as COVID-19 spending faded. The U.S. deficit peaked in fiscal 2020 at $3.13 trillion as the sharpest downturn since the 1930s severely constrained tax revenues while spending on unemployment benefits, direct payments to consumers and aid to businesses peaked.

But the Congressional Budget Office has warned that based on current tax and spending legislation, U.S. deficits will approach Covid-era levels by the end of the decade, reaching some $2.13 trillion in 2030 as interest, health and pension costs mount.

For the 2023 fiscal year, total revenues fell $457 billion, or 9 percent from fiscal 2022, to $4.439 trillion, largely due to a drop in non-withheld individual income tax payments amid a worse performance in stocks and other financial assets as interest rates rose.

Other revenue declines included a $106 billion drop in Federal Reserve earnings as interest paid on bank reserves ate up any portfolio income.

Fiscal 2023 outlays fell $137 billion, or 2 percent from the prior year to $6.134 trillion. Outlays would have been more modest were it not for large increases in spending on retirement and healthcare benefits for the elderly and in debt service costs.

Social Security spending rose 10 percent to $1.416 trillion due to cost of living adjustments for inflation, and spending for the Medicare senior healthcare program rose 4 percent to $1.022 trillion.

Interest costs on the more than $33 trillion in federal debt also rose sharply, up 23 percent to $879 billion, a record.

Net interest payments, excluding intragovernmental transfers to trust funds, rose 39 percent to $659 billion, also a record, according to a Treasury official.

Gross interest payments amounted to 3.28 percent as a share of gross domestic product, the highest since 2001, and the net share at 2.45 percent was the highest since 1998, the official said.

Interest rates have soared over the last year and a half as the Federal Reserve jacked up borrowing costs to slow inflation.

The average interest cost on the Treasury's outstanding debt was 2.97 percent last fiscal year, up from 2.07 percent the year before. —News Desk

INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

Sunday

October 22, 2023

SPORTS NEWS

ICC MEN'S CRICKET WORLD CUP INDIA 2023

Karachi Edition

Ton-up Klaasen stars as SA hammer England

MUMBAI: Heinrich Klaasen made a brilliant World Cup century as South Africa thrashed England by a mammoth 229 runs in Mumbai on Saturday to leave the champions´ title defence hanging by a thread as they suffered a record defeat in a One-day International.

Klaasen made 109, despite being repeatedly troubled by cramp, as South Africa, sent into bat, posted a colossal 399-7 -- the highest total conceded by England at this level.

England then collapsed to 68-6 and were 170-9, with 28 overs left, when the match ended, with last man Reece Topley unable to bat following a potentially tournament-ending hand injury suffered while bowling.

This crushing loss was England´s heaviest ODI defeat following a 221-run reverse against Australia at Melbourne in 2002.

Klaasen received brilliant support from Marco Jansen in a sixth-wicket stand of 151 in just 77 balls.

Jansen finished on 75 not out -- his maiden ODI fifty -- having struck three fours and six sixes.

He then followed up with two early wickets in his more familiar role of left-arm quick.

"That hundred is up there with my best ever," said player-of-the-match Klaasen at the presentation ceremony.

"The conditions were brutal. It´s proper heat and saps the energy out of you."

Not even Ben Stokes, playing his first game of the tournament, could rescue England this time, with the talisman caught and bowled by Kagiso Rabada for just five.

England´s third defeat in four games, including a shock loss to Afghanistan last time out, left them with a mountain to climb to reach the semi-finals, with skipper Jos Buttler admitting: "It leaves us with no room for error."

"We probably have to win every other game we play from here on, and that´s the situation we're in."

Earlier, the big-hitting Klaasen struck a six and a four off successive deliveries from fast bowler Mark Wood to complete a 61-ball hundred.

He was eventually out when bowled by Gus Atkinson in the last over, having struck 12 fours and four sixes in total.

A resounding victory was just what South Africa needed after their stunning loss to the Netherlands, a non-Test nation.

"The defeat to the Netherlands was a tough loss but one defeat does not make a bad team," said Klaasen. "This was a fantastic performance."

The Proteas ran riot as they scored 143 off the last 10 overs after losing the toss.

Topley took three wickets but conceded 88 runs in 8.5 overs, with express quick Wood going for 76 in a wicketless seven overs.

"We came here with high hopes, we wanted to play our best cricket but we were well short of that and were really well beaten in the end," said Buttler

Reeza Hendricks, who only received a late call-up after Proteas captain Temba Bavuma was ruled out through illness, made 85 and shared a stand of 121 with Rassie van der Dussen (60) after fellow opener Quinton de Kock fell to the second ball. —AFP

SCORE BOARD

England won the toss

South Africa innings

De Kock c Buttler b Topley	4
Hendricks b Rashid	85
Dussen c Bairstow b Rashid	60
Markram c Bairstow b Topley	42
Klaasen b Atkinson	109
Miller c Stokes b Topley	5
Jansen not out	75
Coetzee b Atkinson	3
Maharaj not out	1

Extras: (b 2, lb 3, nb 1, w 9) 15
Total: (7 wickets, 50 overs) 399
Did not bat: Rabada, Ngidi
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-125, 3-164, 4-233 , 5-243, 6-394, 7-398
Bowling: Topley 8.5-0-88-2, Willey 9-1-61-0, Root 6.1-0-48-0, Atkinson 9-0-60-2, Wood 7-0-76-0, Rashid 10-0-61-2

England innings

Bairstow c Dussen b Ngidi	10
Malan c de Kock b Jansen	6
Root c Miller b Jansen	2
Stokes c & b Rabada	5
Brook lbw b Coetzee	17
Buttler c de Kock b Coetzee	15
Willey c Rabada b Ngidi	12
Rashid c Hendricks b Coetzee	10
Atkinson b Maharaj	35
Wood not out	43
Reece Topley absent hurt -	

Extras: (lb 9, nb 1, w 5) 15
Total: (9 wickets, 22 overs)170
Fall of wickets: 1-18, 2-23, 3-24, 4-38, 5-67, 6-68, 7-84, 8-100, 9-170
Bowling: Ngidi 5-1-26-2, Jansen 5-0-35-2, Rabada 6-1-38-1, Coetzee 4-0-35-3, Maharaj 2-0-27-2
Result: South Africa won by 229 runs
Player of the match: Klaasen
Umpires: Dahrmasena, Menon

MUMBAI: South Africa's Marco Jansen watches the ball after playing a shot in their ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 match against England at the Wankhede Stadium here on Saturday — AFP wirephoto

Pakistan 'put arms around' Usama after catch blunder: Morkel

BENGALURU: Pakistan bowling coach Morne Morkel on Saturday said the whole team will "put their arms around" Usama Mir after his dropped catch opened the doors for Australia to clinch a crucial World Cup victory.

Leg-spinner Mir, playing in his first match of the tournament, spilled an easy-looking catch which would have seen the back of David Warner in the fifth over of Friday's game bowled by Shaheen Shah Afridi.

At the time Warner was on just 10 – he went onto make 163, hitting nine sixes and 14 boundaries to propel Australia to an imposing 367-9.

Warner and Mitchell Marsh (121) put on 259 for the opening wicket.

Pakistan lost their way with a middle-order collapse and were bowled out for 305 in 45.3 overs to lose by 62 runs.

"Luckily the team atmosphere is very strong and everybody in that dressing room will put their arms around Usama and support him," said former South Africa fast bowler Morkel.

"It was a dropped catch. Anybody can drop catches on any day, it´s part of the game."

Mir, 27, was playing in only his ninth One-day International in Bengaluru on Friday after replacing fellow leg-spinner Shadab Khan.

"This is a big opportunity for Mir to learn and I am sure that he will overcome this," added Morkel.

"It is for us to support him in tough times. The character he has shown as a player is strong and I am sure he will get through it."

Morkel, who played 86 Tests, 117 ODIs and 44 T20Is in a distinguished South Africa career, admitted that the pressures of a World Cup can weigh on all players.

"This is a big stage and the margins are very small and at times it´s brutal," said Morkel.

"As a youngster and as a quality player, playing the World Cup in India is a great experience for all."

Morkel praised Shaheen after the Pakistan strike bowler overcame the disappointment of seeing Warner dropped to go on and claim 5-54. —AFP

We couldn't finish well: Shafique

By Abdul Mohi Shah

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan opener Abdullah Shafique has blamed poor finishing as the reason for the defeat against Australia in the World Cup match, admitting that Australia on the given day played better cricket.

In a post-match media talk, Abdullah said they were going well to chase down a big Australian total but were unable to do that due to poor finishing. "Comparatively we bowled and batted better against Australia than we did against India. But here we could not finish well which turned out to be the reason for our defeat. Our bowlers did well to restrict Australia to a reachable total on a wicket that offered no assistance to bowlers. Our batsmen did well to keep us in the hunt and we brought down the run-rate to a getable target, yet poor finishing cost us the match."

He praised Australia for playing better cricket on the given day. "Australia played and were able to tick all the boxes. We could not finish the game which we should have following good start we managed up front."

Together with Imam-ul-Haq (70) Abdullah put up 134 runs for the opening wicket from just 21.1 overs to set the tone for the big chase.

"In batting, we could not manage last overs well. That turned out to be the reason for losing the match at the end."

He said there was a lot to play for. "Everyone is keen to make the best of remaining matches. We will work hard and make efforts to overcome our weaknesses," he said.

On crucial drop catches including the one by Usama Mir of David Warner, he said it was a sheer bad luck. "Sometimes it happens."

When asked about his powerful sixes, especially against Haris Rauf, Warner said he knew his bowling well. "I also trained hard for such strikes and knew well how Haris bowls."

On his dropped catch, he said he didn't even see Usama dropping him as Micheal Marsh was covering him. "I am especially happy for Marsh for getting a hundred on his birthday. "Once we put up a solid start, bowlers found it difficult to contain us. Though they did well in the end to restrict us to a reachable total."

Akhtar slams Babar, warns Pakistan ahead of Afghanistan clash

By our correspondent

LAHORE: Former Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar has expressed his dissatisfaction with Pakistan's performance in the ICC Cricket World Cup and directed criticism towards the team's captain Babar Azam.

Akhtar warned Pakistan ahead of their clash against Afghanistan that they need to be cautious in their approach if they want to avoid further embarrassment.

Akhtar questioned the decision to win the toss and elect to bowl, emphasising the importance of setting a substantial target when batting first. He lamented Babar Azam's inconsistent form throughout the tournament particularly in crucial matches against top-tier teams. Akhtar stressed that great players need to deliver great innings in significant games to establish their reputation.

In Pakistan's match against Australia, dropped catches, especially the crucial chance to dismiss David Warner, proved to be pivotal in their defeat.

He expressed disappointment with certain team selections and strategies, including the introduction of Iftikhar Ahmed as the first-change bowler and Usama Mir's dropped catch.

He urged Pakistan to put up an improved batting performance and to play with determination in the face of challenging conditions, emphasizing that Afghanistan is a formidable team and shouldn't be taken lightly.

Latham hails 'fantastic' India ahead of marquee WC clash

DHARAMSALA: New Zealand skipper Tom Latham on Saturday said hosts India have been playing "fantastic cricket" and the Kiwis will need to adapt quickly to win the battle of World Cup table-toppers.

Both teams come into the contest unbeaten in their four matches and now meet in the Himalayan hill town of Dharamsala to get ahead of each other in the race to the semi-finals.

New Zealand have an edge over India in World Cup match-ups with a 5-3 advantage and knocked out the much-fancied team in the semi-finals of the last edition in 2019.

"I´m not sure to be honest," Latham, who is leading the side in the absence of the injured Kane Williamson, said on his team´s good record against India at the 50-over showpiece.

"They're a fantastic team. They've been playing some great cricket for a long period of time. We've had some great contests in ICC events, but also in bilateral series, whether that be home or away."

New Zealand reached the final of the last two World Cups but lost to Australia in 2015 and then England four years ago.

"Being adaptable is probably one of the most important things for us as a group and trying to do that as quick as possible," Latham told reporters.

"Obviously with this format you play everyone once which is unique to 2015 where it was pool play."

Latham, a wicketkeeper-batsman, added: "So yeah, again we're in India, we're offered different conditions that we're used to. So, adaptability, sticking to our plan as best you can."

New Zealand´s previous two matches have been in hot and humid Chennai but the action now shifts to the winter capital of the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh.

Points Table

Teams	M	W	L	T	N/R	PT	NRR
New Zealand	4	4	0	0	0	8	1.923
India	4	4	0	0	0	8	1.659
South Africa	4	3	1	0	0	6	2.212
Australia	4	2	2	0	0	4	-0.193
Pakistan	4	2	2	0	0	4	-0.456
Bangladesh	4	1	3	0	0	2	-0.784
Netherlands	4	1	3	0	0	2	-1.048
Sri Lanka	4	1	3	0	0	2	-1.048
England	4	1	3	0	0	2	-1.248
Afghanistan	4	1	3	0	0	2	-1.250

TODAY'S FIXTURE

India vs New Zealand

1:30 pm PST

India 'favourites' to win World Cup, says Taylor

India at home are a "different beast" and remain favourites to win the ongoing World Cup, former New Zealand skipper Ross Taylor said on Saturday.

"India in their home conditions are a different beast and they have started unsurprisingly strongly - I see them as favourites to win the competition at this stage, no matter what happens in Dharamsala tomorrow," Taylor said in an International Cricket Council (ICC) column.

But Taylor, an aggressive batsman who retired last year after being part of two World Cups finals in 2015 and 2019, said a packed home crowd will bring the best out of New Zealand.

"The crowd will naturally play a part but I think New Zealand will thrive in that atmosphere," said Taylor.

"Every time you come here, you play in front of full crowds and you know you'll be up against it." New Zealand come into the game with a 5-3 record against India at the 50-over showpiece and came out on top in the 2019 semi-final at Manchester.

Taylor hopes for a similar result on Sunday, saying, "top of the table at the half-way stage would be a great place to be". —AFP

Sri Lanka bring Dutch crashing back to reality at World Cup

LUCKNOW: Sadeera Samarawickrama hit an undefeated 91 as Sri Lanka brought the Netherlands crashing back down to World Cup reality on Saturday with a five-wicket victory which gave the 1996 champions their first win of the tournament.

The Dutch had stunned South Africa by 38 runs up in the chilly and wet Himalayas on Tuesday, but struggled to contain Sri Lanka in the heat of Lucknow.

Chasing 263 to win, Samarawickrama hit seven boundaries in a patient 107-ball stay at the crease with Pathum Nissanka making 54 as Sri Lanka reached their target with 10 balls to spare.

After defeats to South Africa, Pakistan and Australia, the Sri Lankans have their first points on the board in the 10-nation World Cup.

The Netherlands also have one win and three losses from their four games.

"I'm really happy to finish the game. We needed a win," said Samarawickrama.

"When I went in to bat, the wicket was not easy. The ball was spinning, and the fast bowlers were bowling on a good line and length. The plan was to bat deep."

Opener Nissanka´s half-century came from 52 balls with nine fours as the 25-year-old registered his third successive fifty at this World Cup after 51 against Pakistan and 61 in the game with Australia.

The Dutch sensed a chance of another shock when Sri Lanka were 104-3 but Samarawickrama, who made a fine 108 against Pakistan, steadied the ship in a man of the match performance.

The 25-year-old had reached his 50 off 53 balls with four boundaries, putting on 77 in a key fourth wicket stand with Charith Asalanka (44).

Spinner Aryan Dutt was the pick of the Dutch bowlers with 3-44.

Earlier, Sybrand Engelbrecht and Logan van Beek hit maiden one-day international fifties as the Netherlands recovered from a poor start to post 262.

The 35-year-old Engelbrecht reached his milestone off 65 balls with three fours and one six.

Van Beek went to his fifty from 68 balls.

South African-born Engelbrecht and New Zealand native Van Beek helped the Dutch recover from 91-6, putting on a seventh-wicket partnership of 130.

It was a World Cup record for the seventh wicket bettering the 126 between Kapil Dev and Syed Kirmani against Zimbabwe in 1983.

The partnership ended when left-arm seamer Dilshan Madushanka clean-bowled Englebrecht for 70 with the score on 221. Van Beek was eventually dismissed for 59 when he became recalled fast bowler Kasun Rajitha´s fourth victim. —AFP

LUCKNOW: Sri Lanka's Dhananjaya de Silva (right) is clean bowled by Netherlands' Colin Ackermann during the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 match at the Ekana Cricket Stadium here on Saturday — AFP wirephoto

SCORE BOARD

Netherlands won the toss

Netherlands Innings

Singh lbw b Rajitha	4
O'Dowd b Rajitha	16
Ackermann c Mendis b Rajitha	29
Leede c Perera b Madushanka	6
Nidamanuru lbw b Madushanka	9
Edwards b Theekshana	16
Engelbrecht b Madushanka	70
van Beek c Asalanka b Rajitha	59
Der Merwe Mendis b Madushanka	7
Dutt not out	9
Meekeren run out Madushanka	4

Extras: (lb1, nb1, w26, pen5) 33
Total: (all out; 49.4 overs) .. 262
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-48, 3-54, 4-68, 5-71, 6-91, 7-221, 8-244, 9-252, 10-262
Bowling: Madushanka 9.4-1-49-4, Rajitha 9-0-50-4, Karunaratne 9-1-58-0, Theekshana 10-0-44-1, Hemantha 8-0-42-0, De Silva 4-0-13-0

Sri Lanka Innings

Nissanka c Edwards b Meekeren	54
Perera c de Leede b Dutt	5
Mendis c van Meekeren b Dutt	11
Samarawickrama not out	91
Charith Asalanka b Dutt	44
Silva b Ackermann	30
Dushan Hemantha not out	4

Extras: (b13, w11) 24
Total (5 wkts; 48.2 overs) ... 263
Did not bat: Chamika Karunaratne, Maheesh Theekshana, Kasun Rajitha, Dilshan Madushanka
Fall of wickets: 1-18 (Perera), 2-52 (Mendis), 3-104 (Nissanka), 4-181 (Asalanka), 5-257 (De Silva)
Bowling: Dutt 10-0-44-3 (2w), Van Beek 10-0-57-0, Van Meekeren 8-1-39-1 (2w), De Leede 3-0-29-0 (2w), Van der Merwe 9-0-42-0 (1w), Ackermann 8.2-0-39-1
Result: Sri Lanka won by 5 wickets
Player of the match: Sadeera
Umpires: Raza, Erasmusa

Karachi Whites face Faisalabad in Quaid Trophy final from today

By our correspondent

LAHORE: In what promises to be an exciting encounter Faheem Ashraf-led Faisalabad and Sarfraz Ahmed-led Karachi Whites are set to face off in the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy final at the Gaddafi Stadium here from Sunday.

In the previous edition of the trophy, which was played before the reinstitution of the 2014 PCB constitution Northern emerged as the champions. Led by Umar Amin, Northern defeated Sindh in the final at Gaddafi Stadium by an innings and 55 runs.

In the newly reinstated structure eight regional teams participated in the round-robin stage of the tournament. These teams included Lahore Whites, Lahore Blues, Rawalpindi, FATA, Peshawar, Multan, Karachi Whites and Faisalabad. Faisalabad topped the table with 108 points and three wins securing their place in the final. Karachi Whites finished second with 100 points and two wins.

Faheem has represented Pakistan in 16 Tests and has 73 first-class appearances. Sarfraz, the former Pakistan Test captain, has played 53 Tests and 179 first-class games.

Karachi Whites, with standout performances from Sarfraz Ahmed and Asad Shafiq, enter the final with confidence. Sarfraz has accumulated 579 runs in six matches, including three half-centuries and two centuries.

Both Faheem and Sarfraz expressed their excitement about being close to clinching the country's premier first-class trophy. Faheem Ashraf said, "The entire team is focused on winning the final.

Being on top of the table has given us confidence and momentum which we will use to our advantage."

Sarfraz Ahmed added, "We have played some good cricket throughout the tournament and have taken it one game at a time. We are focused on securing the title, so we will continue to play according to what has worked for us in the tournament so far."

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Egyptian striker Mohamed Salah scores his team's opening goal from the penalty spot during the English Premier League match against Everton at Anfield here on Saturday — AFP wirephoto

Man City return to PL summit after Liverpool win derby

LONDON: Manchester City beat Brighton 2-1 on Saturday to return to the Premier League summit and end Liverpool's brief stay at the top after their victory in the Merseyside derby.

Mohamed Salah scored twice as Jurgen Klopp's men beat 10-man Everton 2-0 in the early kick-off at Anfield, extending their dominance over their struggling neighbours.

But champions City put their recent wobble behind them as they saw off high-flying Brighton thanks to goals from Julian Alvarez and Erling Haaland.

Arsenal can become the fourth team to top the table on Saturday if they beat Chelsea in the early evening kick-off.

Liverpool had fortune on their side at home.

Everton's Ashley Young was sent off before half-time for two bookable offences, while Ibrahima Konate escaped a second booking in the second half with the game still goalless.

Liverpool struggled to make their man advantage count, but finally achieved the breakthrough 15 minutes from time when Salah smashed home from the penalty spot after Michael Keane handled.

Salah was then teed up by Darwin Nunez to make the points safe deep into stoppage time.

Everton manager Sean Dyche was angry about the decision not to send Konate off.

"I have no clue how he didn't feel it was a bookable offence," he said.

"I like to think there are a lot of fair-minded people here today who are stunned that wasn't a second yellow card."

Even Klopp said he could understand Everton's frustration at a lack of consistency from referee Craig Pawson.

But the three points mean the Reds have lost just one of their last 29 Merseyside derbies and remain unbeaten at Anfield in front of a crowd against Everton since 1990.

City, who had lost their previous two league games, dominated the first half of their match at the Etihad against Brighton, taking the lead through Alvarez in the seventh minute.

Jeremy Doku was the creator as he reached the byline and pulled back for Alvarez to tuck home his seventh of the season from 12 yards.

Haaland ended his brief goal drought by doubling City's lead 12 minutes later, driving home a fierce left-footed shot from just outside the area. —AFP

Will Constantine return to take charge of national football team?

By Alam Zeb Safi

MARDAN: English coach Stephen Constantine has gone home after guiding Pakistan to second round in the 2026 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers.

The second round will begin from November 16 with Pakistan taking on Saudi Arabia in their away leg.

This is the first time in Pakistan football history that the nation qualified for the second round.

The question is whether Stephen will return to take charge of the national team?

Sources in the Normalisation Committee told The News that he is a quality coach and every effort is being to bring him back for the second round. Besides Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Tajikistan are the other nations which will be playing against each other on home and away basis in Group G from which top two sides will make it to the third round.

"Stephen has gone back home. He told us that he has done his job and he is now going back," a source told The News.

Stephen, a former India coach, received huge appreciation after he enabled Pakistan to beat Cambodia 1-0 in Islamabad, following a goalless draw in their away leg at Cambodia. He hardly trained his charges for five days at home and two days at Cambodia before he handled the side at a major stage.

Before going to Cambodia he told reporters that they will see Pakistan a different team against Cambodia and he proved that. He left an impression. The way he handled the unit made the difference.

He was very critical of the facilities which Pakistan have and indeed he was very furious.

He told reporters that there should be at least the basic facilities like a proper pitch. And he is justified.

Stephen, according to sources, was also furious over the way the PFF staff behaved in front of him. A source said that Stephen said that NC has hired unprofessional staff.

However a source said that Stephen is a valuable coach and NC will make it every effort to bring him back for the second round which will be tough for Pakistan.

Sources said that he is a man of principles and very tough one and nobody could face him.

This correspondent has learnt that an NC member told Stephen that he should write down on a paper the facilities which he needs for training of his charges for the second round and NC will try to manage those facilities.

An NC member confirmed that top effort is being made to re-hire his services for the second round.

"His initial contract was too short, just for a few days as he had only to handle the unit in the first round against Cambodia. Now as he guided us to the second round we direly need his services for the second round as well," an NC source told this correspondent.

This correspondent has learnt that NC spent around Rs10 million on three foreign coaches including Stephen who worked for hardly two weeks.

England-based Shadab Iftikhar and Brazilian goalkeeping coach Rogerio Ramos were the others who were part of the coaching staff of the side handled by Stephen.

As per schedule of the second round Pakistan will meet Saudi Arabia in their away leg on November 16. On November 21 Pakistan will host Tajikistan at the Jinnah Stadium Islamabad which has already been approved by FIFA as an international venue.

On March 21 Pakistan will host Jordan and on March 26 Jordan will host Pakistan. On June 6 Pakistan will host Saudi Arabia while on June 11 Tajikistan will host Pakistan.

England World Cup winner Bobby Charlton dies aged 86

LONDON: England World Cup winner and Manchester United great Bobby Charlton, described by the club as a "giant of the game", has died at the age of 86, it was announced on Saturday.

Charlton was a key member of England's victorious 1966 World Cup team and also enjoyed great success at club level with United, who became the first English club to win the European Cup in 1968, a decade after members of the team were killed in an air crash in Munich.

"It is with great sadness that we share the news that Sir Bobby passed peacefully in the early hours of Saturday morning. He was surrounded by his family," said a statement on behalf of the Charlton family.

"His family would like to pass on their thanks to everyone who has contributed to his care and for the many people who have loved and supported him."

In 2020, it was announced Charlton had been diagnosed with dementia and as the disease took hold he stopped attending matches at Old Trafford.

United posted a picture of Charlton on X, formerly known as Twitter, with the caption: "Words will never be enough."

Charlton's European Cup success at United came 10 years after the 1958 Munich air disaster, which he and team manager Matt Busby survived but which claimed the lives of eight of Charlton's team-mates.

The midfielder played in the World Cup final alongside his brother Jack, who died aged 85 in 2020, and won 106 caps for England, scoring 49 goals.

He made his debut for United in 1956 and went on to play 758 matches for the Red Devils, scoring 249 goals. Both were long-standing club records until they were overtaken by Ryan Giggs and Wayne Rooney respectively.

Charlton won three league three titles and one FA Cup at Old Trafford and, after leaving United in 1973 and becoming Preston manager, he returned to Old Trafford 11 years later as a club director. He was knighted for services to football in 1994.

"Manchester United are in mourning following the passing of Sir Bobby Charlton, one of the greatest and most beloved players in the history of our club," the Premier League club said in a statement.

"Sir Bobby was a hero to millions, not just in Manchester, or the United Kingdom, but wherever football is played around the world.

"He was admired as much for his sportsmanship and integrity as he was for his outstanding qualities as a footballer. Sir Bobby will always be remembered as a giant of the game."

FIFA president Gianni Infantino said Charlton's influence on football had been long-lasting.

"We mourn the loss of one of England's 1966 FIFA World Cup winning team and a football legend, whose impact on the game spanned generations," Infantino said. —AFP

Islamabad clinch National Deaf Cricket title

By our correspondent

LAHORE: Islamabad clinched the National Deaf Cricket Championship title by defeating Peshawar by six wickets in the final here at the Lahore Gymkhana ground on Saturday.

Peshawar after winning the toss and opted to bat first. They managed to post a competitive total of 130 runs for the loss of 7 wickets within the allotted twenty overs.

Manzoor Khan played a crucial role, scoring 31 runs, while Hasan Zeib contributed 25 runs, and Ehtishamul Haq added 21 runs to the tally. Islamabad's bowlers rose to the occasion, with Asad Jat taking 2 wickets and Muhammad Jawad, Danish Munir, and Usman Ahmed claiming one wicket each.

However, Islamabad's response was nothing short of spectacular. They played with determination and reached the target losing only four wickets.

PAJU: South Korea's Kim A-lim reacts after a putt on the 7th hole during the third round of the BMW Ladies Championship golf tournament at Seowon Hills Country Club here on Saturday — AFP wirephoto

Dravid wary of World Cup becoming batsman's paradise

DHARAMSALA: India's head coach Rahul Dravid on Saturday warned of the World Cup becoming such a batting paradise that teams might as well "play two T20 matches" instead.

Hosts India take on fellow unbeaten New Zealand in a battle of the table toppers on Sunday in the Himalayan hill town of Dharamsala.

The 50-over showpiece has witnessed huge scores with South Africa posting a highest-ever World Cup total of 428 on the third day of the tournament.

The 350-plus mark has also been breached on three further occasions.

But India's wins over Australia and Pakistan in Chennai and Ahmedabad came in low-scoring matches and the International Cricket Council rated the two pitches as "average" while the rest as "good" and "very good".

"Sometimes wickets will turn a bit, sometimes they will seam a bit, they will swing a bit, they will bounce a bit," Dravid told reporters, adding that he disagrees with wickets being classed as "good" purely because big scores are being made.

The batting great added: "So, in a tournament, I just want to see variety, no? But the first few games, when it spins a little bit or something happens, it brings the bowlers into the game, you start rating them as average!

"Where does it leave the bowlers? Why are they coming then? If all we want to see is fours - like I said - we have T20, play two T20 matches."

Low spectator turnout in matches not involving India has raised concerns over the 50-over format losing its significance compared to the faster T20 version.

Turning to Sunday's key clash Dravid said India will have to bring their best to the table to get past a very good New Zealand team.

"A lot of their players have played in the IPL (Indian Premier League), so they're very used to these conditions," said Dravid.

"If you look at their squad, we were going through their squad and obviously doing our strategy meetings, and they do have a lot of experience and depth as well. They are well balanced."

Dravid added: "So, yes, of course, a very good team and playing good cricket as well. So, we know we will have to be at our absolute best...but we are very confident."

New Zealand knocked out India in the semi-finals of the 2019 World Cup at Manchester. That improved their head-to-head record at the tournament to 5-3. —AFP

Engelbrecht's winding road from 'catch of the century' to World Cup

LUCKNOW: Sybrand Engelbrecht has taken a long, winding road to the World Cup, from a "catch of the century" contender as a junior to walking away from cricket altogether.

However, at the age of 35, the Johannesburg-born all-rounder made his mark on Saturday with a fine innings of 70 to lift his adopted country, the Netherlands to a respectable total of 262 against Sri Lanka.

"I started playing again predominantly just to kind of make friends and integrate into the community," said Engelbrecht on Saturday. It was only in July this year that Engelbrecht even became eligible to play international cricket for the Dutch.

He missed the World Cup qualifying tournament in Zimbabwe and only made his debut against New Zealand in Hyderabad in the Netherlands' second game in India. —AFP

Drivers shocked by 'obscene' prospect of one-million euros fines

AUSTIN: Formula One's top drivers have expressed their shock at the possibility they could face fines of up to one million euros ($1.06 million) for breaches of the 'sporting code' after ruling body the International Motoring Federation (FIA) quadrupled the limit.

Britain's George Russell branded the initiative "obscene" and unrealistic, saying most drivers could not afford such heavy fines, confirming that the drivers will meet on Friday ahead of this weekend's United States Grand Prix.

"Maybe one of the drivers who has been paid a lot would be happy to pay that much, but it seems to be pretty obscene," said Mercedes driver Russell, 25, having revealed that he lost money in the early years of his F1 career.

Russell and his colleagues reacted late Thursday to a decision taken by the FIA to quadruple the limit for fines, for breaches of their Sporting Code, following a meeting of the World Motor Sports Council in Geneva earlier.

The limit had been unchanged for 12 years and the announcement came as a shock to most drivers.

Russell, a director of the Grand Prix Drivers' Association, said: "I think it's pretty ridiculous that a driver could be fined one million euros. In my first years in F1, I was on a five-figure salary and lost over six figures in my first year, paying for my trainer, my flights and an assistant.

"And that's probably the case for 25 per cent of the grid. We're doing what we love, so we're not complaining about that, but if you take a year-one driver who probably by the end of the year is losing over 100,000 euros, you fine them one million euros. What's going to happen?" He confirmed that the subject would be discussed at Friday's drivers' briefing at the Circuit of the Americas. —AFP

FIFA suspends Congolese coach for 20 years for sexual abuse

PARIS: FIFA on Friday suspended a former youth coach in the Democratic Republic of Congo from football for 20 years for sexually abusing a youth player.

The governing body of world football said in a statement that Jonathan Bukabakwa had been "found guilty of sexually abusing a minor football player".

It said the adjudicatory chamber had also fined Bukabakwa 100,000 Swiss francs (112,000 dollars). —AFP

Shelton shakes things up to reach first final at Japan Open

TOKYO: Rising American star Ben Shelton said he had to "shake things up" to reach his first ATP Tour final at the Japan Open on Saturday after another gruelling three-set match.

The 21-year-old beat American qualifier Marcos Giron 6-7 (2/7), 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 in Tokyo and will face Russia's Aslan Karatsev in Sunday's final.

Shelton lost the first set and found himself two breaks down in the second against world number 79 Giron, who eliminated second seed Casper Ruud earlier this week.

Shelton said it was "definitely a difficult place to be in" and credited a change in strategy for turning the match in his favour.

"I knew that if I continued to keep playing the way I was, with the rhythm that he'd found, I was going to lose the match," he said.

"I tried to shake things up and try something that was going to surprise him.

"I was able to get him out of his rhythm for the three or four games that I needed to get myself back into the match."

Shelton rode the momentum after he had survived his second-set scare, closing out the match with an ace before letting out a roar and thumping his chest.

He said the encounter was "one of the tougher matches that I've played in my career".

"I definitely had to adjust during the match today and problem-solve and come up with solutions when my back was against the wall," he said.

"I was able to figure it out and get it done in three sets, but definitely not an easy task today."

It was Shelton's third three-set match this week, with all of them featuring at least one tiebreaker.

Karatsev has won all his matches in straight sets, including his 6-3, 6-4 semi-final victory over Japanese wild card Shintaro Mochizuki.

Shelton said his route to the final had been "a little bit different".

"To be able to have been as composed as I was throughout the week, to get to the place that I'm in, I couldn't be happier," he said. Karatsev has beaten fourth seed Alex de Minaur and sixth seed Frances Tiafoe this week in Tokyo.

He said his win over Mochizuki was "tricky", with the crowd getting behind the world number 215 home favourite after his unliklely run to the semi-finals.

"The opponent was really hard, playing without any pressure," Karatsev said of 20-year-old Mochizuki, who knocked out top seed Taylor Fritz in the second round.

"I had to focus a little bit more than normal -- if you lose the focus then the crowd can get crazy and then you're in trouble."

Karatsev lost to Shelton at the US Open, where the American reached the semi-finals.

Karatsev said his opponent's long matches this week in Tokyo are unlikely to make much of a difference when they meet again in the final.

"I think he's really fit -- it doesn't really matter whether he plays three sets or two sets," said Karatsev. "Maybe I will come a little bit fresher than him but I don't think it's a huge advantage." —AFP