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Punjab to reach out to India as Lahore chokes

- Marriyum says province will ask Foreign Office to take up cross-border pollution with New Delhi
- Second largest city shuts primary schools for one week, closure may be extended if 'winds from India' persist
- Minister says two more 'green lockdowns' on the cards, warns of harsher measures

By Arjad Mahmood

LAHORE: As Punjab plans to request the Foreign Office to take up cross-border pollution with India, the provincial government has closed primary schools in Lahore this week, ostensibly to save children from the effects of hazardous air quality, exceeding levels deemed safe by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

"In the wake of deteriorating air quality index and in light of order dated 03.11.2024 issued by director general [of Environmental Protection Agency Punjab] while exercising powers conferred under the Punjab Environmental Protection Act 1997, it is notified that all classes up to 5th grade in all schools (public and private) located in Lahore shall remain closed for one week until 04.11.2024 till 09.11.2024 (Saturday)," said a notification issued by the provincial education department. The closure will be extended if the situation does not improve.

In a press conference on Sunday, senior minister Marriyum Aurangzeb cautioned citizens about smog from India, saying winds would continue to blow towards Lahore for at least one week.

The provincial minister said westerly winds from Amritsar and Chandigarh were spiking the air quality index in Lahore to over 1,000 for the past two days.

Ms. Aurangzeb, who holds the environment portfolio in the cabinet, said Punjab would write to the Foreign Office on Monday (today) to take up the issue with New Delhi.

"The wind from India towards Lahore... is taking the smog to dangerous levels and the wind is likely to sustain its direction for at least next week... People should take care of themselves by avoiding unnecessary coming out of their houses. The elderly and children should be particularly careful..." she said.

The government plans to use the week-long break to "conduct research". "Authorities will use the week to conduct research, mapping, and studies to reassess and determine if extended school closures are needed," she was quoted by the state-run AFP as saying.

In response to a question, she said the government would write to the Foreign Office on Monday to approach Indian authorities for talks on joint efforts to curb smog.

A few days ago, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, at a Dera Ismail Khan, hinted at

Pakistan may face substantial losses in natural resources by 2070 due to climate change: APH — Page 5

Left gasping for air: Situationer on Page 12

approaching the Indian Punjab chief minister to put up a joint front against smog.

Regretting that "mischievous" people attempted to knit a conspiracy around the CM's diplomacy talk, Ms. Aurangzeb said one could not change the direction of winds and the issue of cross-border smog could be tackled only through negotiations. She cautioned against the politicisation of what she described as a matter of generational survival.

She warned brick kiln owners and transporters not to worsen the situation through omissions, saying the government could go for stricter steps, including temporarily closing down construction projects and imposing lockdowns. "Cases may be initiated against the violators, while they may also be arrested."

According to the minister, construction in housing societies has not been banned so far but SOPs will be

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DESPITE minimal vehicular traffic on Sunday, Lahore's Istanbul Chowk, where the iconic Min's Gun is mounted, appears enveloped in smog. — M. Arif / White Star

As IMF deadline looms, SOEs asked to tighten governance

Finance ministry directs all state-owned firms to adopt standard regulations, reporting manuals

By Khaleeq Khari

ISLAMABAD: To meet a deadline set by the International Monetary Fund, the Ministry of Finance has directed all state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to adopt standard regulations and reporting manuals for their operational protocols, business plans, board appointments and financial audits to minimise fiscal risks for the state.

The ministry's Central Monitoring Unit (CMU) issued directives on Oct 31, the IMF-mandated deadline, instructing all ministries and divisions to ensure that state-owned enterprises under their domain comply with the SOEs (Governance and Operations) Act 2023 and the SOEs (Ownership and Management) Policy 2023.

Under these requirements, the CMU has issued 'Business Plan and Statement of Corporate Intent (SCI) Guidelines' to federal SOEs regarding key steps and essential components of their business plans, strategic objec-

tives, performing environmental analysis and framework for effective monitoring and evaluation. As per another directive, the SOEs have to meet 'Public Sector Obligations (PSOs)' Costing Guidelines' and methodologies in estimating and managing the financial needs of fulfilling PSOs, with particular emphasis on activity-based, standard and marginal costing approaches.

All SOEs have been given standard 'Regulations on Audit Committee, Risk Management and Internal Control' to ensure effective governance, transparency and accountability. The audit committees would be bound to implement a robust risk management framework and maintain adequate internal controls to mitigate operational, financial and compliance risks.

The CMU has also issued 'Directors Appointment and Evaluation Guidelines' for SOEs, under which the ministries and divisions are required to ensure transparent and effective appointment, induction and evaluation of the board of directors.

Under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) approved by the IMF's executive board in the last week of September, the government had given a written commitment to the adoption by the 15 largest commercial SOEs by asset size of business plans and publica-

tion of statements of corporate intent (SCI) by the end of October. The first quarterly review of the Fund's programme is due in a couple of weeks, dates for which are currently under discussion between the IMF and Pakistan authorities.

The government had promised to issue these four operational manuals to provide guidance on the implementation of the SOE framework, development of business plans and SCIs, governance, including SOE director selection, appointment and performance reviews, and how CMU will undertake its monitoring functions and reporting, in line with requirements under the SOE Policy, by end October.

The government has also given an undertaking for adoption and publication by the 15 largest commercial SOEs by assets of externally audited, International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)-compliant financial statements and annual reports for FY24 by the end of December. By this date, it will also ensure that boards of all commercial SOEs have a majority of independent directors, as mandated by Section 12(e) of the SOE Act.

Further commitments include identifying, costing and contracting PSOs in the seven commercial

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NA set to pass bills related to SC, detention of suspects

- Law minister to table SC ordinance in lower house today
- Sources say speaker may put off travel to Commonwealth event until passage of key legislation

By Syed Iftan Raza

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly, which meets again today (Monday), is expected to pass three important bills in its current session, including two laws related to the Supreme Court and another regarding preventive detention of terror suspects for up to three months.

Multi-pointed amendments to the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act is one of the three bills expected to be passed by the lower house of parliament in its current session.

National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, who was scheduled to attend 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary

Conference being held in Australia from Nov 3 to 8, has been asked to stay in the country until the passage of the bills, a source told Dawn on Sunday.

One of the main aspects of the SC Practice and Procedure Amendment

HRPC urges govt to withdraw bill on preventive detentions: Page 5

Bill — related to the procedure of formation of benches — is said to be a continuation of the recently passed 26th constitutional amendment that "clipped powers" of the judiciary.

The new bill is expected to give complete authority to the incumbent Chief Justice Yousaf Ali Afridi to pick any judge as

member of the bench. Another bill is related to the strength of judges in the apex court.

The third bill, concerning terrorism, will empower the army and civil armed forces to arrest and detain any person, who is suspected of being involved in terrorism, for up to three months.

When contacted, some MNAs were confident that the three important bills would be passed with a simple majority during the current session of the assembly.

Strangely, the opposition had not raised any objection when the bills related to terrorism was tabled in the lower house of parliament on Friday. It is now expected that they

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Three coal trucks en route to Punjab torched in Duki attack

- Two brothers die after another coal truck plunges into ditch
- Three militants killed, two arrested in Musakhail CTD operation

By Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Unknown armed men attacked coal-loaded trucks in the Chaman coal field area of Duki district on Sunday, setting three of them on fire.

Law enforcement officials said the incident occurred near the Kill-Kach area on Makhtar Road, where the assailants first opened fire to stop the trucks, injuring a driver as a result. "After intercepting the trucks, the armed men set three of them afire before fleeing the scene," a Lawra official said.

The injured driver, identified as Hafizullah Hamzani from Makhtar, was taken to Loralai District Hospital. Two of the trucks were loaded with coal,

while the third was empty. All three were headed to Punjab.

After the incident, the Lawra force and other law enforcement agencies launched a search operation in the area to trace the assailants.

Since February, attacks on coal mines, trucks and labourers in Duki district have intensified, with 21 coal miners killed in previous assaults. No group immediately claimed responsibility for Sunday's attack on the trucks.

Fatal accident

Meanwhile, two truck drivers were killed when their coal-loaded trucks overturned into a deep roadside ditch in Duki district's Musakhail area on Sunday. Senior police officer Hamzay

Khan Nasar said the drivers lost control due to brake failure, causing the trucks to plunge into the ditch.

The two drivers, identified as brothers Sabir Khan and Samiullah Khan from Duki district, were buried under coal because of the accident. Rescue teams used an excavator to retrieve their bodies, which were later transferred to a hospital in Duki.

Three militants killed

The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of Balochistan police, in a joint operation with law enforcement agencies, killed three suspected terrorists and arrested two others after a gun

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Minister hints at PIA privatisation with zero liability

Aleem says govt couldn't accept some of investors' demands due to IMF deal

By Khalid Haasain

LAHORE: Federal Privatisation Minister Aleem Khan has hinted at selling Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to a private buyer with zero liability.

While addressing a press conference on Sunday, the minister also welcomed provincial governments to take over the airline's control and run it as a professional manner.

He said that, as per the existing framework, around \$650 billion of PIA's liabilities

of over \$650 billion debts have been parked in a holding company, while the remaining \$200bn will be transferred to the private buyer.

Mr Khan added that after failing in its first attempt to sell PIA, the government might devise a new framework to clear the \$200bn liabilities and "sell a clean PIA" to a private buyer.

This might spare buyers' interest, he said.

The minister also claimed that there were some demands by potential buyers, like zero GST on purchasing new aircraft, which the government couldn't accept due to the deal with the IMF.

Provinces can buy PIA

The minister's remarks came three days after the government had to face an embor-



ALEEM, Aleem Khan

rowment over the failed attempt to privatise PIA.

The process was stalled as the price of \$650 billion quoted by the sole bidder — Blue World City consortium

— was significantly less than the government's minimum estimation of over \$850bn.

Since then, at least two provincial governments have shown interest in taking over the airline's control.

In his press conference, Mr Khan said the Blue World City consortium was shortlisted for participation in the auction by the consultant under the legal framework," he said, adding the company's bid was not suitable.

He added that if provinces are interested in buying the national flag carrier, they can fulfil legal requirements.

He said so far, only the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has submitted an expression of interest for buying PIA.

Mr Khan said he also learnt through media that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam

Nawaz Sharif had talked about buying PIA with her father and PML-N president Nawaz Sharif.

"If they [Punjab and KP governments] are interested, the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan may also show their interest. And if all provinces want [to buy the airline], they can do it and run PIA in a professional manner," Mr Khan said.

"[The] provinces would have to bring professionals," he said, calling professional management "vital to run PIA" effectively.

However, he added that the prime minister would make any decision to either sell PIA to a province or restart the privatisation process.

Mr Khan also responded to the criticism over his absence from the bidding

event on Thursday.

He claimed that he was in Saudi Arabia "to meet a minister for investment in Pakistan".

He said the Privatisation Commission completed the initial bidding process "in a transparent way" with the help of an international consultant.

He held his predecessor responsible for "destroying" PIA and said he couldn't devote time from the privatisation procedure given to him.

According to Mr Khan, the framework for PIA's privatisation was made by the caretaker government.

He added that any changes required in the framework to carry the privatisation process forward would be made.

All these things had

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First-time Muslim voters in US wary of two-party system

By Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON: Disenchantment with both major US political parties is pushing more first-time Muslim voters in Northern Virginia toward abstention or even third-party support, raising concerns for Democrats who traditionally rely on this constituency.

In conversations with visiting Pakistani journalists at a frothy shopping plaza in the region, some young Muslim voters cited foreign policy decisions, environmental issues, and unmet domestic needs as reasons for their reluctance to vote for either major party.

The plaza, known for its diverse array of halal restaurants, grocery stores,

What could a Trump presidency mean for Pakistan? — Comment on Page 3

Trump, Kamala head to 'photo finish' in US polls: Page 12

and pizza shops, has become a central meeting place for Muslims from Virginia, Maryland, and Washington DC.

Store owners are preparing for election day by setting up a large screen in one of the restaurants to broadcast results, and offering free tea and samosas to patrons to foster a sense of community.

They recently hosted an event inviting Pakistani

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ON OTHER PAGES



Children bear brunt of polio drop refusals

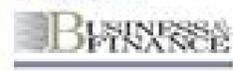
They say only bad news from Balochistan makes the headlines, mostly it's about armed attacks and lives claimed by terrorists. But today, the province finds itself at the centre of a polio crisis, with cases witnessing a surge over the past many months. Yet, many parents still consider immunisation "unnecessary". Jabbaruddin is one of them, and his son has been stricken by the virus. Page 3



New Zealand 'whitewash' India at home

New Zealand capped a tough tour of Asia with an unprecedented 3-0 series sweep in India, while the home side will face uncomfortable questions ahead of their trip to Australia by five Tests. The Black Caps' spinners ran out on a challenging wicket in Mumbai to dismiss India for 121 in the second innings and secure a 26-run victory on the third day of the third and final test on Sunday. Page 10

Plus...



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LITERARY NOTES

Errors in Iqbal's Urdu poetry and prescriptivism

By Rauf Parakh

ALLAMA Muhammad Iqbal's poetic genius has been acknowledged far and wide. But in his own days, especially early in his literary career, a constant campaign was run to mock and disparage him.

Opponents would raise literary and linguistic points to damage Iqbal's reputation. Of course, there are a few errors in Iqbal's Urdu poetry when it comes to lexical or syntactical analysis, but these errors make a very tiny part of his works and are negligible as they do not affect, in any way, his poetic anatomy and philosophy when his poetical works are perceived in totality.

Secondly, to say he was wrong, as given the reasons, Iqbal was a human being, as earthy and prone to error as rest of us are. He was no angel and neither did he ever claim to be

one. But then hardly any author has escaped critical remarks and disapproving reviews, be it literature in Urdu or, for that matter, any other language. The ill treatment, however, meted out to Iqbal was unprecedented and if any other example is sought only Ghali's name comes to one's mind that was made target of a similar sinister campaign because of his presumed literary and linguistic sins. Ironically, those who criticised Ghali and Iqbal unfairly are hardly known today, but both Ghali and Iqbal are acknowledged as the greatest poets that Urdu language has ever produced. History has its own, strange way of dispensing justice!

Between 1901 and 1950, a large number of articles were written against Iqbal's assumed poetic and linguistic lapses. But, at the same time, many defended Iqbal and penned rejoinders to what way-

ers had written. Akber Hyderi Kashmiri (1929-2012), a Kashmiri Indian scholar, had collected such pieces, both for and against, and published them in a book titled *Iqbal Ki Sifa-i-Zabari* (Lucknow, 1998), with an intro and a foreword. It is generally believed that it was poets and critics from UP who criticised Iqbal for his actual or perceived errors, but the book compiled by Akber Hyderi reveals that those who criticised Iqbal and those who sided with him both included writers from UP and Punjab. According to Akber Hyderi, the first-ever piece that raised objections on Iqbal's usage was published in *Iti*, a newspaper from Lahore. Syed Muzam Ali (1860-1935), a scholar from UP settled in Lahore, had launched *Iti* in 1901, a fortnightly from Lahore in August 1902. The fortnightly began publishing articles that supported Iqbal, says Akber Hyderi, and many

of these articles were penned by Muzam Ali himself.

In this literary feud many magazines and newspapers took part and published articles written by numerous authors. Those who wrote against Iqbal included, for instance, Urdu-Mirza, published from Aligarh by Huzar Mahomed and Qadir Panohi, Lucknow. But some, for example, *Pinis Akbar* from Lahore, published views from both sides. Shibli Nu'mani and Akbar Hussain Halli, the two renowned authors from UP, were in favour of Iqbal. Lahore's weekly *Pinis* published an article in several episodes with the pseudonym *Jarrabi*, or *Surgush*. It was later published in book form under the title *Iqbal Ki Khushmazaan* (1928). When its second edition was published in 1977, it was revealed that the real author was Jash Makhayari, a poet from Punjab. Siraj Lakhnavi, a poet from Lucknow, wrote a reply to Jash's

book in several issues of Lahore's *Sarosh* (1931).

Protestant among writers that severely criticised Iqbal for his supposed lexical and grammatical inaccuracies was Barkat Ali Gouda Nadwani, a poet from Punjab. His book *Iqbal Ki Sharamna Zameen*, or Iqbal's poetical doctrine, published in two parts in 1931, pointed out errors in Iqbal's Urdu and Persian poetry. But Qadir Panohi, a humour magazine launched from Lucknow in 1877, continued publishing pieces against Iqbal and parodying of Iqbal's poems, spoofing at his perceived linguistic and poetic blunders, from the early 20th century till the magazine ceased publication in 1933.

Qadir Panohi and other critics that insisted on preserving old poetical styles and themes, favouring upon new ideas and new phrases or lexical structures coined by Iqbal, may be termed *purists*. Linguistic pur-

ism favours 'purity' of a language by stressing a particular style or variety of language. Attached towards language, any language, can be described with the help of two useful terms: prescriptivism and descriptivism. Prescriptivism tells the users of a language to strictly follow clear-cut rules and suggests how to use a language. But modern linguistic science favours descriptivism that describes how a language is being used currently because every language of the world changes with the passage of time and the concept of 'purity' of language is flawed.

The languages that do not embrace change and insist on prescriptive usage often fall out of favour and can even die. Urdu is a living language and poets like Iqbal have infused a new life into it by using it creatively.

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Polio programme gets new head as fight against disease hits a low

By Asif Ghauhray

LAHORE: Amid reports of aggravating poliovirus situation in several districts, the Punjab government has appointed the new head of the Polio Programme & Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC).

The officer, Ahsan Taseem, is already holding multiple positions and assignments in the primary and secondary healthcare departments, including additional secretary development & finance, project director of the Project Management Unit (PMU) and head of the strengthening of development wing.

Mr Taseem had been picked as the programme coordinator on the recommendations of Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department Secretary Nadia Saqib, said an official, privy to the information.

He said Punjab also reported its first case of poliovirus in four years, marking a significant setback to the province's fight against the crippling

disease when a six-year-old male child from Chakwal was reported to be carrying the virus in August this year. Before that, the last case in Punjab was reported in 2020. Similarly, he said, environment samples for wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) had been tested positive in various cities, including Lahore, Rawalpindi, Attock, Miranshah and Bahawalpur, putting at risk the health of hundreds of thousands of children under five in the nearby districts of the province.

The detection of environmental samples in many districts of the Punjab province in a year raised serious concerns among the higher authorities who expressed their displeasure at the performance of the officers associated with the polio programme.

The official said the programme had been in the limelight as it persistently missed thousands of children during such campaigns for polio drops.

In a statement, the spokesperson said the new head of the polio

programme and EOC Coordinator of Punjab, Ahsan Taseem, reiterated pledge to eradicate polio, saying the commitment shown by the top leadership of the province, including Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department Secretary Nadia Saqib by holding campaign reviews every day, showed that polio eradication was top priority of the government.

Mr Taseem sounded an alarm that Punjab's children were at the risk of imported virus circulation, which could not be allowed at any cost. He underlined that genomic sequencing results indicated that the virus was linked to Afghanistan and other endemic zones. As final data continued to pour in on Sunday, the preliminary stats showed that over 23m children had been vaccinated till the sixth day of the campaign, the EOC coordinator said.

Lahore topped the list of most vaccinated children with over 2.2m children getting vaccinated till the sixth day of the campaign. It was

followed by Faisalabad and Bahawalpur with over 1.5m and 1.1m vaccinations, respectively.

The national campaign was launched across Punjab on Oct 28, targeting 23.3m children. The campaign continued for seven days in mega districts including Lahore, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad.

The spokesperson for the polio programme said Punjab hit a key milestone on Sunday, wrapping up its third and last national polio immunisation drive of the year. He said the polio teams vaccinated thousands of 'missed children' on the final day of the campaign to block off any possibility of poliovirus circulation in the province.

Punjab had already wrapped up the polio campaign in 33 districts of Punjab on Friday except Lahore, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad where it was completed on Sunday.

Over 200,000 teams were seen rushing to homes in their respective areas, which were marked as having 'none available' children.

Accidents in Lahore, Sargodha Three die, 36 hurt as buses from Raiwind overturn

SARGODHA/LAHORE: At least three men died and seven others were injured when a vehicle carrying a Tallooghi Jamaat (TJ) group overturned near Bhatta Interchange on M2 motorway on Sunday, while 29 persons returning from the event suffered injuries in another accident in Lahore.

According to Rescue 1122 officials, in the first incident, the vehicle bringing back people from the Tallooghi Jamaat gathering held in Raiwind, Lahore, overturned when one of its tyres burst.

Most of the passengers in the vehicle were returning to De in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

On being informed of the accident, a Rescue 1122 team reached the spot and shifted the injured persons and the dead bodies to the Bhatta Tehsil Headquarters Hospital.

Those who died were identified as Naik Muhammad (33), son of Pte Bahadur, Sabir Shah and Sofian (53), while the injured included Ashraf, Gul Sultan, Umar, Hidayat Allah, Abdul Wahab, Abdul Wahid, Nisar Shah and Anam Khan.

Following the accident, teams of National Highway and Motorway Police and Punjab police also reached the spot.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz expressed grief over the loss of precious human lives in the accident and offered condolences to the families of the deceased.

In the second incident, up to 29 participants returning from the Raiwind congregation were injured, 16 of them seriously, when a bus overturned in Lahore.

According to the initial reports, the bus carrying 29 people fell into an open drain near Pali No 2. The bus on its way to Bhagwan Chowk when it met with an accident. The Rescue 1122 spokesperson claimed that the incident took place due to speeding.

The ambulances of Rescue 1122 shifted the seriously injured persons to nearby hospitals, besides providing first aid to others on the spot.

Up to 15 of them were shifted to the Raiwind Tehsil Headquarters Hospital, while another was rushed to the Lahore General Hospital.

The traffic police arranged a crane to retrieve the bus from the open drains. The local police have started investigations.—Dawn Report



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DAY 01

INSIGHTS INTO VISA APPLICATION PROCESS
SPEAKER
CANADIAN VISA EXPERT
12:15 TO 12:45 PM

HOW AI IS RESHAPING LEARNING
SPEAKER
NIGEL CLARKE, MEd, RESIDENT MANAGER, PENK & SOUTH ASIA, PENK
01:00 TO 02:00 PM

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION
SPEAKER
SABIR ALAM, AHSAN BEHAR, COUNTRY MANAGER, AHSAN EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING
2:45 TO 03:15 PM

CLOSING & SHIELDS DISTRIBUTION
03:45 PM

DAY 02

NAVIGATING CREDIT TRANSFERS ABROAD
SPEAKER
BIVD HANSHI, ALL HANSHI, COUNTRY DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON
12:15 TO 12:30 PM

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION.
SPEAKER
ASAD TALIB, ASAD DIRECTOR
01:15 TO 01:45 PM

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION
SPEAKER
AFRIZAN AHMED BEHAR, COUNTRY MANAGER, AHSAN EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING
02:30 TO 03:00 PM

CLOSING & SHIELDS DISTRIBUTION
03:45 PM

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A climate change initiative

Privacy concerns prompt Nawaz to seek treatment outside UK

• PML-N president has historically been treated in London • PTI steps up protests with demonstration outside Downing Street

By Aika Fishman

LONDON: Former prime minister and PML-N president Nawaz Sharif returned to London over the weekend, and is expected to spend less than a week here, ahead of his departure to another country for a medical check-up.

Sources told Dawn that Nawaz would remain in London for less than a week, and that he is scheduled to have medical check-up in another country where his daughter, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, is expected to join him.

Many on social media noted that unlike the day when Nawaz arrived from Pakistan, there were no PTI protesters thronging his vehicle on his return to the UK from the United States as he was driven to his apartment in Avenfield House on Saturday evening.

However, a large crowd of PTI supporters gathered near 10 Downing Street, the British PM office, on Sunday evening, demanding the release of incarcerated party founder Imran Khan and appealing to authorities in Pakistan to uphold the rule of law.

Protest at Downing Street

PTI supporters from across London as well as those from Leeds, Luton, Manchester and Birmingham travelled to the city to register their protest and be part of the demonstration.

Men and women of all ages were in attendance, with many holding Mr Khan's posters, demanding his release. There were also posters demanding that the government "free political prisoners".

PTI's Zulfikar Bukhari, who is active in campaigning for the party in the UK, was prominent among those who were present and made a speech. Besides, former adviser in the PTI government, Shabbaz Gill, who has been in the United States since the crackdown against the party began back home, was also at the protest.

The protest was originally scheduled to take place at the end of October, but the date

was shifted forward to include Mr Gill.

"Whoever is telling you that Imran Khan is striking a deal, or that he is weak, or that he or that he is compromising on his position, they are making a fool of you. Because you believe in conspiracies, because we are a weak nation, we are not brave," he said, adding that this protest was held to demand Imran Khan's release, nothing else.

Also speaking at the podium was PTI social media lead Azhar Masrovi, and former adviser to Mr Khan, Shabbaz Akbar, who has been in the UK for more than a year.

Asked about the criticism against the PTI leaders for fleeing the country, Mr Bukhari told Dawn that Azhar Masrovi has "faced persecution himself, and his family have been through hell. He left because there was a threat to his life. As for me, I've been here long before Khan sahib was arrested, and he told me to stay out."

"It is by being here that we made it possible to raise awareness about Mr Khan's imprisonment, and engage the international media and UN."

Provincial PTI activist Shayan Ali was also at the protest, though he was not allowed to speak.

When asked to comment on Mr Ali's recent action to chase Justice Qazi Faez Isa's car outside Middle Temple last week, Mr Bukhari said, "There are many supporters of Mr Khan, but they all are not part of the PTI. PTI leaders speak about rule of law and democracy."

Nawaz's travel plans

About the PML-N president visit to the UK, sources said, Nawaz would return to Pakistan after three weeks, towards the end of November.

Though he has historically had his medical check-ups in London, it appears that due to privacy concerns, and in lieu of the PTI's growing protests and demonstrations outside Nawaz's home and office, the decision was taken to have his medical examination and treatment in another foreign country. In 2019, his doctors said he had coronary artery disease.

Minister hints at PIA privatisation

Continued from Page 1

happened before he took charge as privatisation minister, Mr Khan added.

He said PIA was a "national asset" and "could not be sold at throw-away price". PIA can be "turned into a profitable organisation" if it gets new planes and best professionals, the minister said.

NHA profit

Mr Khan, who is also the commercial minister, claimed that the National Highway Authority (NHA) will record a profit of Rs50 billion by year's end for the first time.

"This year, NHA's revenue would reach Rs110bn from Rs44bn," he claimed. Regarding Pakistan Post, the minister said he had abolished 3,500 new jobs and it helped save Rs2.8 billion.

Polio refusals: children pay the price for 'old habits'

Even though his young son has been afflicted by the poliovirus, Jalaluddin still acts like everything will be alright

By Muhammad Akbar Notozal

QUETTA: They say only bad news from Balochistan makes the headlines, mostly it's about armed attacks and the loss of life in incidents of terrorism. But today, the province finds itself at the centre of a spiralling polio crisis, with cases witnessing a surge over the past several months.

With rising cases come vaccination drives, but many parents still consider immunisation "unnecessary".

Jalaluddin, a father of six, is one of those people, and his two-year-old son is one of those stricken by the disease.

His home in Quetta's Salehabad area is as simple as his own nature. Jalaluddin has apparently been frequently approached by the media ever since his son, Javed, was afflicted by polio, which is why he seems fed up with journalists and their questions.

After repeated requests, he agrees to speak to Dawn, yet, he seems to be in a hurry. He says the water pump in his home has malfunctioned and he is eager to fix it so the household's water supply remains uninterrupted. I have to ask my questions as quickly as possible. During our conversation, he tries to portray as if



JALALUDDIN holds his two-year-old son Javed during an interview. —Photos by the writer

everything is alright, seemingly unaware of the severity of the problem that faces his young child.

"Thank God, he is able to stand on his feet," he says of his son.

Soon after the two-year-old contracted the poliovirus in mid-October, Jalaluddin started consulting local clinics, who gave him a talisman and prayed for the young child, but to no avail. One of them also told him the boy had a stroke.

Jalaluddin then saw a doctor, who informed him that his son had been severely afflicted by the poliovirus.

Growing up in Balochistan, where suspicion of anything to do with the state is a norm, it was not a big deal

for Jalaluddin to keep vaccinators at bay by hiding them whenever polio teams came to visit.

Although things have improved in the region, thanks to awareness campaigns launched by the government and NGOs, cases still continue to emerge from the province, mostly because old habits die hard.

Jalaluddin, who is a shopkeeper, claimed he had all his children, including Javed, inoculated. However, interviews with those who know the family reveal that the affected child had only received the drops once, that too soon after his birth.

Javed is not alone; so far, 22 cases

have been reported from across the province this year. Most of the cases have been reported from the seven districts bordering Afghanistan.

Afghanistan and Pakistan are the only two countries left that are still not rid of the scourge of polio.

"This is because of the virus flow [from Afghanistan] that Balochistan has so many cases," says Akbar Hadi Khan, a communication officer associated with the anti-polio drive. "That is why cases are increasing in Balochistan."

It is Hadi who introduces us to Jalaluddin. While talking about the afflicted child, the officer says poliovirus attacks children whose immune system is not strong enough, which is why they are given the polio drops.

"There are grey boxes [which] are refused cases," he says, talking about parents who refuse to allow their children to get polio drops. "Some children are not present when the polio team visits, while others claim they have gone to visit their relatives. We try to achieve our target, we try to convince the parents who refuse to give polio drops to their children in any way possible."

In most cases, it has been observed that young boys are affected by the poliovirus.

According to Hadi, this could be because the boys go out to play in contaminated areas, where the virus could be present, while girls are hardly allowed to venture out.

As he leaves, Jalaluddin goes to see to his water pump. He says he'll be able to fix it, as he does not seem like the negligent type. But his reluctance to vaccinate his son may cost the young one dearly, for the rest of his life.

Police, peasants face off after farmland transferred to pvt firm

Eyewitnesses say heavy machinery used to destroy standing crops, level fields in Arifwala operation

By Shaqib Butt

SARDIWA: A tense standoff between Pakistani district police and about 700 peasants (women, including women and children, from the Muhammad Nagar Kandi Farm in Arifwala) defied a court-ordered police operation over the weekend.

The peasants had been protesting for two days against the government's decision to reallocate their "ancestral land" — cultivated by them for nearly a century — to a private company.

According to eyewitness accounts, a large contingent of policemen, including elite force personnel, arrived at the farm on Sunday afternoon, accompanied by revenue officials, heavy machinery, tractors, eight prisoner vans and 40 police vehicles.

The operation aimed to vacate 528 acres of land currently held by peasants of Muhammad Nagar Kandi Farm.

Reports suggested that the land was allocated to the private firm by the District Revenue Department on the Punjab government's directives on Feb 20.

The land vacating operation was led by DSP Sadar Malik Tariq, Arifwala Assistant Commissioner Roshan Raza, and Sarda Police Station SHO Abid Adhik Mishra.

Pakistan Deputy Commissioner Kadia Mohr said the operation was conducted under sections 13 and 34 of the Land Acquisition Act, 1914, on orders from the Punjab Board of Revenue.

She claimed that the administration had attempted to negotiate with the



PEASANTS hold protest against the reallocation of their ancestral land in a private firm in Pakpattan district, on Sunday.—Dawn

peasants several times, but they refused to comply.

Muhammad Ikhtlaq, President of the local Arifwala Muhammad Nagar Kandi Farm, told Dawn that the land was originally granted to his great-grandfather Charing Din and 33 other families in 1928 under the Government Land Reform Act of 1912.

"This land was barren then, but our fourth generation is now cultivating it," Mr Ikhtlaq said. "We are now helpless to protest it."

As of 8pm, heavy machinery was being used to destroy standing crops cultivated by the peasants, levelling the fields despite their protests.

Mr Ikhtlaq claimed that the peasants had secured a stay order on Oct 9 from Justice Muhammad Mahmood of the Lahore High Court (LHC) to prevent the sale of the land.

However, he alleged that the Pakistan Deputy Commissioner proceeded with the allocation to the private company.

The writ petition was filed by Muhammad Jabbar, a tenant of the

Muhammad Nagar farm, under Article 199 of the Constitution through Advocate Chaudhry Muhammad Akbar.

Mr Ikhtlaq also claimed that the senior justice judge of the Supreme Court, Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, had also granted a stay order on the same land on Aug 19, 2011, when he was an LHC judge.

The peasants' legal claim traces back to a judgement CA 221 of 1995 passed by the Supreme Court on Oct 25, 1980, which established a 60:40 produce-sharing ratio between owners and peasants.

The Supreme Court had also ruled that in case of any sale to a third party, the cost of inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides and tube well water should be split on a 50:50 basis. The 528-acre farm was designated an Agricultural Seed Farm in 1928 under Section 19 of the Colonisation of Government Land Act, 1912.

The Arifwala DSP and assistant commissioner could not be reached for comment.

'Secret detention cell' run by cop uncovered

By Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Police have unearthed a private detention cell operated by a police constable in collaboration with others in Quetta, recovering four young men held in captivity, officials said on Sunday.

The police acted on information regarding the secret detention facility managed by a cop in Hazara Town, on the outskirts of Quetta.

SP Kadir Shoukat Ali Mohmand formed an investigation team led by Brewery Police Station SHO Mohamud Khattar.

The police team raided a house in Hazara Town's Block 33, where they discovered four young men detained in a room. Three suspects arrested from the house were identified as Waqar Karalshahi, Ali and Nadir Ali.

The alleged mastermind, Constable Samuallah of the Balochistan Constabulary, had already been taken into custody.

Police said the private cell had been run by Samuallah for a long time.

The rescued detainees told officers that Samuallah and his associates had detained them three days ago and subjected them to torture to coerce confession of theft.

Sources said the accused used the cell to blackmail young people.

What could a Trump presidency mean for Pakistan?

By Yousof Nizar

COMMENT

SOME in Pakistan believe that if Donald Trump wins the US presidential election on Nov 5, it could bring favourable outcomes for Imran Khan and US-Pakistan relations. Such expectations, however, are based on grand delusions, far removed from the realities of US foreign policy.

While certain members of Congress have voiced concerns about Imran Khan's captivity, these gestures reflect standard American political practices, where elected officials address issues important to their constituents, primarily to secure votes.

The Association of Physicians of Pakistan (AAPNA) is an influential organisation, representing over 18,000 Pakistani-American doctors. Originally a network of healthcare professionals, AAPNA has evolved into a significant advocacy group.

Following Imran Khan's arrest in Pakistan, AAPNA mobilised support

within the US, reaching out to lawmakers to highlight concerns about democracy and human rights in Pakistan. While Mr Khan is a divisive figure domestically, his stance on sovereignty and anti-corruption has earned him notable support among Pakistani-Americans, including members of AAPNA.

They warned that the crackdown on the PTI could harm US foreign policy interests in the region. However, AAPNA's influence has limits, as US foreign policy priorities typically pivot on broader national interests, rather than ethnic lobbying efforts alone.

If Trump were to assume office again, we could expect his foreign policy to return to an "America First" approach. His previous administration's decisions indicate that a second term would likely focus on immediate US economic and security gains rather than broader commitments to democratic ideals or global partnerships.

For countries like Pakistan, another Trump presidency would likely mean a shift to a more transactional relationship — one that emphasises specific security concerns rather than economic or democratic development. Let's examine some key aspects of Trump's foreign policy and how they may impact Pakistan.

Reduced foreign aid

Trump's approach to foreign policy prioritises American interests, often at the

expense of international alliances and obligations. This could mean a significant reduction in foreign aid to Pakistan, with funds directed solely toward specific security initiatives rather than long-term development projects.

While recent administrations have invested in supporting Pakistan's civilian institutions, a Trump administration may view these initiatives as unnecessary, focusing instead on counterterrorism opera-

For countries like Pakistan, another Trump presidency would likely mean a shift to a more transactional relationship — one that emphasises specific security concerns rather than economic or democratic development

tions and security partnerships that align with US interests.

Greater US-China competition

Trump's first term saw a significant decline in US-China ties, characterised by a trade war and restrictive measures on Beijing's investments and researchers. Trump has consistently viewed China as Washington's primary competitor, and a second term could mean an intensified effort to contain Chinese influence globally. This stance could place additional strain

on Pakistan, whose strategic relationship with Beijing, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), could face US scrutiny. Trump may press Pakistan to limit its cooperation with China, especially in sensitive areas such as infrastructure, technology, and defence, although Pakistan would likely resist compromising those critical ties.

A Trump presidency would likely place Pakistan in a challenging position, where

Islamabad must balance its longstanding relationship with the US against the pressures arising from its ties with China. As US support becomes more conditional and transactional, Pakistan may need to lean more heavily on China for economic and strategic support if American aid and investment diminish.

Better ties with India

As president, Trump has shown a clear preference for India as a strategic counterweight to China, a position that may deepen

if he returns to office. This could have implications for Pakistan, particularly if Trump's administration shows less sensitivity to Pakistan's concerns over India's role in Afghanistan. The US may prioritise its broader Indo-Pacific strategy over addressing South Asian security dynamics, risking a diplomatic rift if Pakistan perceives a pro-India bias that threatens its security interests.

Nuclear security and counterterrorism

Trump has previously expressed concerns regarding nuclear security in South Asia, and his administration could impose more stringent conditions on US aid and support for Pakistan. Increased scrutiny on Pakistan's nuclear assets may be part of his foreign policy, with new demands for transparency and cooperation.

Additionally, Trump's historical focus on counterterrorism, highlighted by his approach to the Taliban in Afghanistan, may lead him to press Pakistan to take a firmer stance against domestic terror groups, particularly those impacting US interests in the region.

For Pakistan, the stakes under a Trump administration would be high, as maintaining strong US diplomatic and economic ties is vital for balanced foreign relations. Should US-Pakistan relations become selectively engaged, Islamabad may be pushed to prioritise Washington's security interests over its broader regional concerns.



ARTISTS decorate carts with truck art while workers set up the Punjab Pavilion at Lok Vira in Islamabad on Sunday. Preparations are underway for the annual Lok Mela which is scheduled to start on Nov 8.—Photos by Mohammad Asim

HEC awards 200 scholarships to Sri Lankan students

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan has awarded 200 fully and partially funded scholarships to the sixth batch of Sri Lankan students under the Alama Mohiuddin Iqbal Scholarship Programme, says a press release issued by the HEC on Sunday.

It said that around 600 Sri Lankan students, apart from those awarded, were already pursuing their undergrad, MS and PhD studies in leading universities in Pakistan. "HEC in collaboration with the Pakistan High Commission, Colombo held a ceremony for the newly-selected students in Colombo. General Shewendra Silva, Chief of Defence Staff was the chief guest. High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka Mij Gen. (R) Fawwaz Ul Aziz also graced the occasion," the press release said.

Speaking on behalf of the HEC chairman, Project Director, Pakistan-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme, Johanzab Khan congratulated the Sri Lankan students and briefed the participants about various aspects of the scholarship.

He highlighted the importance of education in bringing regional economic stability and enhancing collaboration between the two friendly countries. The Pakistani high commissioner said awarding these scholarships to Sri Lankan students was yet another testament to the excellent brotherly relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

He urged the students to embrace this opportunity with determination and resilience.

"As you pursue your studies, remember that you are ambassadors of your country and culture. Engage with your peers, share your experiences, and be a bridge between our two nations. The knowledge and understanding you gain will be invaluable as we work together to address the challenges we face in the ever-changing world," he said.

The ceremony was attended by prominent personalities from various walks of life including businessmen, academicians, parents of the awardee students, and government officials.—Staff Reporter

Week-long anti-polio drive concludes in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI: A week-long anti-polio campaign wrapped up in the garrison city on Sunday, with the health authorities vaccinating over 950,000 children less than five years of age out of the set target of one million.

District Health Authority Chief Executive Officer Dr Asif Arbab Niazi told Dawn that more than 90 per cent children were immunised in the third national polio immunisation drive of the year.

Punjab completed the anti-polio campaign in 33 districts on Friday whereas the drive in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad concluded on Sunday.

Dr Niazi said all children in bus stands, railway stations and entry and exit points of the district were administered anti-polio drops.

He reiterated the pledge to eradicate polio from the district and underlined that genomic sequencing results indicated that virus was linked to Afghanistan and other endemic zones. He said the government was planning to stop transmission of polio virus by June 2025, and reach zero polio by the end of next year.—Staff Reporter

Govt still undecided about revision of Islamabad's master plan

Latest summary sent by CDA to interior ministry on Sept 10 carrying 15 names of experts for submission to cabinet

By Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: It seems the federal government is still undecided about the long-delayed revision of Islamabad's master plan.

The Capital Development Authority (CDA) during the last few years had sent several summaries for reconstitution of the master plan commission, but to no avail.

After approval of the federal cabinet, the commission will be notified to start the revision of the city's blueprint. The latest summary dated September 10, carrying 15 names of experts was sent to the Ministry of Interior for onwards submission to the federal cabinet.

Meanwhile, another summary dated October 23, available with Dawn, with some new names was being discussed in the CDA. However, sources said the CDA management had decided not to send this summary rather to follow the summary already sent to the ministry.

"We have been observing this drama of making and reworking summaries for the last several years, but no serious action is being taken to get the summary approved from the federal cabinet to constitute the master plan commission," said a deputy director of CDA.

The issue was also taken up by National Assembly recently. In response to a question from PPP MNA Dr Shazia Sobin Anjum Soomro, Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Nispi in his written response on October 25 had shared details of the proposed revision of the master plan.

The minister said the cabinet had constituted a commission to review the master plan in the light of directions issued by the HEC on April 17, 2018, after which the Ministry of Interior issued a notification for the commission on January 24, 2019, including its terms of reference. The commission, after detailed deliberations and working, prepared some documents/reports.

Subsequently, the CDA Board on December 2, 2019 adopted the interim report on the review of the master plan (2020-2040). The federal cabinet in its decision dated August 17, 2021 made second addition/alteration to the composition of the commission.

"The commission later suggested to hire the services of consultants to review the master plan and also revised the RFP/TORs document. After the change of the federal government, some members quit and the remaining stopped responding."

Recently, the work of the commission was held up. The federal government was informed about it and summary for the constitution of the revised

commission was forwarded to interior ministry on December 2, 2022, he added.

The cabinet in its meeting held on January 26, 2024 considered the summary regarding reconstitution of the commission and decided as under: "The Cabinet considered the summary titled 'reconstitution of the Federal Commission to review the Master Plan of Islamabad' submitted by the Interior Division and directed the division to deliberate on the matter holistically in consultation with the cabinet members and to then formulate a well-thought out proposal for consideration of the cabinet which should include inter alia the option to engage private sector professionals of international standing."

The minister in his reply stated that in compliance with the above decision, an amended summary was submitted to the interior ministry on February 16, 2024, by the CDA.

Sources said on September 10, the CDA sent another summary, reducing the numbers of members from 20 to 15. Several names of experts of previous panels were replaced with new ones. As per this summary, the CDA chairman will be the convener and new commission will have three urban planners (Adnan Mughal, Jahangir Shergoo, Kinwaran Faridi), Executive Vice President Nurgak Lahore Dawood Kara will be a member as a transportation planning specialist.

Meanwhile, the summary also carried the name of a retired bureaucrat of

Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) Syed Razaan Mubtashid as an environmentalist.

The sources said Dr Naveed Iftikhar will be new member as urban economist while the name of a resident of Islamabad, Raja Changaq Sahian from village Shakerpurian had also been proposed as a representative of the villages in Islamabad. The names of Barrister Qasim Chaudhry, lawyer of the Supreme Court, and Abdullah Khan (architect) were proposed as members.

In addition, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Member Planning, CDA, Member Environment, Director General Pakistan Environment Protection Agency and the Director General Planning will be ex-officio members of the proposed commission.

Donaldis Associates, a Greece-based firm that prepared the master plan, had recommended its revision after every 20 years in accordance with the needs of the time. However, successive governments did not bother to make proper revision rather kept focusing on selective changes without any input from professionals, resulting in poor planning in the capital city. So far, 45 changes have been made to the original master plan by federal cabinets. On the other hand, Islamabad has been facing rapid growth in its population.

CDA's Director Media Shahid Kiari said the civil agency had recently sent the summary to the government which will be approved by the competent authority.

44 medical students from Gaza to attend classes at RMU from today

By Aamir Yasin

RAWALPINDI: As many as 44 medical students from Gaza have arrived in the city to complete their education at the Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU).

Since October 7, 2023, Israel's bombardment of Gaza has killed over 43,000 people with an extensive damage to buildings, including health and educational institutions.

Gaza's largest hospital, Al-Shifa, has been rendered non-functional while the World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned of a growing health crisis with rising cases of meningitis, jaundice and other infections.

The RMU said it had become the first public sector university in Punjab to accommodate 44 students and will start special classes for them on the basis of their curriculum from Monday (today).

Talking to Dawn, RMU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Mohammad Ultee said 44 students from Gaza had become part of the RMU. He said these students had joined fourth year of the MBBS programme and would complete their two years training at the RMU.

"Both federal and provincial governments and the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) facilitated all the difficult process. PMDC President Prof Dr Kirwan Taj played a pivotal role to accommodate the students," he said.

He said the orientation sessions for the students from Gaza had been started and their regular classes would begin on Monday.

The RMU has constituted a special committee to supervise the process to review the curriculum in collaboration with the dean of Al Aqar University, Gaza.

Special classes will be arranged and the portfolios of each of the students will be prepared to document their training activities. He said there will

also be a mentoring programme on the faculty and student friendship model for the academic and social support of the students. He said a demographic, academic and medical database of the students would also be prepared.

"RMU is the only public sector medical university in Punjab to get these students, which is a pride for us to serve the children of Muslim Ummah in a difficult time," he said.

The vice chancellor said the students had been accommodated in a hostel especially allocated for them. He said the expenses of their stay in Pakistan will be borne by philanthropists. "We are conducting research on psychological trauma, anxiety and depression of medical students in Gaza Strip during the war," he said.

He said there was a little difference in Pakistan's medical education and that of the university in Gaza but the basics are the same and we want that the students will start their education from the point where they had been forced to stop it.

He said special translators of Arabic had also been arranged to communicate with these students so to bridge the gap of languages. He said house job training will also be provided to these doctors and in this regard PMDC was working.

FDE handed over 10 rural area schools after facelift

ISLAMABAD: After renovation and provision of new facilities, 10 schools in rural areas have been handed over to the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE).

According to the FDE, the month-long renovation and facelift work has been completed and new education facilities have also been provided to students in 10 schools in rural areas of the capital territory.

Secretary Education Secretary Molyuddin Ahmad Wani said that work in 10 schools had been completed. "Work in 86 other schools of rural areas is in progress. Every month a batch of 10 schools sees completion," he said and added that the ministry wanted to get the rural area project completed within this fiscal year.

Besides renovations, "we have established new state-of-the-art labs and libraries and furniture," the secretary said, adding that 76 newly appointed subject specialists had also been deployed in rural area schools. The secretary claimed these steps would end the disparity between urban and rural area schools and also increase enrollment.

The 10 schools, which have been handed over to the FDE after the completion of works included Islamabad Model School for Boys (IMSB) Chana Rakhitarwan, Islamabad Model School D-17, IMSB Tamerson, IMSB Dara Tarnod, IMSG Haseek, IMSG Mughal Shikha, IMCC Rasool Town, IMSB Tarnod, IMSB Jhang Syedon, and IMCG Tando Para.

Meanwhile, renovations are underway in 86 other schools, which included 16 schools located in the Shikha region, 45 in the Nikoro area, nine in the Bhara Kaba area, and 16 in the

Termed area.

It is relevant to note that under the Rs7 billion project, the education ministry updated around 170 schools and provided new facilities. The schools in urban areas had already been facilitated and now work was being conducted in rural areas.

A few months ago, the issue of shortage of basic facilities in rural areas was also highlighted by the National Assembly Standing Committee on Education, which formed a subcommittee to visit schools. Subsequently, the FDE shifted its focus from

urban to rural areas.

It may be noted that amid these renovations, the teachers urged the education ministry in June to pay heed to their concerns, citing financial hardship and administrative neglect. One of the teachers told Dawn that physical upgrades alone were insufficient to uplift the standard of education in these schools as the most crucial element in this equation is the teaching staff, whose welfare and professional growth were being overlooked by the government.

The other doctors on the seniority list are Prof Dr Mazhar Badshah, Shajee Ahmed Siddiqui, Shahbaz Hussain Waqar, Muhammad Anjum Chaudhary, Maghdod Hussain, Muhammad Shafiq, Ayedha Iqbal Majeed, Nabeed Fatima, Nuzhat Yasmin, Munir Ahmad Khan, and politician Dr Durrani on the 14th spot.

Clinical cadre eligible to vie for Pims executive director slot

FST refuses to interfere in seniority list containing doctors from admin, clinical cadres

By Koam Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Service Tribunal's refusal to interfere in the seniority list of the Pims doctors trying for the executive director slot has paved the way for doctors belonging to the clinical cadre to become the head of one of the largest public sector hospitals.

The admin cadre of the hospital had been demanding an exclusive right to the administrative posts, claiming that they had received relevant training and that only they should have the right to promotions to such posts, for instance, the executive director (ED).

They claimed a clinical doctor could not do justice to administrative posts, as such an appointment would not only affect their performance but also leave them with little time for clinical practice or teaching as faculty members.

Eventually, Pims Joint Executive Director Dr Muhammad Iqbal Khan Durrani (RPS-20) filed a petition, along with others, with the FST, stating that the petitioner was an

officer of the administrative cadre.

"After completing MBBS and joining Pims, [the] petitioner and others decided to pursue a career in public health administration and in this regard, they got their higher education in [the] public health administration. Consequently, we were placed in [the] administrative and general cadre of the Pims with the legitimate expectation of career growth and promotion in the same cadre (at the highest post of ED). While the respondents (clinical cadre) chose clinical or teaching cadre and pursued their career in clinical or teaching and promotion as professors," he stated.

He stated that he got promotions from RPS-18 to 20 on separate seniority lists and he was on the second spot in the seniority list. However, all of a sudden a combined provisional seniority list was circulated in which he was dropped to the 14th slot. He said the Pims ED, who has the acting charge, forwarded the case of the top three doctors, including himself, for the appointment as the permanent ED.

In response to the petition, the FST said it did not see any reasons for interference. "We see no reason to interfere in the seniority list; however, the respondents are directed to forward the working papers for consideration of promotion against the post of executive director (RPS-21) of these individuals who strictly fulfil the conditions of

eligibility prescribed in the Service Rules. With this direction, the appeal is held stands disposed of."

A doctor of the hospital, wishing not to be quoted, said that the joint seniority list was challenged in the tribunal and it was decided that only the admin cadre had the right to the ED post. "Now, names of clinical cadre officers can also be considered for the post. However, officers of RPS-20 should have three years [of] experience to become ED. Now the health ministry can retain the already seen necessary for the appointment of the ED or can send a fresh one," he said.

Another doctor said that there was no doubt that only Dr Muhammad Iqbal Khan Durrani

had the experience to become ED and others lacked the three years of experience or relevant qualifications required for the top slot.

According to the seniority list available with Dawn, Dr Tariq Iqbal is at the top of the list and Dr Raza Inam Sikander, the acting ED, is in the second spot.

The other doctors on the seniority list are Prof Dr Mazhar Badshah, Shajee Ahmed Siddiqui, Shahbaz Hussain Waqar, Muhammad Anjum Chaudhary, Maghdod Hussain, Muhammad Shafiq, Ayedha Iqbal Majeed, Nabeed Fatima, Nuzhat Yasmin, Munir Ahmad Khan, and politician Dr Durrani on the 14th spot.

FIR lodged following Panjutha's 'recovery'

PTI terms 'encounter' which led to lawyer's recovery 'a hoax', seeks probe

By Arjad Iqbal

TAXILA: The Attock Police on Sunday registered a case against the kidnappers of Interior Minister Panjutha, the lawyer of PTI's founding chairman Imran Khan.

Hassan-ul-Haq Mirza managed to rescue Mr Panjutha in the wee hours of Sunday after a brief shootout with the alleged kidnappers.

However, PTI labelled the development as "scripted" and demanded that an FIR be filed against Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Ulman Awan, who claimed in the Islamabad High Court on Friday that Mr Panjutha would be recovered within 24 hours, suggesting he was aware of his whereabouts.

In the FIR lodged under sections 324, 427, 342 and 186 of PPC, the complainant, Coordinator Environment Department, Sindh Inspector Asif Iqbal stated that police had set up a check point on G.E. Road near Barhan Choshi and signalled a suspicious vehicle bearing no number plate to stop.

When the vehicle didn't stop, a police team chased the car and intercepted it near the Khadda village, he said.

However, the suspects opened fire and two bullets hit the police vehicle, prompting a response, he added.

The two masked attackers then "abandoned" the vehicle and fled the scene.

He further stated that upon inspection, officers found Mr Panjutha inside the vehicle with his legs tied. The lawyer was then taken to the police station, where he gave a statement.

Mr Panjutha allegedly said the kidnappers, who spoke in Punjabi, had abducted him from Club Road in Islamabad on October 10, when he was returning from the high court.

They shifted him to an unknown location and "tortured" him.

Mr Panjutha said the abductors had told him that they had demanded \$20 million ransom from his family for his release.

In a statement the spokesperson for the Attock DPO said some people were "trying to defame the police by spreading negative propaganda".

He added that legal action was being initiated against YouTube users running negative campaign against the police, Dawn.com reported.

Mr Panjutha's disappearance had led to a legal petition in the IHC, where his colleagues sought his immediate release.

When AGP Awan informed the IHC on Friday that Mr Panjutha was expected to be recovered within 24 hours, Chief Justice Anwar Faiz said that if the lawyer was not found by Saturday, the AGP would be summoned for further proceedings.

"No question asked"

PTI Chairman Gohar Khan questioned whether anyone would "ever take any such case to its logical conclusion".

"You abduct, torture and then leave by [the] roadside and yet people say, 'Thank God, he is back,'" he questioned asked, "no question asked," he said in a post on social media platform X.

"Will any court ever hold anyone responsible or punish them for it?" Mr Gohar wondered, adding that Mr Panjutha's recovery without any consequences signified the downfall of human dignity and the rise of the "rule of might is right".

PTI Secretary General Nadeem Akram Raja uploaded a video statement to X, stating that the encounter in which Mr Panjutha was recovered was a "hoax".

Former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser called on the judiciary to curtail its authority and initiate a comprehensive investigation to determine who was responsible for the "abduction and the mistreatment" of the PTI lawyer.

"If the courts choose to overlook incidents of this nature today, then no individual will be safe tomorrow," Mr Qaiser said in a post on X. "This issue will continue to spread unchecked, ultimately affecting all," he added.

In a post on X, PTI MNA Mehboob Qureshi alleged that Mr Panjutha was "kept under deplorable conditions and physically assaulted" by authorities.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meets a delegation of Pakistani businessmen from the United Kingdom, on Sunday.—PTI

HRCP urges govt to withdraw preventive detention draft

Says such proposal is tantamount to legalising enforced disappearances, internment centres in absence of judicial oversight

By Arjad Mahmood

LAHORE: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on Sunday urged the government to withdraw the recently introduced Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill, 2024 and formulate legislation and a plan of action that may not be abused as a means of violating fundamental rights.

The HRCP expressed concern

over the bill, authorising the state to detain individuals for up to three months for any inquiry based on 'credible information' or 'reasonable suspicion', without judicial oversight, on the presumption that they pose a threat to national security or public order.

Given the recent surge in militancy and significant loss of life, the HRCP said it recognised the urgent need to address law and order.

"Preventive detention is not, however, the solution as such powers are liable to be abused," it stated.

Regretting the state's poor track record of using such mechanisms fairly, transparently or judiciously, the HRCP referred to the long incarceration of climate justice activist Isha Jan and former legislator Ali Waar as "troubling" charges of inciting terrorism, and more recently, the inclusion of rights activist Maheer Baloch in the Fourth Schedule.

In the current political climate, it added, there was the fear that preventive detention could be used against political rivals.

The HRCP further stated, "Of deep concern is the fact that the bill also empowers the armed forces to detain individuals on mere suspicion and without civilian or judicial oversight."

This is tantamount to legalising the use of enforced disappearances and internment centres, with scant regard for the right to due process and fair trial as protected by Articles 10 and 10A of the Constitution.

"Additionally, the grounds for such detention are imprecise and subjective and do not meet the threshold for the derogation of rights under article 4, paragraph 1, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. As such, the amendment is open-ended rather than referring to temporary or exceptional circumstances."

NA may pass bills related to SC

Continued from Page 1

may register their protest in the house at the time of passage of these bills.

Monday's agenda

According to the agenda of the NA for Monday, an ordinance regarding Supreme Court (Practice & Procedure) Bill will be tabled in the house. The ordinance already landed in the Senate on Friday.

The controversial ordinance, promulgated by President Asif Ali Zardari in September, had given a dominant role to the chief justice of Pakistan in the formation of benches.

The ordinance changes the composition of the committee that forms benches and fixes cases under the SC (Practice & Procedure) Act, 2021. While the three-member committee originally comprised the chief justice and two senior most judges of the court, it now comprises the CJ, the next most senior judge, and a judge picked by the CJ.

Another significant change is about handling of cases under

Section 184(D) of the Constitution. The ordinance makes it mandatory to document why a particular case is considered a matter of public importance before it is taken up by the court.

The ordinance also takes away the SC power to take up a case for hearing out of turn.

A number of matters featuring on the orders of the day relate to Law Minister Aamir Nazeer Tarar, who is accused as being the minister who will lay the ordinance in the house.

A calling attention notice, moved by Sahar Kamran, invites Mr Tarar's attention to Pakistan's plummeting ranking in the Rule of Law Index.

An earlier provision, other pieces of legislation not on the agenda can also be moved by including them on a supplementary agenda, which could be issued any time today (Monday).

Number of SC judges

Assisted opposition from the PTI and JUI-F, a Senate panel on Friday had agreed to increase the number of SC judges from 17 to 25.

The bill, moved by Senator Abdul Qadir, was thoroughly discussed during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice held with Farooq H. Naik in the chair. The bill introduced in the house had proposed to increase the number of judges from 17 to 20.

In another significant move, the government on Friday quietly introduced a crucial bill in the NA seeking to grant military and civil armed forces the authority to keep individuals "facing terrorism charges in 'preventive detention' for up to three months."

Deputy Speaker Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shoh referred the bill, which proposes amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 1997, to the relevant committee for consideration immediately after Law Minister Aamir Nazeer Tarar tabled it in the closing moments of a thinly-attended session, without explaining its salient features.

The bill also includes provisions for establishing JTs composed of members from various law enforcement and intelligence agencies to conduct inquiries.

Wasa workers' strike leaves Quetta without water

By Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Water supply to many localities of the provincial capital has been suspended as hundreds of employees of the city's utility company have gone on strike.

The strike by employees of the Water and Sanitation Authority (Wasa) — responsible for supplying water to Quetta — entered into the second day on Sunday.

The striking workforce also included tubewell operators and well men, due to which no water could be supplied to the city.

The Wasa employees are demanding a 25 per cent ad hoc allowance and benefits.

According to reports, no water could be supplied to the city from over 400 tubewells due to the strike.

The city was already facing a water shortage, and Wasa was supplying water from the tubewells to different localities on alternate days for just one hour.

The employees have vowed not to call off their strike till their demands are accepted.

"We are facing hardships due to inflation, which is rising with every passing day," Abdul Wahab, a tubewell operator, said.

Meanwhile, the Wasa managing director, Hamid Khan, said a summary for the 25pc allowance was sent to the provincial government, which rejected it.

He said the allowance would put an additional annual burden of Rs380m rupees on the authority.

According to reports, provincial minister Sardar Abdul Rahman Khan is in contact with the employees regarding their demands.

Meanwhile, the district administration has issued a notice to the Wasa Employees Union.

It claimed that the Baluchistan High Court had banned strikes and urged the employees to return to their jobs immediately. Meanwhile, helpless citizens are forced to purchase water from the tankers, which have increased prices due to the strike.

Punjab to reach out to India as Lahore chokes

Continued from Page 1

introduced to regulate the matters.

She said that all primary schools were being closed down for a week and the duration may be extended depending on the situation, including that preparations for two additional "green lockdowns" were also underway.

The minister, in response to a question, said that arrangements for artificial rain were complete but the clouds required for the purpose were not available.

Listing the steps taken by the government to control smog, the minister claimed Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif had mobilised all departments over the past eight months to reduce smog.

Farmers are being provided with 1,000 super seeds at a 40 per cent subsidy, with a goal to supply 5,000 units in total, she said, adding that these machines were also available on a rental basis at the union council level to discourage farmers from burning crop residues.

She added that 550 kilns had been closed, construction activities that failed to comply with SOF's were being restricted, and vehicles emitting 'excessive' smoke were also being impounded.

She further said the Environmental Protection Department had been restructured to increase its capacity. "Plans are in place to introduce an electric mass transport system," she added.

According to APF, Lahore, the city of 14 million people has been enveloped by low-grade smog, dust and pollutants caused by low-grade diesel fumes, smoke from seasonal agricultural burning and winter cooking.

The air quality index, which measures a range of pollutants, exceeded 1,000 on Saturday — well above the level of 300 considered "dangerous" — according to data from IQAir.

Breathing the toxic air has catastrophic health consequences, with the WHO saying strokes, heart disease, lung cancer and respiratory diseases can be triggered by prolonged exposure.

Pollution in excess of levels deemed safe by the WHO shortens the life expectancy of Lahore residents by an average of 2.5 years, according to the University of Chicago's Energy Policy Institute.

According to Unicef, nearly 600 million children in South Asia are exposed to high levels of air pollution.

Three coal trucks torched

Continued from Page 1

battle in Muzakhal district on Sunday.

Acting on intelligence, CTID and Frontier Corps personnel launched an operation in the Barabaran area on Saturday night following reports of suspected members of the banned Baluch Liberation Army (BLA) planning a terrorist attack, a CTID spokesperson said.

During the operation, security forces allegedly encountered a group of armed militants moving towards the area to light up.

"In an intense exchange of fire, three terrorists were killed, and two were apprehended," the spokesman said, adding that other militants managed to escape under cover of darkness but were being chased.

Arms and ammunition were recovered from the militants' possession and their bodies were shifted to the district hospital.

"The arrested terrorists are being interrogated for further leads," the spokesman said, adding that an FIR had been registered with the CTID and investigation was in progress.

In late August, over 22 passengers were killed in Barabaran after armed men intercepted a Punjab-bound train.

As IMF deadline looms, SOEs asked to tighten governance

Continued from Page 1

SOEs with the largest government claims, with 1950 agreements to be in place by end-June 2025, in accordance with the SOE Act (Schedule II) and SOE Policy.

The SOEs' boards would be required to constitute audit committees led by an independent non-member and comprising others with financial expertise, but this committee would not have

the chairman of the board or chief executive of the company as its members.

These committees will review interim financial results before board approval and conduct meetings with external auditors in the absence of the chief financial officer and chief internal auditor. Separate meetings with external auditors are also required.

The government is required under the IMF programme to

complete the development of an electronic database so that the CMU can fully meet its reporting requirements under Section 31 of the SOE Act by the end of June 2025.

In that end, the Ministry of Finance will include SOE's performance against FY24 financial and non-financial benchmarks in the December 2024 report.

According to the Fund, SOE reforms are key to reducing

losses, improving services and scaling back the role of the state.

Many SOEs provide poor-quality services and make large losses, absorbing more than 8pc of GDP in direct budget support cumulatively since 2016, it said.

The IMF and the Ministry of Finance also signed a structural benchmark for amending the 2023 Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) Act by the end of December 2024 to ensure that

SOEs under the ownership of the wealth fund report to the SWF Act's governance structures.

About \$8bn worth of companies — Oil and Gas Development Company Ltd, Government Holdings Pvt Ltd, Pakistan Petroleum Limited, National Bank of Pakistan, Mari Petroleum Co Ltd, Pakistan Development Fund Ltd and Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Ltd — are included in the Sovereign Wealth Fund.

Pakistan may face substantial losses in natural resources by 2070 due to climate change: ADB

Combined losses to the country are expected to be around 12pc of its GDP

By Amin Ahmad

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan might face the threat of substantial losses in the natural resource sector, encompassing agriculture, forestry and fisheries due to the effects of climate change by 2070, said a new report of Asian Development Bank.

The combined losses from these sectors in Pakistan are expected to be 12 per cent of GDP, which is the highest in the Asia-Pacific region, according to the Asia Pacific Climate Report 2024, published by the Asian Development Bank.

By 2070, climate change under a high-end emission scenario could cause a total loss of 16.9 per cent of GDP across the Asia and Pacific. Most of the region would face more than 20 per cent loss.

Among the assessed countries and sub-regions, these losses are concentrated in Bangladesh, Vietnam, Indonesia, India, the rest of Southeast Asia, high income Southeast Asia, Pakistan, the Pacific and

the Philippines.

The effects on labour productivity from heat waves are large and rank second or even dominate losses. While the GDP loss in 2070 from reduced labour productivity is found to be 4.9 per cent for the region, Pakistan is among the countries where the impact would be 10.4 per cent. Impact on India would be 11.5pc followed by Vietnam (8pc).

Whereas the sea-level rise is the largest source of economic losses in 2070, in the 2030s, most economic losses are driven by effects on labour productivity and energy demand.

Losses related to sea-level rise and storm surges accelerate over time, because of the combined effect of sea level rise itself accelerating, storm surges exacerbating the acceleration effect, and the cumulative effect on economic growth of costs to rebuild damaged capital.

The largest economic impacts of climate change will occur in areas with lower relative incomes, such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, the rest of Southeast Asia, Vietnam, and the Pacific, through increased coastal inundation, lower labour productivity, and lower natural resource productivity.

The poor communities are likely to be

the most affected by these calamities, the ADB warned, adding that climate change will drastically alter the living conditions for people in developing Asia.

The most pronounced impacts of climate change in the region will be felt in the frequency, duration and severity of heat waves, followed by shifts in precipitation patterns that will elevate flood risks and increase drought occurrences.

The report said more severe storms and rising sea level are expected to increasingly threaten low-lying coastal areas, including coastal megacities where populations and economic assets are heavily concentrated.

The ADB said more severe storms and rising sea level are expected to increasingly threaten low-lying coastal areas, including coastal megacities where populations and economic assets are heavily concentrated.

If the climate crisis continues to accelerate, up to 300 million people in the region could be threatened by coastal inundation, and trillions of dollars of coastal assets could be damaged annually by 2070, the report further warned.

The report cautioned that by 2070, climate change under a high-end greenhouse gas emissions scenario, rising to 41 per

cent by 2100 that could cause a total of 17pc of GDP across the Asia Pacific region. Most of the Asia and Pacific region is expected to be worse in the future, as warmer air can hold more moisture and increased temperatures increase oceanic evaporation.

However, this overall trend masks substantial variations by locality. In South Asia, precipitation would increase by around 50pc by 2100 under 4.7 centigrade mean global warming and, in East Asia, it would increase by around 25pc, whereas Southeast Asia could expect a mixture of increases and decreases.

According to the report, annual financing needs for adaptation in the region are estimated to be between \$102 billion and \$431 billion.

Nearly half of modeled needs are for coastal and river flood protection. The needs far exceed the approximately \$34 billion of tracked adaptation finance that was committed in the region in 2021-2022.

The policymakers must continuously revisit and improve predictions of impacts and systematically test adaptation measures to ensure that adaptation policy addresses evolving challenges, the report emphasised.

PARCO PEARL GAS (PRIVATE) LIMITED

Tender 0000003786-24-40

Users are invited to view the tender notice for the following:

Sl. No.	Items Description	End Submission/Opening Date and Time
1.	Installation, testing, commissioning & start-up of Pearl Type Gas Sinterizers with accessories	End Submission Through SAP ARISA 18.11.2024, 1500 hrs.
	Est. Bond Amount	Est. Opening 18.11.2024, 1500 hrs.
	PKR 25,000,000/-	
	Tender Enquiry Date / Tender Fee	SAP ARISA PORTAL LINK
	Tender Enquiry Through SAP ARISA 04.11.2024 to 13.11.2024	PKR 100,000/-
	Fee of Cost	

Single Stage - Two Stage Bidding process shall be adopted. Any party interested in participating may need to request for the Tender Documents through SAP Arisa Portal Link by uploading the following documents:

Scanned copy of the duly signed and stamped request on Company's letterhead along with the scanned copy of valid NTN and PEC ID of above mentioned.

The Service Provider should be registered with the relevant income tax authorities, and shall maintain its status as an active/valid taxpayer with those tax authorities while rendering services to PPSC.

PPSC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or to cancel the entire bidding process without assigning any reason whatsoever before or after the Bid Opening.

The advertisement is also available on PPSC website <https://ppsc.com.pk/tenders> & SAP Arisa Discovery.

Manager Materials

Disregarding CCI

THE 19th Amendment reflected the collective commitment of the 2008 parliament to increased participatory federalism. Its authors were aware that devolving powers to the federating units would not be seamless, despite the tremendous support that political parties had extended to the changes in centre-province relations. That is why the Council of Common Interests was 'institutionalised' in the amendment, with its own separate secretariat. Its decisions can now be overturned only by a joint sitting of parliament. Unfortunately, some elements are trying their best to roll back the amendment to ensure the continuation of the centre's dominant position in the federal scheme. In fact, when in power, certain political parties, including some that had supported the amendment, too, look at it as an obstacle to their plans.

The CCI is the highest constitutional body empowered to decide, formulate and regulate policies concerning interprovincial and centre-province matters, as well as those outlined in Part II of the Federal Legislative List. It also exercises supervision and control over related institutions such as Irsa. The idea is to strengthen the federal system by resolving policy disputes related to the devolved subjects at CCI meetings mandated to be held every 90 days. However, successive governments have been in breach of the Constitution by not convening these meetings, not even when the provinces have approached them with complaints or reservations. There have been at least 20 such violations in 14 years due to delays in CCI meetings. No CCI meeting has been held since the present government came to power. One scheduled in July was postponed twice. Only two CCI meetings have been held in 34 months. This shows the respect politicians have for the Constitution when in power. In February 2016, the then Senate chairman Raza Raza had stated that policy matters falling under the CCI's purview would cease to have legal effect without the council's approval.

The failure to regularly convene CCI meetings means that the process of democratic decision-making is falling apart, with central forces dominating matters where the provinces feel that their interests are hurt. For example, the present Shehbaz Sharif government has twice bypassed the CCI in total disregard of Sindh's concerns. First, it ignored the province's reservations regarding undemocratic changes in the Irsa law. Now it is banking on Sindh's request to discuss its objections on the Chadian canal project at the CCI forum. In both cases, unilateral decisions were taken to facilitate the military's Green Initiative for large-scale corporate farming. Sindh, being the lower riparian, has valid reasons to be upset over these decisions and for insisting on the CCI's intervention. The federal government is afraid that, if presented before the CCI, the project might be rejected or delayed. By breaching the Constitution to favour central forces, the government is harming participatory federalism.

Defeating TB

CONSIDERING the fact that Pakistan has the fifth highest burden of tuberculosis in the world as per the World Health Organisation, the state cannot afford to let its guard down when it comes to battling this contagious ailment. Though public healthcare may not be high on our rulers' priority list, it is essential to pursue action plans designed to defeat curable and preventable diseases for a healthier, more productive population. In 2023, 10.8m people fell ill with TB across the world; 1.25m of those patients did not survive. TB spreads through the air, and those with diabetes and weak immune systems are particularly vulnerable, as are malnourished individuals. As Pakistan has a high number of malnourished children, this can increase the latter's chances of contracting TB. The use of tobacco and alcohol can also up the risk of contracting TB. What is more alarming is that multidrug-resistant and extensively drug-resistant TB strains are increasing, largely because of improper prescription practices on the part of doctors, and a tendency among patients not to complete their course of medicines. In fact, the rise of 'superbugs' resistant to antibiotics is not limited to TB; MDR typhoid also presents a significant public health challenge.

There are various steps that can be taken to strengthen efforts to reduce and perhaps eliminate TB as a public health hazard in Pakistan. These include the promotion of better personal hygiene — which is key to the prevention of multiple ailments — as well as better ventilation, as TB is transmitted through the air. Moreover, the state needs to push for greater vaccine coverage, as the BCG vaccine, which is part of the Expanded Programme on Immunisation, can help prevent TB in babies and toddlers. Aside from prevention, there must also be focus on curing TB patients. In this respect, it is essential that those diagnosed with TB take their medication as prescribed by a medical professional. Stopping midway will only complicate matters, therefore, public awareness campaigns, particularly in areas with high TB prevalence, should stress that medical instructions regarding the drug dosage regimen must be strictly followed. Through vaccination, testing and following the proper regimen, TB can be defeated. If left unattended, hundreds of thousands of new TB cases will be added each year to the existing cases, compromising the quality of life, and adding to Pakistan's disease burden.

Ceasefire charade

THE convention is that when parties are seeking a cessation in hostilities or a ceasefire, they engage in confidence-building measures that can eventually help silence the guns. However, in Israel's case, the Zionist state has 'supported' American efforts to effect a truce in Lebanon by relentlessly pounding that country. Beirut, Basleik and Tyre have been hit in savage bombing raids over the past few days, but these actions are unlikely to convince Hezbollah — Tel Aviv's Lebanese arch-enemy — to sue for peace. In fact, Sheikh Naim Qassem, the new Hezbollah leader, taunted the Israelis in a speech after taking office, indicating that the pro-Iran armed group remains defiant. America's efforts to end the violence in Lebanon and occupied Palestine must also be questioned. The US talks of peace, while simultaneously arming and funding their Israeli allies as the latter continue to butcher Lebanese and Palestinian civilians. Such 'peace talks' led by a biased interloper are doomed to fail, and are little more than a charade for public consumption. Moreover, the reported criteria that Tel Aviv has laid out for accepting a ceasefire in Lebanon — particularly allowing it to cross the border at will in pursuit of Hezbollah, thus violating Lebanese sovereignty — will not be a ceasefire, but an instrument of surrender for Beirut.

Both in Gaza and Lebanon, Israel is stuck in a quagmire. Militarily, though it has inflicted damage on both, it has been unable to defeat Hamas or Hezbollah. Rockets and drones continue to fly towards Israeli cities from Lebanon. One of the world's best-armoured militaries — backed by a military superpower and its European supporters — has been unable to defeat two much smaller non-state actors. It is perhaps to erase this ignominy that Israel continues its genocidal war in Palestine and Lebanon. A ceasefire in both theatres is definitely required; only it will take unbiased respected international actors — who do not act as Israel's B-team — to bring one about.

OPINION

BY MALEEHA LODHI



Politics of 'nepo-babies'

Dynastic politics undermines institutions and the very notion of meritocracy.

PAKISTAN'S politics is still dominated by dynasties and family networks that manage to retain their grip over the country's top political offices and a significant number of seats in parliament. Many lawmakers come from political dynasties and have inherited seats from their parent, spouse or other familial connections. Hereditary politics continues to hold sway, with power distributed among relatives by those who secure high office. The mould of dynastic politics was broken by the rise of PTI, but while its leader was not a dynast, the party included scores of influential political families.

Pakistan is no exception to a phenomenon witnessed across the world — of political families and dynasties dominating the political landscape. What are called political 'nepo-babies' are prominent almost everywhere. A political nepo-baby is generally defined as a beneficiary of nepotism — the favouring of someone who achieved high political office and ascends to power by virtue of that. The phenomenon also includes spouses or siblings who succeed in politics due to family connections.

Many countries in Southeast Asia are governed by nepo-babies. Pongornu Shrivatsara in Thailand, Bongbong Marcos in the Philippines, Hun Manet in Cambodia and Kim Jong Un in North Korea are all children of former rulers who now run their countries. Similarly, Indonesia's vice president Gibran Rakabuming Raka is the son of former president Joko Widodo. Singapore was ruled for two decades by Lee Hsien Loong, son of Lee Kuan Yew, the country's founder and first prime minister. In South Asia, the recently ousted prime minister of Bangladesh, Hasina Wajed owed her political ascent to her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In India, three prime ministers came from the Nehru-Gandhi family; its son Rahul Gandhi is now leader of the opposition. Latin America too has had its share of political families. Argentina has seen the Peron and Kirchner families. Former Uruguay president Jorge Luis Batlle came from a family of three presidents. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is the spouse of an ex-president. Political dynasties have also been a familiar phenomenon in the West. The Kennedys, Bushes and Clintons are prominent examples in the US. Then there is

Justin Trudeau in Canada. In Europe, Estonia's premier is the daughter of a former prime minister. Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo and Marine Le Pen in France had politically famous parents.

The track record of nepo-babies has varied. Some have governed well, others not so. But there is no disagreement that however 'qualified' they may be, it is their family name that helped them attain power. Their privileged backgrounds give them an advantage that runs counter to the very notion of a meritocracy. When the political playing field is skewed by their privileged DNA and offers unequal access to other political aspirants that doesn't make political competition fair or equitable. This has adverse implications for democracy.

A study of 'Hereditary democracy' by an Australian scholar Dr James Loxton emphasised its harmful impact on the political system. It found that mediocre leaders are more likely to rise to power when political office is limited to those with family connections in politics. In some cases, they even lack formal qualifications. Voters are also let down because when they elect relatives of famous politicians, they usually assume and expect similarity in leadership qualities or policies. However, elected progeny or relatives may differ substantially from their predecessors, leading to dashed voter expectations and poor representation. An article published earlier this year in *The Economist* titled 'Damaging dynasties', argued that in several Asian countries, dynasties impeded economic growth because their interests and those of their cronies collided with the need for reform. Moreover, dynastic rule inhibits the building of strong institutions as personalisation assume an outsize role and seek to dominate institutions, allowing nepotism with institutional checks on their power. They also prevent meritocratisation of their own political parties.

Why people vote for nepo-babies is an important question but has no uniform answer as political contexts and conditions vary from country to country. Generally speaking, name recognition and people's familiarity with a well-known personality are important reasons for their support. As also their perception that the parent or relative of the political leader had earlier lived up to

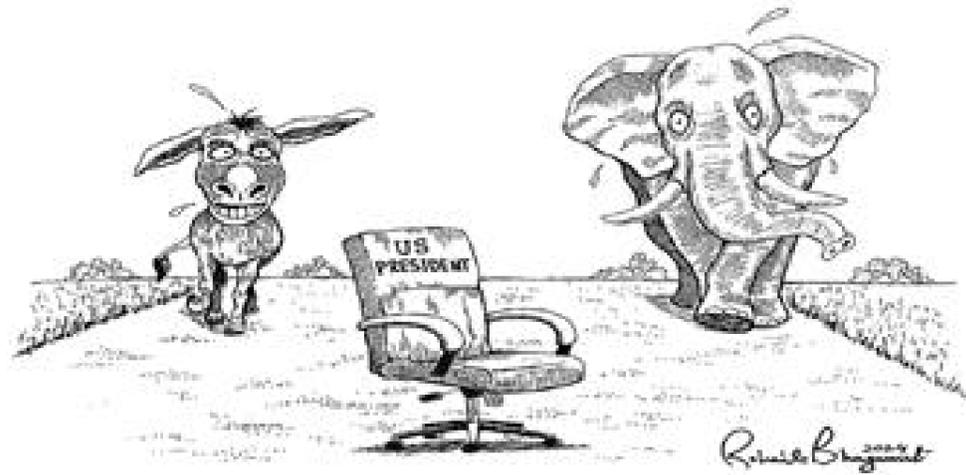
their expectations and his/her heir would bring stability. Dynastic leaders are also more prevalent in developing countries which have a political culture where politics is organised around patron-client networks and patronage till the working of the political system.

While every country with ruling dynasties has specific features, Pakistan's case is different from others in an important respect. As political involvement by the military have been pervasive throughout Pakistan's history, it has often chosen to ally with one or the other political dynasty to contain a common political foe. This has helped to shore up their position and revive their political fortunes even when public support for them has waned. They have also been inclined to preserve the status quo. The two major political parties headed by dynasties are today favoured and bolstered by the establishment, as they serve as a counterpoise to Imran Khan's PTI.

The two dynastical parties, PML-N and PPP have alternated in power for over four decades (when the military hasn't assumed overt power). An assessment of how they governed has to be undertaken separately. Noteworthy here is that while the country has moved on, politics is still stuck in the old hereditary mode. Representative politics and the governance system are increasingly misaligned with the social and economic changes that have been reshaping the country's landscape. These changes include greater urbanisation, shift in economic power from the country side to the cities, emergence of a more assertive middle class, emergence of a diverse civil society and a more 'connected' and informed citizenry, thanks to the spread of technology.

These changes are creating different public expectations and aspirations. The growing middle class wants to see a meritocratic political system free from domination by dynasties that are seen to represent the past, not the future. The key question is whether this growing middle class meets the demands of a rising middle class and family or clan-dominated politics can unleash dynamics that ultimately yield more competent and accountable governance. ■

The writer is a former ambassador to the US, UK and DM.



BY AFZAL ALI SHIGRI

Skardu's water crisis

SKARDU, nestled in the heart of Gilgit-Baltistan, has rapidly transformed from a small town into a popular tourist destination because of its modern international airport. However, despite this progress, the city's infrastructure has experienced little development, rendering it ill-equipped to meet the demands of an expanding population. For instance, chronic water shortage is one of Skardu's old challenges. The government tasked Wagha with the modernisation of Sadpara Dam, the city's sole water storage facility. The dam was built four centuries ago by Prince Ghal Khan when her husband, Raja Ad Sher Khan Anchan of Skardu, was away in battle. Unfortunately, Wagha's construction was carried out without securing a reliable water source, which exacerbated the city's water crisis.

In parallel, extensive water channels were constructed by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme with funding from USAID. Designed to procure water from the renovated Sadpara Dam, these channels were to be replenished by the Shering Nullah, a water source from a stream originating in the Deosai plateau. But due to a flawed bidding process, the construction of the diversion channel was abandoned, leading to severe water shortage and serious hardships for residents. Although Wagha attributed its inaction to environmental concerns, specifically the protection of brown bears, there were allegations that the real motive was to shield the contractor from financial losses.

Wagha closed its eyes to the massive losses borne by the state as well as the difficulties faced by Skardu's people. Even drinking water became scarce, leaving residents living along the banks of the Indus to scramble for water from leaky water hoses that serve hotels. The situation became so dire that a local cleric, Agha Bagir, witnessed a tragic scene where a child was chasing a water hose with a plastic bottle. The incident reminded him of Karbala, where infants were denied water. Deeply moved and determined to provide abundant drinking water to Skardu city, Agha Bagir resolved to take on the challenge of refilling the dam's water, bringing it to a suitable level.

Agha Bagir's strength lies in Baltistan's tight social fabric, where clerics are not only spiritual

leaders but also active participants in community service. Their contributions, particularly the ones by Agha Bagir, are visible in the form of the region's high quality school system, shelters for widows and initiatives for the rehabilitation of the poor. Another cleric, Sheikh Ghulam Hussain, runs a network of orphanages which have transformed the lives of hundreds of children. Clowns from the rival sect are also a part of the cause through their profitable agricultural ventures and a tourist resort, generating revenues for public service projects. When it comes to a common cause, clerics set their differences aside to collaborate for the greater good. Therefore, people were quick to support Agha Bagir with funds.

Skardu is not only peaceful, it is also remarkable

Skardu's committed civil society, in partnership with technical experts, is determined to achieve the impossible.

ly self-reliant, to the extent that there are no beggars on its streets and despite the region's weak economy, no one goes to bed hungry. In this spirit of solidarity, the community pursued arranging water for Skardu. While Agha Bagir spearheaded the fundraising efforts, a team of experts, led by Nariq, a social activist who is highly experienced in managing such projects, assessed the technical feasibility for the dam's water supply. They developed a feasibility plan with Phalng Stream as an alternative water source for potable water.

Despite the dearth of funds, a committed civil society, in partnership with technical experts, is determined to achieve the impossible. Acknowledging the initiative's significance, Chief Secretary Mubayyidin Wasti initiated a project based on a public-private partnership model. A committee, which was formed to oversee its inclusion in the annual development plan, also endorsed the alternative water source. However,

government processes move at a painfully slow pace. While Agha Bagir and his volunteers have recently completed the construction of the Phalng Stream, considerable work, such as arrangements for financing, remains to be done.

Moreover, Gilgit-Baltistan's ambiguous political status has turned it into a region in limbo. Its people are not represented in parliament or its governance institutions where crucial development projects are approved. Pakistan's successive dispensations have failed to offer even provisional parliamentary representation to this hapless region. Thus, Gilgit-Baltistan continues to be governed by an unaccountable bureaucracy and a weak, deeply flawed political structure.

The consequences of a feeble governance arrangement are clear. The local government is unable to hold Wagha accountable for such unmitigable neglect primarily because it is both colonial and ineffectual. As a result, Skardu has a dam with an extensive irrigation network and a 10MW power addition, without any water. Despite years of protests, Wagha proved too apathetic to undertake corrective measures. Instead of taking up the matter with the federal government, the local government has donated Rs15 million to the project and approved the creation of four new revenue districts, thereby burdening the region with the recurrent and wasteful liability of underemployed government employees.

The people of Skardu patiently await intervention from the ruling elite, testing their patience in far from advisable. The nation's clerics, deeply engaged in social work, command significant influence. While mostly prone to peace and development, some can mobilise larger and protracted protests. Given the current toxic political environment in the country, it would be prudent for the government to avoid unnecessary conflict by acknowledging and addressing the genuine demands of Skardu's populace. Immediate action is desperately required for the completion of the Phalng Stream project along with the resumption of work on the Shering Nullah so that efficient and operational water infrastructure, vital for the entire territory, is ensured without further delay. ■

The writer, a former IGP Sindh, belongs to Gilgit-Baltistan.

OPINION

BY SOHAIL HABIB

Gamification of violence

ON Aug 28, police station Bani in Sialkot came under a militant attack in which one policeman lost his life and two others were wounded. Investigations revealed that a tech-savvy group of young militants had used an online video game 'Player Unknown's Battlegrounds', popularly known as PUBG, for this attack. The chat room of this gaming platform was adopted to dodge electronic surveillance and communicate with accomplices both in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In January 2022, militants had carried out a blast in Atrakhail, Lahore, killing three persons and injuring dozens. One of the militants, involved in the blast, disclosed during investigations the use of PUBG for recruitment and coordination.

Today, more than three billion people play video games around the world and the global gaming industry is annually generating \$200bn in revenues. At the same time, the gamification of violence, where extremists use gaming to encourage violence in non-gaming contexts, is becoming more prevalent in digital playgrounds. For extremist actors, gamification is a gateway for recruitment, propaganda, radicalisation, fundraising and scam formation. This weaponisation of gaming spaces has become an important concern for multiple reasons.

Firstly, due to a huge global audience, especially children, video games provide an excellent hunting arena for indoctrination. For example, the gaming platform Roblox alone hosts daily more than 26 million children under 13 years. Secondly, the ecosystem of gaming platforms offers complete anonymity, encryption and privacy. Thirdly, these platforms are operating below the surveillance radar of law enforcement agencies as compared to conventional communication systems.

Fourthly, criminals and extremists use coded language to evade algorithms of technology used for moderation. Fifthly, live-streaming used for instant broadcast to a wider audience is difficult to detect and discontinue. Sixthly, extremists have developed electronic marketplaces for generating funds. Finally, current online gaming is becoming a forerunner of 3D fully immersive futuristic 'metaverse' which will be an attractive virtual battlefield for extremists.

Popular video gaming platforms like Steam, Drive, Twitch and Discord have historically remained a strong force of white supremacists. Here, they share right-wing propaganda like, 'Your skin is your uniform in this battle for the survival'. Features of gaming platforms are exploited in mass shootings too. Anders Breivik, the Norwegian mass shooter who

killed more than 77 people in 2011, used World of Warcraft's Call of Duty for training purposes. In 2019, an Australian gym trainer killed more than 50 people in a crowded mosque of Christchurch, New Zealand. He used the video game Fortnite for training and got inspired by the video game Spore.

In 2018, the British white supremacist David Perham shared a gamified online reward system for violent acts against Muslims. For example, 25 points were to be awarded for pulling the headscarf off a Muslim woman, 50 points for throwing acid and 1,000 points for burning a mosque. These online video games are exploited by other militant groups. In 2014, IS released custom-made military simulators (MILSIMs) known as Arma 3 so that gamers could play as virtual insurgents and shoot Westerners. It also introduced the Hurologap used for teaching alphabets with military vocabulary and illustrations of guns, bullets and rockets.

Although radicalisation is creeping into the digital playgrounds, counter-measures are still in their infancy due to the huge volume of players involved and under-resourced law-enforcement agencies. The latter deficit is both financial and technological. Not surprisingly, gaming spaces are undergoverned.

The way forward includes introducing more filters and moderation of gaming spaces to detect prohibited content and implement enforcement measures. Advanced AI technologies need to intercept violent inappropriate live-streaming. Capacity building of law enforcement in cyber-awareness training is warranted to identify malicious actors and detect cyber-crimes from extremist content.

Furthermore, empirical studies are needed to understand the nature and magnitude of extremism in gaming sites. Video-gaming platforms traditionally offer avenues for two 'E's: Entertainment and Education. However, the third 'E' of Extremism is encroaching into the digital gaming sphere. This requires more intellectual investment and financial resources to demystify and detoxify this domain. Nonetheless, securing the gaming spaces is not advisable. Rather necessary steps are required to make these less amenable to manipulation by malicious actors. ■

The writer is a security analyst and academic.



BY ZARRAR KHURO

My enemy's enemy

AMERICA has allies while its enemies have enemies. America's allies have governments that must be supported while its enemies have regimes that must be changed. And right now, in the matter of their jointly conducted genocide, America and Israel have decided, in their infinite wisdom, that this is a ripe time to change the face of the Middle East. Again.

The plan for Gaza has been clear for some time: it involves starving and terrorising the remaining population of Gaza into fleeing their homes and making way for Jewish settlements and a permanent Israeli military occupation.

But there are plans afoot for Lebanon, too, where both Israel and US feel that the Israeli attack is a perfect opportunity to degrade Hezbollah, while also changing the country's political landscape. They've not exactly making a secret of it in October, State Department spokesman Vedran Patel took a break from his regular genocide apology to tell reporters that America's "goal is to get the government and country of Lebanon to a place where it is out of the stronghold of Hezbollah".

To achieve that end, the US tasked Amos Hochstein, the US special envoy to the region and a former IDF soldier, to press Lebanon to immediately hold elections despite the Israeli onslaught. Lebanese officials protested that in order to do so, they would have to reconvene parliament and there was no guarantee that Israel would not target that parliament to eliminate politicians they find problematic, given that Hezbollah and its allies control more than half the seats. Would the US guarantee the safety of Lebanon's parliament? Hochstein had to reply.

Reportedly, the US is pressing for the head of the Lebanese army, Joseph Assaf, to take charge as president, either through fiat or through an election in which pro-Hezbollah and pro-resistance voters will be disfranchised thanks to Israel's forced evacuation of large parts of southern Lebanon where Hezbollah has its strongest support.

The Lebanese army, one should note, evacuated its positions before the Israeli assault, leaving Hezbollah to protest.

Some of Hezbollah's opponents in Lebanon are also seeing an opportunity. Samir Geagea, the leader of a right-wing Christian party, feels this is the perfect time to push for the disarming of Hezbollah, after which he feels an agreement could be reached with Israel. However, the indiscriminate nature of Israel's bombing, and the Lebanese people's own experience with Israeli atrocities mean that this is, for now, seemingly a minority view even in Geagea's own

community.

That hasn't stopped Lisa Johnson, the US ambassador to Lebanon, from using her position to pursue the agenda of eliminating Hezbollah from the Lebanese political arena and thus providing a clear field for Israel to do as it wishes. Lebanese media has reported her saying to Lebanese politicians that "Israel cannot achieve everything through war, it's time for you to do your part and launch an internal uprising under the banner of 'Enough'". Chiding them for being "afraid" of Hezbollah, she reportedly said: "Hezbollah has been defeated, its leadership is destroyed, and we are with you, and the entire free world stands by your side." The Arab states would back such a movement, she added.

Meanwhile there's brass, the government of which has been in the target sights of successive US administrations from 1979 onwards. Thus far, all attempts at actual regime change have been unsuccessful but hope springs eternal, especially in the borderline psychopathic circles of US policy-makers and think tanks.

As for who would lead Iran after the current regime is done and dusted, a very small suspect has officially thrown his crown into the ring — His Royal Highness Reza Pahlavi, the son of the deposed Iranian Shah, who is going around marketing himself as the perfect ruler of Iran which would then become the most allied ally of Israel and the US in the region. However, he only has the support of the monarchist elements of the Iranian diaspora and those wealthy are, I can assure you, the most unlikely for you will ever come across in this lifetime. In their hate for Iran's government, some of them have become the vocal allies of Zionism, going to the extent of calling for the mass killings of their own compatriots if it were to bring their Prince Charming one step closer to power.

Here's an example 'journalist' Rafik Edgah, who is affiliated with a pro-monarchist Persian news outlet embedded with the Israeli army in Gaza, while recording a piece to camera in the ruins of a Palestinian home, inscribed the slogan of the 2022 Iranian protests 'women, life, freedom', on the remains of a wall. These then are the Ahmed Charabas of today, the genocidal court jester who would be king. ■

The writer is a journalist. X: @zarrarkhuro

FROM THE PAST PAGES OF DAWN

1974 | Fifty years ago

Test of time

RAWALPINDI: The Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr. Lu Weichao, and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Aziz Ahmed, expressed the ... view here tonight [Nov 3] that "the peoples of China and Pakistan are friends sharing goals and will". They said that "our friendship has been developed and consolidated in our common struggle against hegemonism and expansionism and has stood the test of time and nobody can undermine it". They were speaking at a dinner hosted by the Chinese Ambassador for [a] Chinese delegation. Mr. Aziz Ahmed ... said that Pak-Chinese friendship had been further consolidated — News agencies.

[Meanwhile, as reported by news agencies from Lahore], Muzaffar Raza Khan, founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami, has called upon al-Shura to create awareness among the people about the forces undermining Islam and urged them to put up strong resistance against them. Addressing a meeting ... at the Jamaat headquarters ... the said leadership of public opinion was based among affluent sections of society and the circles of al-Shura. The latter could give a new sense of direction to the people if they fully discharge their duties in the light of Islamic injunctions.

1949 | Seventy-five years ago

Cease-Fire Line

NEW DELHI: Demarcation of the Cease-Fire Line in Jammu and Kashmir State extending over 800 miles of territory has been completed, the United Nations Control Headquarters in Srinagar and Rawalpindi announced today [Nov 3]. The cease-fire will come into force on Jan 1 this year. The announcement ... said that the terms of the agreement reached in Karachi on July 27 by military representatives of India and Pakistan, involving not only demarcation but also extensive troop adjustments along a wide front, have been fulfilled.

The reinforcing of existing defensive positions with new or war-like stores will be a breach of the cease-fire, according to a six-point definition ... agreed as supplement to the Karachi Agreement.

[Meanwhile, as reported by news agencies in Cairo], Hassanin Sirry Pasha formed an all independent Egyptian Cabinet tonight [Nov 3] a few hours after his three-month-old caretaker coalition had resigned. He had tendered the resignation of the old Cabinet after a stormy meeting of Ministers on electoral reform. "It is impossible to reach agreement among the coalition parties over any issue," he told newsmen.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@dawn.com

Letters may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All letters should carry the writer's address, CNIC and phone numbers.

Parliament should focus on masses



Qasim Soomro
Shikarpur

Long-term fixes

THE recent spike in inflation, along with a catastrophic trade deficit and unhealthily foreign exchange reserves, has brought the national economy to a difficult pass. The common man is experiencing the brunt of these economic troubles, with rising prices and declining purchasing power. Unfortunately, the government's focus on short-term remedies, such as borrowings, has exacerbated the situation.

The government must adopt a holistic strategy in order to address the economic challenges. It should focus on maintaining budgetary discipline and lowering its reliance on borrowings. It should invest in export-oriented sectors to increase foreign exchange revenues, encourage foreign investment and promote austerity while conducting its business.

Moreover, the government must fight against corruption, and fortify institutions while helping marginalised people to lessen income disparity.

Truly, we do not need shortcuts. We need to have a long-term vision. It is imperative for political leaders to direct their attention towards long-term fixes, and it is our duty as citizens to hold them accountable.

Besides, it is also critical to address the matter of corruption, work towards significant tax reforms to broaden the tax base, and make due investments in the human capital.

While trade and regional cooperation are also essential aspects that can help fortify economic relations with neighbouring countries, the private sector must also be given the space to propel economic progress. What we do now will determine the nation's economic destiny. Will the leaders step up to the plate?

Aamir Raza
Karachi

Avoidable deaths

IT is a matter of deep concern as well as sorrow that two young children lost their lives recently while crossing the railway track between Bani Saidaan Shah and Dharanpura Phatak Gate in Lahore.

Unfortunately, these innocent lives were lost simply because of the lack of a safe railway crossing in the area. It is a tragedy that could have been surely avoided if proper measures had been taken,

During the monsoon season earlier in the year, the main drainage mullah at Bani Saidaan Shah overflowed, causing significant disruption. Despite repeated appeals to the Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) authorities for a viable solution, the matter was ignored.

However, it was only after involving a political figure that the passage covering the mullah was dismantled. While this action temporarily alleviated the immediate chaos, it created a far more lethal problem.

The residents of Bani Saidaan Shah, who previously used the passage as a shortcut to reach Dharanpura and Mian Mir Darbar, were forced to take a longer route. Consequently, many began crossing the railway track, leading to the tragic death of two young children.

In fact, these children would have been alive today had the passage been rebuilt after the torrential monsoon rains that unleashed havoc across the province.

There is not an iota of doubt that the provincial government is responsible for the wellbeing of the people.

Now, it has become rather imperative for the provincial government to take immediate action to ensure the safety of the residents of Bani Saidaan Shah.

M. Abid Dajani
Lahore



Education funding

THIS is with reference to the report 'Leaders ask govt to stop funding public universities' (Dn 15). The news surprised me because it is disappointing to note that such recommendations are coming from leaders who are not natives.

It is said that literacy is more harmful than financial poverty for a society. The country is passing through a financial crisis owing to years of poor governance marked by wrong priorities as well as inappropriate decisions. Should we destroy our future, too?

Institutions of higher education groom the young generation by imparting quality education and training the students for future roles, and the investment ultimately

benefits the country. The institutions of higher education are essentially government think tanks.

Globally, countries have heavily invested in the higher education sector that has produced matching results. The first and foremost step public sector universities need is the restoration of their autonomy which has remained excessively compromised over the years.

Political governments and bureaucratic interventions have severely disturbed the student-faculty-employee ratio, leaving these institutions paying more to the non-productive staff. This situation has, on the one hand, caused disappointment and distress among the faculty, while, on the other hand, it has also severely dented the financial position of these institutions.

If the government is serious about improving the financial health of public sector universities, it should take an inclusive approach by engaging with the relevant stakeholders — students, faculty and university administration to not only find a win-win solution. To stop funding the seats of higher learning, mind you, is to shoot oneself in the foot.

Dr. Nigam Meemta Mirjat
Jambhore

Test transparency

THE Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) recently announced various exam positions in elementary schools in the capital city. The last date for filing applications was Sept 19, and, surprisingly, the roll numbers were issued within days, and the candidates were given only a week to prepare for the screening test. Besides, the advertisement placed in this regard was unclear on the matter of subjective allocation of seats to each province.

The test was conducted only in Islamabad, while most of the candidates skipped as they could not afford to travel all the way to the capital from different parts of the country. At least the test should have been held in at least the four provincial capitals.

Once the test was over, the FDE simply conveyed the status through text messages to all the candidates who had not been shortlisted for interviews. The message carried not a word about the exact result of the candidates. This has raised many suspicions, questioning the credibility of the test and its results. It is the right of the candidates to know how they performed in the test. Besides, when people do not know their weaknesses, how will they try to address those areas, performing better when the next opportunity comes their way?

The FDE has simply played with the emotions of the poor and intelligent candidates. The authorities concerned should take strict action immediately to make the system fair and transparent.

Name withheld on request
Rawan

► DEARTH OF VENTILATORS: The Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) and the Polytechnic lack adequate number of stretchers and ventilators. Critically ill patients in need of life support through ventilators are left waiting. My younger brother died recently due to this lack of critical care facilities. Staff at these hospitals indulge in vain talk with the attendants of patients, and waste time in unnecessary formalities. Critical care facilities and equipment should be provided to the two hospitals, otherwise innocent patients like my younger brother will continue to die prematurely deaths.

Kafkasan Khan
Islamabad

► SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS: Kharian is the only district in Balochistan division to have a nursing college. Disappointingly, there is a serious shortage of teachers in the college. The students have held several protests to highlight the issue, but no action has been taken by the authorities so far. The college admission notice does not pay heed to the students' grievances. It is imperative for the higher authorities to take notice of the issue at the earliest, and appoint qualified teachers to improve the standard of education.

Jawad Rasooli
Kharian

► DEVIL'S PROPAGANDA: Foreign media outlets continue to churn out malicious propaganda to damage Pakistan. I came across a report on a foreign website that focused on the security steps Pakistan had taken as it prepared to host the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit. Unfortunately, the report skewed the narrative, portraying a predominantly negative outlook of the country's overall security situation. Moreover, while focusing exclusively on 'security concerns', the report missed discussing Pakistan's positive role in hosting such a prestigious international event on its soil. Undoubtedly, it is essential to cover all dimensions of an event, including security, but it is also equally important to present a more comprehensive view. In essence, it is incumbent upon media in Pakistan to counter and challenge such biased reporting.

Naveed Raza
Islamabad

External Ombudsman
Veteran journalist Muhammad Ali Siddiq is Dawn's External Ombudsman (EO). His duty is to attend to our readers' complaints, and to respond to them professionally. EO is the investigating authority to whom all complaints can be referred, and it is EO who takes notice of any alleged violations of Dawn's code of ethics, and informs the Editor for appropriate action. Email: muhammadali@msd.com

PUNJAB NOTES

Gasp for air and love Lahore!

By Mushtaq Soofi

ONE who hasn't seen Lahore isn't born yet" was an old saying about Lahore. The new one is "one who is born in Lahore is going to die soon". The city has earned the honour of being one of the most polluted cities of the world. It hasn't happened in a day. The dirt has been gradual. Traditionally, Lahore has been a city of gardens from the Mughal era onward. Vestiges of some such gardens are still there as a historical memory such as Chausarji Bagh (Private Zohra Nisa Gardens), Badshahi Bagh, and Angori Bagh. Shahjahan Garden is still there in an unrecognisable condition though. It's well known that Mughal emperors, princes and princesses loved Lahore and tried to keep its environment clean and healthy. Apart from gardens and green patches, the city had a sizeable number of Rakhs (Rakhi is a Punjabi word which means a protected forest/ woodland/ timberland). The British Raj promulgated a number of laws to preserve and protect them.

The Rakhi served three main purposes, 1, it provided timber to the army, 2, it provided grazing area for the cattle, 3, it was a source of wood for the local market. All Rakhs gradually disappeared after the

emergence of Pakistan. Have you heard of Rakhi Kot Lakhpar, Rakhi Shahdara, Rakhi Talaha and Rakhi Rainsind? They were mini jungles that functioned as a natural oxygen tent for Lahore.

It's now difficult to breathe in Lahore because of polluted air. People especially the elderly and vulnerable are falling sick as there is no escape from what chokes their throats. The last three decades have been quite tough for the city. The administration and the decision makers despite their professed love for Lahore have done everything that ecologically and environmentally damaged it. The main reason is that there is no representative city government. Bureaucracy and political class neither sought people's input nor allowed free public debate on the so-called projects they launched for the uplift of the metropolis.

Let's look briefly at the initiatives that have created an eye-opening mess with disastrous consequences. A property sharks have been allowed to buy agricultural lands that surrounded the city for residential and commercial purposes. The officials call it development, which they claim, has eased the pressure on the housing problem. They first, it must be remembered, discouraged vertical construction by allowing only two floors for the houses. Then touting the housing shortage they gave licence to

the property developers to gobble the lands that environmentally and ecologically protected Lahore with bush, crops, trees and flora and fauna.

B, In the name of broadening roads and creating signal-free corridors green patches and belts have been destroyed and millions of trees killed for the benefit of polluted motorists who don't know how to drive sensibly. Instead of training and disciplining the drivers they encouraged them to indulge in reckless speeding at the expense of the city's health.

C, In the north of the city there was a big area across the dried-up river Ravi that had fruit gardens and grew vegetables and flowers for the local market. In the year 2020, the then government launched with great fanfare the Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project in this very area. It displaced farmers, indulged in land grabbing by forcing the owners to sell the pieces of their lands at throwaway prices for the benefit of commercial developers.

The Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA), concerned with the project makes tall claims in highfalutin language about reviving the river whose waters Pakistan had sold to India long ago. The Ravi is now a stinking sewer as everything that contaminates and pollutes is thrown into it by industrial units.

Low and behold, without fresh water and regulating the industrial waste they claim we would see the river flowing as it was seven decades ago. This area which is now with the property tycoons along the Ravi used to function as the lungs of north Lahore. It's not a small area by any standard. It is spread over 40,000 hectares (100,000 acres).

D, Central Business District (CBD) was established in 2021 in Lahore in a high density push area called Gulberg. Land measuring 158 acres was in possession of Walton Airport which was initially taken from the Forest Department in Rakhi Kot Lakhpar and village Bhaddra in 1938. The Punjab government later transferred more land to it. Its land worth Rs350 billion was sold for Rs50bn floating all the rules, it is alleged. The racket is being peddled by concerned agencies. CBD was handed over 295 acres of land at the expense of a number of trees and green belts and patches. The area would have vertically constructed in way more facilitating the corporate sector. The scale of activities and traffic congestion would further pollute Lahore's air and sky. With the destruction of the area's ecology and environment, CBD plans to work towards a prosperous future by promoting comprehensive and sustainable projects that enhance the urban landscape. By

urban landscape they surely mean constructed monstrosity in a city that parts breathlessly.

The lords and the masters of Lahore have made it unlivable with their plans and projects designed to the advantage of the rich and the powerful. Now when it's crunch time they are not looking for a scapegoat. The easiest target is the farming community which is accused of choking the city with their stubble burning while the fact is that auto vehicles, poorly regulated industrial activities, elimination of trees and construction dust hugely pollute the atmosphere, environment and air at local level. They cannot even stop the steel industries from using the used tyres as fuel that emit highly poisonous fumes making 40 of the per cent population in the area beyond Bhaddrana seriously sick. They take concrete measures to improve the situation. Soon they would advise the people grazing under the unbearable inflation and high prices of commodities to buy air purifiers. Can someone count how much it would cost the people and public hospitals to treat allergies, respiratory diseases, lung cancer and heart conditions caused by air pollution in the wake of official inaction? Above all, the uplift programmes conceived in smoggy isolation will get us nowhere.—soofi09@hotmail.com

'Most-wanted' human trafficker arrested

By Our Correspondent

GUJRAT: Gajrat circle of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) claimed to have arrested a 'most wanted' human trafficker who was also a proclaimed offender (PO) in the case pertaining to the Libya boat capture tragedy occurring in 2021.

The suspect, Badshah Ahmed, a resident of Hafizabad, was also included in the FIA's red book in 2023 as a most wanted trafficker.

According to a spokesman, an FIA team led by Gajrat Assistant Director Muhammad Younis, arrested the suspect from Hafizabad district during a raid on Sunday.

The spokesman says the suspect had been booked in at least 10 different cases of human trafficking lodged with the FIA's Gajrat circle.

In 2021, the suspect, along with his accomplices, illegally converted Rs.8 million from each of the 12 Pakistani nationals intending to migrate to Europe.

The individuals were initially flown to Nigeria, and then to Niger, from where they crossed into Libya through unauthorised means. Once in Libya, they were held in safe houses under deplorable conditions before being transported by boat to Italy.

Tragically, the boat carrying these individuals sank, and all on board are presumed dead.

Following the incident, different FIRs were lodged with the FIA's Gajrat circle.

An FIA official says further investigation into the matter was underway.

CAMPBELL: Aiming at curbing illegal human trafficking, the Sialkot International Airport and the FIA have deployed standees carrying the material against human trafficking.

An FIA official said an awareness campaign had been launched at the airport in connection with the ongoing drive against human trafficking in Gujranwala and Gajrat regions since most Pakistani exports belonged to these regions.

He said the awareness material had been put at the arrival and departure immigration counters, boarding halls and passenger lounge of the airport. He added that awareness seminars in the potential rural areas were also being conducted on a regular basis to convince the rural youth to stay away from becoming victims of human smugglers.

The standees also carry warnings of imprisonment and fine for the crime of travelling on fake visas and documents. Meanwhile, the FIA Gujranwala claimed to have offloaded 38 passengers, including five beggars from different flights at Sialkot airport during the last week whereas 17 human smugglers were arrested and 27 cases of human trafficking were lodged.

LDA retrieves state land in Sabzazar, Gujarpura

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) teams retrieved previous state land in Sabzazar and Gujarpura (China Scheme), after demolishing illegal structures as part of an ongoing crackdown on land mafia in the city.

"Around 120 kanal land, consisting of several 5 to 20 marla plots, has already been retrieved in Johar Town during various operations. And now similar operations have also been launched in Sabzazar and Gujarpura housing schemes where a number of plots are under illegal occupation of the land mafia," an official source in the LDA told Dawn on Sunday.

The official requesting anonymity said the land mafia has been found involved in receiving rent from illegal occupants, mostly nomads, who were residing on the plots in shanties.

Besides, he said some officials, in collusion with land mafia, also allowed permanent encroachments on LDA-owned plots by preparing fake ownership documents.

The official said the pace of land retrieval activities has been accelerated following the frequent surprise field visits by LDA Director General Mr Tahir Farooq.

The DG also paid visits on Sunday to various housing schemes, including Sabzazar and Johar Town and supervised the ongoing operations. He also visited various city roads to see the patchwork being carried out there by the LDA and Taps.

GAS THEFT: The Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) teams on Sunday disconnected another 125 illegal connections for gas theft, imposing fines amounting to Rs3.7 million in those involved in the crime.

In Lahore, according to a spokesman, 26 illegal connections were severed, along with one for compressor use, resulting in fines of Rs 1.61m.

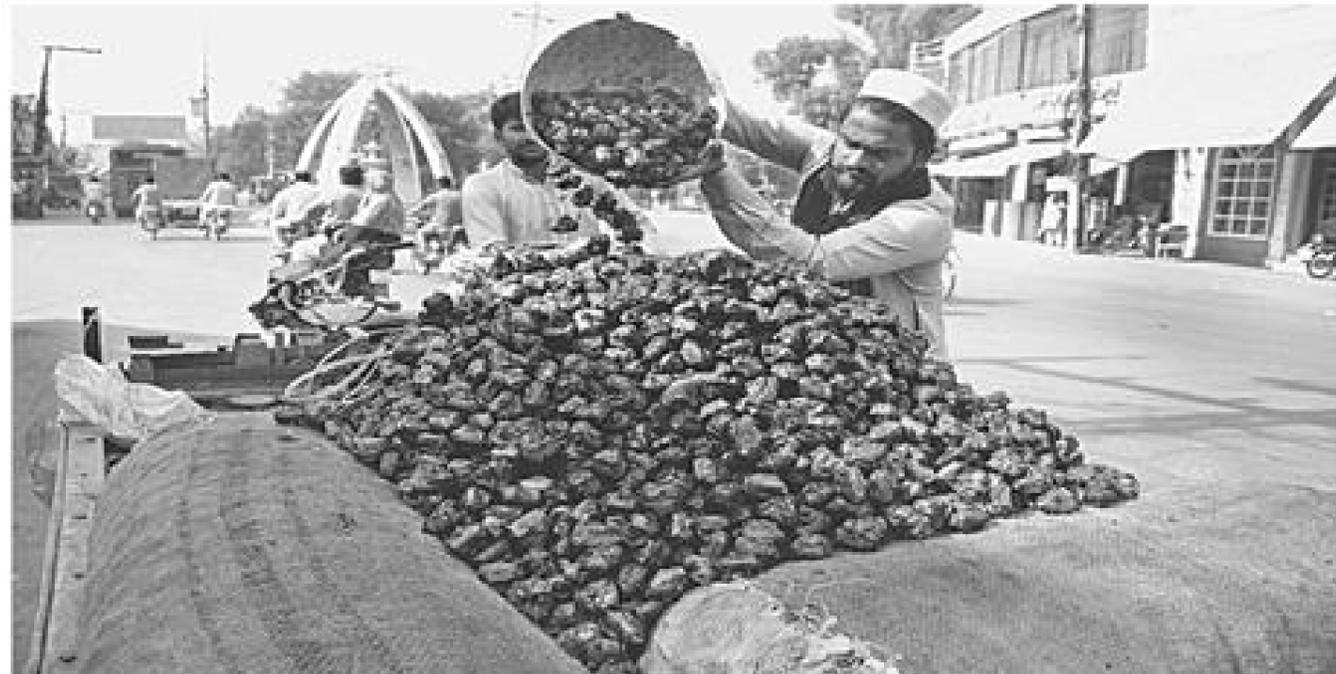
The Gujranwala team disconnected 4 illegal connections, imposing total Rs3.1m fine on violators, while in Gajrat, one illegal connection was removed, besides two others for compressor use.

Similarly, Faisalabad saw four disconnections, with fine totaling up to Rs0.05 million.

In Sheikhpura the SNGPL teams severed five connections, along with slapping total fine of Rs0.67m.

In Multan, 20 connections were cut due to illegal usage and for compressor use, while in Sahawal four illegal connections were severed and two others cut for compressor use, with Rs0.04m fine.

The Bahawalpur team disconnected 12 connections for compressor use.



MULTAN: Water chestnuts available at Rs100 per kg can be seen on various city roads.—APP

Court orders case against SHO for trespassing on man's house

By Our Correspondent

RAJAWALPUR: Rawwala Additional Sessions Judge Mirza Shabbid Baig on a petition ordered registration of a case against Sheikh Fazal station house officer (SHO) for trespassing on the house of the petitioner during a raid.

According to the petitioner, Mahmood-ul-Hasan, the SHO, along with some other persons, illegally raided his house and violated his privacy, to arrest a man Ali Hassan, whose bail was rejected by the court.

He alleged that the SHO also subject of the women of his family to torture and harassment.

BOOKED: Rawwala police booked a woman, along with three others, for murder of her husband, who was an army man.

According to police, the victim, Farman, had a family dispute with his wife Zorvat. When Farman came to her house the other day, Zorvat, along with three others, allegedly shot him dead.

The police registered an FIR against the victim's wife and her three unidentified accomplices, without any arrest so far.

MURDER CASE SOLVED: Feroz Shah police in Vehari district claimed to have solved a blind murder case, arresting a woman, along with her male friend, for their alleged involvement in her father's murder.

According to Vehari district police spokesperson, the suspect, Sadia Anis, after her arrest, confessed to have killed her father Amir Ali Shah for refusing to allow her to marry her friend, co-suspect Wasim Gulzar.

The police say that Sadia would monitored her father's routine and informed the co-suspect Wasim about it. Wasim chased Mr Shah for about 15kms and as he reached near 465/ER village during night time, he shot him dead and fled away.

The police also claimed to have recovered the pistol and motorcycle used by Wasim in the crime.

Woman tortured to death by husband, in-laws

By Our Correspondent

OKARA: A woman was allegedly tortured to death by her husband and in-laws at Khalid Town in the city on Sunday.

As per first information report (FIR) registered by Muhammad Iqbal, a resident of Kasur, received a phone call from his son-in-law Imran who informed him that his daughter, Amna, had expired.

Iqbal and his relatives reached Okara. They found clear marks of torture on body of Amna. They called police on 15 and policemen reached Amna's house and launched legal proceedings.

City B-District police registered a case against victim Amna's husband Imran, her mother-in-law Surraya and her husband's uncle, Rafiq. The FIR does not mention the cause of alleged murder.

Upgraded Rohtas Museum opens

By Our Correspondent

LAHORE: The Directorate General of Archaeology Punjab has reopened the Rohtas Fort Museum to the public following extensive maintenance and upgrades.

The museum provides a revitalized experience that celebrates the cultural and architectural significance of Rohtas Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Iqbal Khan, deputy director of archaeology, supervised the upkeep and maintenance work. Entry to the museum is free for all visitors. The museum's updated exhibits showcase rare artifacts, enriching the visitor experience. This reopening is part of the Punjab government's broader initiative to promote heritage tourism and foster greater appreciation for Pakistan's historical treasures.—Staff Reporter

Man dies after falling from thresher

By Our Correspondent

TOBA TEK SINGH: A man died on Sunday after falling from a thresher machine being transported with a tractor near Hassan Bahal in Athara Hazrat tehsil, Jhang.

Reports said Muhammad Adnan slipped from the machine at a road bump and was struck by a fan following closely. He suffered injuries and was shifted to the Rakhs Sultan Rural Health Centre, where he succumbed to his injuries.

PASSPORT: Passport workers in Toba Tek Singh can now deposit fees at a second branch of the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP). Previously, fees could only be deposited at the main branch, leading to long queues daily. Tahir Arshad, manager of the city NBP branch, confirmed on Sunday that his branch is now authorized to receive passport fees.

OBITUARY: The wife of PTI MPA from Faisalabad Chaudhry Javed Niaz Mang passed away on Sunday after a prolonged illness.

She was the sister-in-law of another PTI MPA Rana Akbar Ahmad Khan. Her funeral prayers are scheduled for 1pm on Monday.

APNA GHAR: Former Faisalabad Deputy Mayor Sheikh Muhammad Younis, ex-MINA Haji Muhammad Akram Anwar and former MPA Rana Ali Abbas distributed certificates on Sunday to recipients eligible for houses under the 'Apna Ghast, Apna Ghar' programme.

Loans are being provided to landowners with one to five marlas of residential plots in the city and one to ten marlas in villages.

THEFT: Police and Reserve 1122 teams arrested an alleged robber who jumped into a large waterlogging canal outside Jhang city on Sunday.

Reports say Javed Iqbal Baloch of Sillanwali, Sangolha, had been hiding in crops when police spotted him, prompting him to leap into the canal. Rescue drivers pulled him out. Jhang City Police SHO Shabbid Anwar said the suspect was involved in 32 robberies across various districts.

DEATH: A motorcyclist died when his seat struggled him near Adha Soofi Bk Khos in Lahore Road, Jaranwala, Faisalabad, on Sunday evening. Reports stated that Ghulam Murtaza (45) was riding with another person when his seat became entangled in the bike's wheel, causing his instant death.

THEFT: A man accused of rape managed to escape police custody in Mianchangan, Khanowal, on Sunday.

Reports stated that the suspect had allegedly rape a child and was under arrest but escaped from Mianchangan city custody. SHO Arsalan Anwar claimed the accused would be arrested shortly and that action is being taken against the ANI responsible for the escape.

Two die, one injured in accident

By Our Correspondent

GUJRANWALA: A woman and her teenage son died while her daughter suffered injuries in an accident near Attari Yirkhan on Sunday.

Forty-year-old Nabila Bibi was riding a motorcycle behind her 14-year-old son, Allah Dad, while her 18-year-old daughter Saira was also riding the same bike. They were going to Beggar for shopping. Meanwhile, a tractor-trolley appeared on the road coming from the opposite side and the motorcycle collided with it. As a result, Nabila and Allah Dad died on the spot while Saira was critically injured. Rescue 1122 shifted the injured girl to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital in Gujranwala. The driver of tractor trolley fled the scene after the accident.



A CHEF barbecues chicken at a food outlet on Khan Mast Road, Peshawar, on Sunday. — White Star

Over 5,000 community schoolteachers without salary for eight months

Cash-starved govt spends huge amounts on protest rallies

By Muhammad Ashfaq

PESHAWAR: Although Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has been spending huge amounts on holding protest rallies for release of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder Imran Khan and showing interest in purchase of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), it has failed to pay salaries to 5,238 teachers of girls' community schools during the last eight months. The non-payment of salaries to non-formal schools for girls functioning in far-off areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has endangered the future of 276,000 students enrolled in such institutions. These schools have been functioning under the auspices of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elementary and Secondary Education Foundation

(E&SEF) for the last many years. The institutions have been established in far-off areas where no government schools exist. "The teachers, who have not received salaries, are posted to 2,200 girls' community schools, 541 basic education center schools (BICS) and 275 National Commission of Human Development (NCHD) schools," sources told this scribe. The provincial government has fixed Rs26,000 as minimum wage for unskilled labour, however, government is paying Rs21,000 salary to teachers of these schools. A senior official in E&SEF told Dawn that the foundation required Rs2 billion to pay salaries to teachers but the provincial government was reluctant to release funds to it. He said that since the transfer of the then managing director of E&SEF, Zameer Masani, in September 2023, the foundation was not working efficiently owing to frequent transfers of its managing directors and lack of efforts to get the funds released. "Mr Masani had made tireless efforts for putting life in the oth-

erwise dead foundation because managing directors in the past had taken no interest in it as they had just taken handsome salaries," said the official. He said that after the transfer of Mr Masani in September 2023, the foundation was headed on additional charge basis by the then special secretary of elementary and secondary education department till appointment of Anwar Rehman as managing director in December 2023. He said that Mr Rehman was transferred in August 2024 and the charge of E&SEF was given to the managing director of Merged Areas Education Foundation, Mian Amirullah, till appointment of Khawaja Fakhim Sajjad as its managing director in mid-September. One of the teachers of girls' community schools told Dawn that teachers of the community schools were more hard workers than the regular teachers of government schools. She said that people had more trust in them that was why each of 4528 had enrolled 500 to 1000 students. "We are in troubles as we

have not received our salaries since March," she said, wishing not to be named. She said that she covered a distance of 10 kilometers to reach the school and changed several public transport vehicles as teachers of these schools were unable to hire a Suzuki van or rikshaw for pick and drop. Earlier, she said, the teachers of these schools had hired a rikshaw for their pick and drop. However, they were unable to pay the driver since the government stopped paying them salaries, she added. The teacher said that she knew that several GCS schools had been closed owing to non-payment of salaries to teachers. She added that there were also possibilities of closure of more schools if the government didn't release salaries to teachers immediately. "Now we are taking loans from our relatives to fulfil our basic needs as we have no other source of income," she said. On one hand, the provincial government has not been paying salaries to teachers but on the other hand, the district programme officers have made their lives miserable on one pro-

ject or other, according to a teacher. Officials in E&SEF told Dawn that as per government's criteria for establishment of GCS, local community would provide a building of two or three rooms for the school while government would provide teachers, books for students, chair for teachers, table, white board and other school related materials to the institutions. However, several teachers of GCS told Dawn that community had not provided building for schools instead teachers lived in buildings and paid rent collectively from their salaries. They said that owners of the buildings were also putting pressure on them to pay the rent or vacate the building. "How we will pay the rent as the government has stopped our salaries," they questioned. Sources in E&SEF confirmed to this scribe that 40 per cent rent of schools were paid by teachers from their salaries. As usual, Minister for Education Faizal Farooq didn't respond to the queries forwarded on his WhatsApp regarding non-payment of salaries to teachers.

Hazara province movement decides to mobilise people

By Our Correspondent

MANSEHRA: The Subah Hazara Tehreek has decided to hold public gatherings across the country to mobilise the people before presenting a resolution in the National Assembly, demanding a separate province. "Our core body has decided to adopt a multipronged strategy for the Hazara province's cause. We will reach out to parliamentary leaders of political parties to seek their support for the approval of the Hazara province resolution in the National Assembly," Saad Mohammad Yusuf, chief of the movement, told reporters here on Sunday.

Accompanied by other leaders of the Tehreek, he claimed that people from across Hazara, which comprises eight districts, were united for the cause of a separate province regardless of their political affiliations.

Mr Yusuf, who is also an MPA and central vice-president of PMF, N, said that their core body had recently decided to hold public gatherings across Hazara and the rest of the country.

"The complete schedule of our public meetings, which will likely begin from Karachi, will be issued shortly," he said. Mr Yusuf, who is also a former federal minister of religious affairs, added that a committee had been formed under his chairmanship and comprising former lawmakers Murtaza Javed Abbasi, Gaseem Ali Shah and Captain retired Mohammad Saifur to engage parliamentary leaders of all major political parties in the National Assembly to persuade them for the passage of the Hazara province resolution, which has already been submitted to the lower house of the parliament.

"We are optimistic that our struggle, in which we have lost many precious lives since the renaming of the North-West Frontier Province to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010, will soon achieve a breakthrough," Mr Yusuf said.

He said that creating more federating units was essential to address the country's socioeconomic challenges.

KPRA posts 40pc growth in revenue collection

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) collected Rs14.24 billion on account of sales tax on services and Infrastructure Development Cess (IDC) in the first four months of the ongoing financial year 2024-25, marking a 40% growth compared to the same period last year. A statement issued here on Sunday said that the authority collected Rs11.25 billion from the sales tax on services as compared to Rs9.3 billion collected last year (FY24). KPRA collected Rs3.59 billion on account of IDC as compared to Rs2.28 billion collected in FY24. This reflected a 21% growth in sales tax on services and 100% growth in IDC year-on-year. KPRA director general Fouzia Iqbal appreciated the authority's efforts and expressed confidence that with continued efforts, not only would the annual target be met, but it would be surpassed by a significant margin.

"If we continue with our current approach, we will exceed this year's target," she said. She said that the provincial government's support was instrumental in developing effective strategies for achieving its targets. — Bureau Report

Bomb defused in Bajaur's Mamond tehsil

BAJAJUR: The local police on Sunday recovered and defused an improvised explosive device in Mamond tehsil of Bajaur tribal district.

According to a statement issued from the office of the district police officer, the IED, which was placed in a field in Erabi area, was recovered by personnel of the bomb disposal squad.

The statement said that the bomb, which was placed by unknown miscreants for sabotage purpose, was later defused peacefully. — Correspondent

Swat villagers unwilling to give land for cantonment

Jirga pledges to resist any move of forcible eviction by govt

By Faizal Khaliq

SWAT: The residents of 13 villages in Kabal tehsil declared here on Sunday that they would not give any portion of their land for the planned extension of cantonment. They pledged to resist any such attempt by the government. They took the decision in a jirga convened by elders and organised by local social organisation Sama Lash. Hundreds of people including MPA Sultanullah Khan, Sher Shah Khan, Sultan Ali Khan, Riaz Ahmad, Sulman Khan, Zahid Khan, Imran Khan and Rashid Ahmad Swati attended the jirga. They said that a large portion of their land had already been acquired over the years for projects like airport, cantonment, bypass and Swat Expressway. Now, they said, the state was seeking additional residential and agricultural lands for extension of cantonment. The local elders recalled that several years ago, approximately 4,000 kanal of land was taken for the cantonment by invoking Section 4, with the government compensating them at a rate of just Rs250 per square foot. They said that the rate was far below the market price, which stood at



ELDERS of 13 villages held a jirga in Swat on Sunday. — Dawn

around Rs2,700 per square foot for residential land and Rs25,000 per square foot for commercial areas. They added that many locals felt that their land had been forcefully seized. They said that 13 villages including Ningolai, Bara Bandai, Kozai Bandai, Dhawal, Kanja, Dargam, Mansafherai, Soandherai, Ghawara, Dely, Dughdaga, Sagram, Lalo Bandai, Kamar Bandai, Mahooka, Jarkot, Rama and Khan Tangay would be impacted by the proposed extension of cantonment. Villagers said that these lands were the only source of livelihood for many, which they were unwilling to sacrifice. "If gov-

ernment insists to seize our land, we are prepared to sacrifice our lives rather than surrender our homes and farmlands. We are deeply rooted in this land and we have no intention of leaving," they added. The participants of the jirga voiced fears of displacement, saying that there was insufficient land in Swat to accommodate more than 45,000 people, who would be affected. "We don't want to become refugees in our own land. If forced to leave, we would rather die on our land than be driven away," they said. They said that any attempt by state to forcibly evict them would be met with strong resistance.

Muqam accuses PTI of misleading public with false slogans

SHANGLA: Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (Safraz) and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs Eng Amir Muqam said here on Sunday that PTI government was misleading the public with hollow slogans and engaging them in politics based on lies.

He was addressing a peace jirga after turning the 30 years old enmity into friendship between families of Poran Bandori.

The families of Ayub Khan and Ameer Zareen Khan announced an end to a 30 years long enmity due to reconciliation efforts of Eng Amir Muqam.

Mr Muqam was proud of the great regard he received from the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly Shingla, and said he always put the needs of others before his own.

The minister said the people problems related to Nadra, electricity, gas and national highway authority were addressed.

On the other hand, he said that PTI has deceived people on the name of change and hollow slogans. He said that despite the third term in government, PTI had failed to address people's problems.

Eng Amir Muqam heard about people problems and issued spot orders on some applications. — AFP

Official transferred after levelling corruption charges against hospital MS

Hospital head accuses accounts officer of running parallel administration

By Asadq Yousafzai

PESHAWAR: The accounts officer of public sector Naseerullah Khan Baber Memorial Hospital Peshawar has been transferred after he accused the medical superintendent of misappropriation of hospital's Rs40 million funds, according to documents. However, the medical superinten-

dent said that the official was creating hurdles to operation of the hospital and he requested the director general health services to never appoint him again at the same hospital. Mohammadullah, accounts officer in SPN-17 of Naseerullah Khan Baber Memorial Hospital (NKBMH), wrote a letter to Dr Fakhrauddin, the medical superintendent of the same hospital, on October 28 and asked him to deposit Rs19.90 million to the government's kitty otherwise he would approach higher authorities for recovery of the 'shortfall' sum he had sighted off. The letter titled "Illegal withdrawal of specialists' share in lieu of Senior Card Plus, hospital management committee and trustee contribu-

tion' too, stated that the medical superintendent had withdrawn illegally the amount during his three and half years tenure. It said that the MS was requested to deposit the same. The officer alleged that these irregularities had also been pointed out by audit teams during inspection of record of 2023-24 but the MS gave Rs2.5 million as bribe to auditors to bury the issue. He said that the MS illegally charged the hospital management committee (HMC) and stuffed it with relatives and home servants without fulfillment of usual formalities as per rules. He also alleged that he had brought into his notice that a junior clerk had passed fake arrears bills to the tune of Rs10 million but instead

of launching disciplinary proceedings against him, he was awarded the opportunity to do exceptional and bypass the accounts officer. He said that recently, a nephew of the same clerk was appointed as ward orderly at the hospital despite ban on recruitments imposed by the government. He said that other major irregularities were also committed by the MS which he would reveal during a high level inquiry. Responding to the allegations, the MS in a letter surrendered the services of Mohammadullah to Director-General Health Services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on administrative grounds for further posting anywhere in the province with the

request that he should never be posted to Naseerullah Khan Baber Memorial Hospital Peshawar in future, in the best interest of public. "Mohammadullah is making his advance and interference in the smooth functions of hospital affairs," he said. The MS alleged that the accounts officer was interfering in hospital administration, especially in radiology department and elaborated that he concocted a written complaint against Mohammad Khan of radiology section. "Then the employee came to my office and admitted that she submitted a written complaint in the presence of senior administrative officers," he added.

He alleged that the attitude of the officer with all the employees including doctors, pharmacist, nurses, paramedics and other staff was unethical as he had set up a parallel administration in the hospital, which was tantamount to misconduct and disobedience under the prevailing rules. The copy of the letter has also been sent to local MPA, secretary and director general health and other concerned officials whom manager of the bank have been requested not to contact until the signature of Mohammadullah. The account section has been instructed to stop his pay immediately. The MS didn't respond to message sent by this scribe to seek his version.

Chinese video game becomes a global sensation

Unfinished, the animated finale of Black Myth: Wukong, resonates with audiences worldwide

THE first Chinese AAA game, *Black Myth: Wukong*, inspired by the classic novel *Journey to the West*, has become a global sensation since its release in August this year. Every aspect of the game — from its music and songs to its animation — has been in the spotlight, including *Unfinished*, the ending clip of chapter six, and its director Yang Yiqiang.

"I've watched several reactions videos from international fans, and I was surprised to see that many of them were moved to tears," said Yang, founder of Game Science Animation.

For him, the ability of something so inherently Chinese to resonate with global audiences is the triumph of the animation.

"When you truly incorporate your own traditions and cultural identity as a Chinese person, this sentiment can reach foreigners too. Even if they aren't familiar with the story of *Journey to the West* or the visual style we used, they can sense that the product is cohesive in every aspect and feel emotionally connected to it," he explained.

Yang credits the success of the clip and its reflection of Chinese culture to a collaborative effort: the dialogue is taken from the original novel, the music is inspired by the theme song of the 1986 TV adaptation of *Journey to the West*, and the character Wukong is influenced by its Peking Opera portrayal.

However, the unique animation of the Chinese *Shanshu* (painted comic books) is solely the work of Yang and his team. They initially explored various print-



SCENES from the animated finale of *Black Myth: Wukong*—Courtesy China Daily

ing styles, including traditional Chinese ink and wash, before ultimately choosing the *Shanshu* aesthetic.

"*Shanshu*-style illustrations are familiar to most Chinese people, but no one has seen them animated before," Yang noted. "This blend of familiarity and novelty creates a unique effect."

Yang conducted extensive research, drawing inspiration primarily from traditional Chinese ink wash painting, or *shu* (literary painting). One of his main sources was the work of Li Gonglin (1049-1106), a Northern Song Dynasty painter renowned for his techniques.

"My goal is to restore the ancient essence of *Journey to the West*," Yang explained. "I wanted to steer clear of contemporary animation techniques, and Li Gonglin's style

was exactly what I needed."

Yang was also deeply inspired by the murals in Dunhuang, Gansu province, which he studied to capture intricate details, like the folds in clothing. Another major influence was the actor Dai Jinhong, who created an entire set of artworks based on *Journey to the West*.

Even with thorough research and preparation, the project remained challenging for Yang and his team, as they were not only reviving a traditional style but also pioneering a new approach to animating *Shanshu*.

Yang described how his team was "building a new animation technique from scratch." One example was animating a large cluster of auspicious clouds, something never attempted before. According to

Yang, the final version of the clouds features multiple circular lines that rotate independently, with the overall outline moving alongside the inner circles. This creates a dynamic effect as cloud clusters merge, separate, and then merge again.

"While it may appear to be a single pattern, it actually contains many layers of motion, making this technique a breakthrough for us," explained Yang.

Illustrating animals like snakes, turtles, and chickens pecking at grain also presented challenges for Yang and his team. Despite their industry experience, it was their first time animating some of those animals.

"We looked for references from books and videos, and some team members even visited the zoo. We needed to see the actual animals and capture their appearance from different angles before bringing them to life in animation," Yang said.

As *Unfinished* received attention and praise, many industries suggested that if expanded into a feature-length film, it could become the next "classic." Yang's response was practical. He noted that his combined team of about 70 people took six months to complete the later production stages for the short film. "Creating a full-length film would require two to three hundred staff," he said.

He added that innovative techniques, like the new movement patterns, are mastered by only a small number of specialists. "Making short films is like using experimental technology in a lab, not yet ready for mass production," Yang explained. "While we've developed the method in a lab setting, scaling it up would pose numerous challenges — standardization issues, a limited pool of skilled personnel, and the training of a larger talent base are all practical obstacles."—China Daily/ANN

India cuts power supply to Bangladesh

INDIA's Adani Power (Bharat) Limited has halted its power supply to Bangladesh, saying it has yet to receive outstanding bills. Bangladesh reported a shortfall of more than 1,000MW on Thursday night after the 1,400 megawatt Adani plant reduced supply.

Power Grid Bangladesh PLC data show the plant is producing around 700MW from a single unit now.

Earlier, Adani Power (Bharat) Limited (APPL) had written to the power secretary, asking the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) to pay the bills by October 30.

"Otherwise APPL shall be constrained to take remedial action under the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) by interrupting power supply on October 31," Adani wrote in the letter seen by *The Daily Star*.

The letter, dated October 27, said: "As you [secretary] are aware, the deadline is approaching shortly and till date, PDB has neither provided LC for an amount of \$170.03 million from Bangladesh Krishi Bank nor cleared the outstanding amount of \$84.6 million."

A PDB official told *The Daily Star* that they had cleared a portion of previous dues earlier, but since July, Adani has been changing more than the previous months.

He said the PDB has been paying around \$28 million weekly, while the charge is more than \$22 million. "This is why the due payments increased again."

The official added that they had submitted last week's payment to Krishi Bank as well, but the bank failed to open a letter of credit against the payment due to a dollar shortage.

About the additional payment, he said, when the PDB raised a question on the coal pricing in February last year, they signed a supplementary deal. The deal obliged Adani to quote coal prices less than the rates charged by the other coal-fired power plants, such as Faria and Kamraj.

After the terms of the one-year supplementary deal, Adani again started charging as per the PPA. According to the PPA, coal prices are calculated based on the average price of the Indonesian coal index and the Australian Newcastle index, which increases the prices.

The Adani letter said the company once again requested PDB to expedite payments of "material defaults" no later than October 30.

It said Adani revised the deadline for the suspension of power supply to October 30 from October 20 in response to a PDB letter on October 17, which confirmed that the Krishi Bank agreed to issue LC within 10 business days.

"We reiterate that non-submission of LCs and non-payment of outstanding amount within due date are the material defaults of PDB under the PPA, which has adversely affected the performance of APPL in supplying power to PDB," it said.

"We have been facing tremendous difficulties in managing working capital for making payment to coal suppliers and operations and maintenance contractors on account of huge outstanding payments from the PDB and the non-availability of LC, as well as our lenders having with-drawn the working capital support," the letter added.

Adani said that during the period of non-payment of supply, the company reserves its right to recover capacity payments under Section 13.2(i) of the PPA.

Adani has been pressing the interim government to pay the dues since they took charge. Gostam Adani, chairman of Adani Group, also wrote to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus.—*The Daily Star/ANN*

Allies say 1953 mutual defence treaty extends to cyber, space threats

SOUTH Korea and the United States have, for the first time, explicitly confirmed that cyber and space threats to either country could trigger mutual defence actions under their bilateral treaty signed in 1953, which forms the basis of their military alliance.

The commitment was outlined in a joint statement following the South Korea-US "2+2" foreign and defence ministerial meeting held on Thursday in Washington, notably amid rising concerns over deepening security cooperation between Russia and North Korea, particularly in areas like cyber and outer space, including satellite technology transfers.

"We also affirmed that attacks in space or cyberspace that clearly challenge the security of the alliance could lead us to invoke Article III of the Mutual Defence Treaty," US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said during a joint news conference following the 2+ meeting — the first of its kind since March 2021. "So to improve our awareness of threats in the space and cyber domains, we're enhancing our interoperability and information sharing."

Article III stipulates a mutual defence commitment if either party within its jurisdiction is attacked, provided the other party deems the attack a threat to its own peace and safety and declares its intention to address the shared danger in accord with its constitutional processes.

The joint statement clarified that international law applies to cyberspace and that, under certain circumstances, a cyber-attack could be considered an armed attack under Article III. It also emphasized that attacks originating from, targeting, or occurring within space pose a significant threat to the security of the alliance and could trigger the invocation of Article III.

"Both sides affirmed that a decision as to when attacks in either domain would lead to an invocation of Article III would be made on a case-by-case basis, and through close consultations between the United States and the ROK, as would be the case for any other threat," the statement read, referring to South Korea by the acronym of its official name.

Yang Uk, a research fellow at the Asian Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul, noted that the allies' declarations are driven by the urgency of emerging security challenges, particularly in the cyber and outer space domains from North Korea and other authoritarian countries.—*The Korea Herald/ANN*

Medical ChatGPT aims to save diagnosis time by 40pc

FOUR AI medical models developed by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), including a "medical ChatGPT", can assist with diagnosing up to 30 types of cancers and other diseases, potentially reducing diagnosis time by up to 40 percent, the school announced.

During a media briefing, Chen Hao, assistant professor in the HKUST Department of Computer Science, who leads the pioneering project, introduced MedDi, which functions as a versatile AI medical generalist akin to a "medical GPT".

The AI tool can generate reports and provide initial diagnoses using medical images, allowing users to submit close-up images for analysis and receive treatment recommendations from the chatbot, Chen explained.

Chen said he hopes the model can save doctors 30 to 40 per cent of their time, significantly improving their efficiency and freeing them up to handle tasks of higher value.

Chen added that the university will collaborate with local hospitals and central government to ensure the accuracy of the tool.

According to HKUST, MedDi is one of the largest open-source software developments available in general medicine. A recent study by Shanghai AI Laboratory recognises it as one of the best existing generalist models.

Another AI model, MOMI, focuses on diagnosing one of the most common cancers among Hong Kong women — breast cancer.

Chen said it assists doctors in ana-



HKUST Provost Prof Gao Yike (left) and assistant professor in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering Chen Hao (right) pose for a photo.—Courtesy China Daily

lyzing patients' breast MRIs, helping them to swiftly distinguish between benign and malignant breast lesions, potentially averting unnecessary pathological biopsies.

This model can also predict patient responses to chemotherapy, facilitating the formulation of suitable treatment plans, Chen added.

Chen noted that the system accuracy of this model can rival that of radiologists with five or more years of experience, achieving a rate surpassing 90 percent. This achievement was made possible through partnerships with five Chinese mainland hospitals and the analysis of over 10,000 patient cases.

Additionally, the four models include pathology assistant tools

medSTAR and XAIM, which assist how AI medical systems make decisions.

HKUST said that research of the AI models was carried out using the university's AI computing resources. With sufficient arithmetic power, these AI medical systems are able to process large amounts of data and achieve outstanding performance.

Provost of the university Gao Yike, speaking at the same media briefing, described this as the first concrete step toward modernizing healthcare.

He said that HKUST is actively pursuing the establishment of Hong Kong's third medical school, with the development of AI integrated modern healthcare being a significant future direction for the university.—*China Daily/ANN*



DOWA (Malawi): Models wear creative fashion designs during the Turnama Festival at Dzaleka Refugee Camp, on Saturday, billed as the world's only music festival at a refugee camp. Turnama, taking place this weekend and which has been held annually since 2014, brings together refugees and locals to share music, art and crafts. Only a few kilometres outside Malawi's capital Lilongwe, Dzaleka Refugee Camp was a prison before it was transformed into a camp following a massive influx of refugees from Africa's Great Lakes region in 1994.—AFP

NEWSMAKERS



PEOPLE attend a demonstration protesting for clean water, on Sunday.—Reuters

Thousands take to London streets demanding cleaner water

LONDON: Thousands of people marched through central London on Sunday demanding action on cleaning up Britain's rivers and seas.

Environmental activist and singer Fygaral Sharkey and adventurer Bear Grylls were among those planning to join The March for Clean Water, which was backed by groups including Greenpeace, the Wildlife Trusts and British Rowing.

Protesters are demanding reviews of water regulator Ofwat and the Environment Agency along with stricter enforcement for water companies who break existing pollution rules.

River Action said that there were around 15,000 marchers, who were encouraged to wear blue and to bring a sample from a body of water close to their heart. Many wore elaborate costumes, while others held signs reading "Water not funds", "Cut the crap" and "Water for life".

Jenny Lushard, a 61-year-old food writer, said that it was "astounding what has happened to our waters since the water companies were privatised." It's absolutely obscene that Britain's rivers and lakes and seas are having more sewage pumped into them.

"We're here because we want to speak up for water... and just say to politicians 'please act'," she said, adding that the issue was a factor in the Conservative Party's defeat in the July election.

The new Labour government last month set out legislation that will give regulators powers to issue harsher penalties, including prison sentences, to polluting water companies and their executives.

Lewis Pugh, endurance swimmer and ocean advocate, said the march was "an opportunity to tell government that we really do need them to act on what's happening in our rivers."—AFP



EL PASO (Texas, US): Migrants embrace during the "Hugs, no Walls" event organised by the US organisation Border Network for Human Rights in the middle of the Rio Grande, on the border between the United States and Mexico, on Saturday.—AFP



BELOGRADE: Demonstrators protest on Sunday to commemorate an accident at a railway station for which they blame negligence and corruption by the authorities. Fourteen people were killed when the roof of the train station in the northern Serbian city of Novi Sad caved in, on Friday.—AFP



NEW DELHI: A cattle covered in toxic foam stands on the banks of the polluted Yamuna River, on Sunday.—AFP

Bangladesh vows to strip 'fascism' from constitution

DHAKA: Bangladesh's constitutional reform commission, newly appointed in the wake of the student-led revolution that ousted long-time autocrat Sheikh Hasina, vowed on Sunday to strip out "fascism" to safeguard democracy.

The commission must submit its recommendations to the interim government by December 31 — part of sweeping changes promised by Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, who was appointed the country's "chief adviser" after the August uprising.

Reform commission chair Ali Riaz, who is also a political science professor at Illinois State University, said the aim was to draft a constitution that "reflects the aspirational" of Bangladesh.

"Under the current constitution, the prime minister holds immense power, and this centralization of authority paves the way for fascism," Riaz said, speaking to reporters for the first time since the commission was formed by the interim government in early October.

"The lack of balance in power is the source of fascism," he added.

Other members include senior barristers, law professors at Dhaka University, rights activists and a student leader — among them who spearheaded the protests against Hasina.

The process will involve rounds of discussions with constitutional experts, lawyers and civil society representatives, as well as between the government and political parties.

"The interim government will discuss the proposals with all political parties, and forward their recommendations to the commission," he said.

"The final version will be established after a series of discussions." Hasina's 15-year rule saw widespread human rights abuses, including the mass detention and extrajudicial killings of her political opponents.

Her government was also accused of politicising courts and the civil service, as well as staging lopsided elections, to dismantle democratic checks on its power.

Yunus has previously said he inherited a "completely broken down" system of public administration that needed a comprehensive overhaul to prevent a future return to autocracy.—AFP



WOMEN hold placards with anti-US and anti-Israel slogans during a rally outside the former site of the US embassy in Tehran, on Sunday.—AFP

Iran stages rallies to mark 1979 hostage crisis

Tehran celebrates the event every year in front of the former US embassy that has been transformed into a museum

TEHRAN: Thousands of Iranians rallied on Sunday to mark the 45th anniversary of the 1979 hostage crisis, with protesters in Tehran and elsewhere demanding the return of the former US embassy site to Iran.

"There's no difference between Biden and Trump, between the donkey and the elephant," said protester Saeed Davaki, 23, of the animal mascots that represent the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States.

"They both follow the same policy," said the construction worker, as a giant puppet meant to represent US President Joe Biden hung over the crowd.

A picture of his predecessor Donald Trump, who hopes to beat his rival Kamala Harris and win the American presidential election on Tuesday, lay trampled on the ground.

Sunday's rally commemorated the 1979 hostage crisis, which began nine months after the Islamic revolution led by Iran's late supreme leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini ousted the Western-backed Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi.

Students loyal to Khomeini stormed the embassy compound and held 52 staff hostage for 444 days while demanding that Washington hand over Iran's recently toppled shah, who was being treated in the United States for cancer.

Washington officially broke off relations with Tehran in 1980, midway through the crisis, and they have been frozen ever since. Iran celebrates the event every year in Tehran in front of the former embassy that has been transformed into a museum known as the "Den of Spies".

"Death to America, death to Israel!" chanted crowds of Iranians, including many schoolchildren and students, as they sang revolutionary songs outside the building.

The embassy's seizure has shaped relations between the United States and Iran for decades, with Tehran considering it an act of defiance against what they describe as the "global arrogance" of the West.

Protesters brandished portraits of prominent figures, including slain Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, killed by an Israeli strike in Beirut, as well as Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"I am here for the destruction of Israel and America," Hassan, a 42-year-old civil servant who did not wish to give his full name, said. "Criminal America is at the root of all these wars and all this hatred" in the region, he said.

Nearby, a mural depicted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu digging his country's grave. Iran does not recognize Israel and considers it an extension of the United States in the Middle East.

Iranian leaders have made support for the Palestinian cause one of the pillars of their foreign policy since the Islamic Republic was established in 1979. The presidential campaigns of both Harris and Trump have been closely followed in Iran.

However, most of the Iranians said the vote's outcome is unlikely to mend relations between the two countries. "Relations between Iran and America cannot return to normal," said Mohammad, a 40-year-old housewife, who gave only her last name.

"We have repeatedly shown America our honesty" to improve relations. "But America does not care," she said, clocked in a black chador.

Iran, subject to significant international sanctions, reached an agreement with the major powers in 2015 to limit its nuclear programme in exchange for a gradual lifting of sanctions. But the pact was torpedoed three years later under Trump whose administration withdrew from it and reimposed sanctions.

"It doesn't matter who the next American president is," said a woman at the protest. "We have never liked any of them, and that won't change now."—AFP

Moldova accuses Russia of meddling in presidential runoff

CHISINAU: A Moldovan security official accused Russia on Sunday of "massive interference" in the country's presidential runoff election that could see Moscow ally Maia Sandu lose power. The official said the Russian intelligence services were active in the country, drawing closer to the European Union.

Pro-Western incumbent Maia Sandu, who has accelerated the nation's push to leave Moscow's orbit and join the EU, faces Alexander Stolojan, an ex-prosecutor general backed by the traditionally pro-Russian Socialist Party.

The former chief of Sandu, who set Moldova on the long path of EU accession talks in June, is being closely watched in Brussels a week after Georgia, another ex-Soviet state seeking membership, rejected a ruling party regarded in the West as increasingly pro-Russian.

Moldova's future has been in the spotlight since Russia in 2022 began its full-scale invasion of neighbouring Ukraine to the east.

"We're seeing massive interference by Russia in our electoral process... an effort with high potential to distort the outcome," Sandu's national security adviser Stanislav Nechitaru wrote on X.

There was no immediate comment from Moscow, which has denied past allegations of meddling in Moldova. An official has accused Stan Shear, a high-profile lobbyist living in Russia, of spending millions of dollars to pay off voters to oppose Sandu. He denies wrongdoing.

Stolojan, who supports EU integration, but also wants to develop ties with Russia in the national interest. He wants to renegotiate cheap Russian gas supplies and said he would meet with President Vladimir Putin if Moldova wanted it.

"I voted for a free, stable and blossoming Moldova that isn't standing with its hand out, but develops in harmony with the West and East," he said after casting his ballot.

Sunday's results will set the tone for parliamentary elections next year when Sandu's party may struggle to regain its majority and that will determine the political slant of the future government.

"Today is a crucial day for us... to go in one direction or the other. We didn't have such an important day in the last 30 years," said Mihail David, 58, who voted in Chisinau.

"My son is in Germany, and I'm happy about it. I was there and it's much better and we want it to be the same here," said Maria Popilova, 68, a pensioner.

Stolojan's East-West balancing rhetoric contrasts with Sandu's four years in power, during which ties with the Kremlin have unravelled. Moscow's diplomats have been expelled and she has condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Moscow has said that her government is "Russophobic". Sandu portrays Stolojan as the Kremlin's man and a political Trojan horse, pointing Sunday's vote as a choice between a bright future in the EU by 2030 and one of uncertainty and instability.—Reuters

14 killed by lightning strike in Uganda

KAMPALA: At least 14 people, including several children, were killed in a lightning strike at a Ugandan refugee camp when lightning struck a makeshift church where they were sheltering, local officials said on Sunday.

Around 50 people took shelter in the church in Palabek refugee camp in northern Uganda, on Saturday evening when a heavy storm hit the area.

Fourteen people died when lightning hit its metal roof, including five girls and nine boys aged between 14 and 18, said William Karamba, resident district commissioner for Lango region, said.

"There are several injured who are being admitted to health centres," he added. The refugees were mostly from the Ngora community of South Sudan.

"The government is working with UNHCR and other agencies are providing the necessary assistance to the survivors," Hilary Ochi, Uganda's minister for refugees and disaster preparedness, said.

"The government team is already on the ground helping to deliver the bodies to their respective families," he added. Uganda has suffered several lightning-related deaths in recent years.

A lightning strike at a primary school killed at least 18 students in 2011, and nine teenagers were killed in an incident in August 2020.

In February 2020, four endangered mountain gorillas were killed by an apparent lightning strike in Mgahinga National Park in southwest Uganda.

"The victims... had gathered for prayers when the rain started around 5pm and the lightning suddenly struck" at 5:10pm, police said.

Police did not identify the nationalities of the victims but the camp and others in the region mostly host refugees from South Sudan. Most of those refugees had fled during a bloody civil war that gripped the country shortly after its independence in 2011. The victims were mostly juveniles and included a nine-year-old girl, police said.

Fatal lightning strikes are common in the east African country, especially in schools where structures rarely have lightning conductors.—Agencies

Russian forces capture Ukrainian village

MOSCOW: Russia's military said on Sunday that its forces had taken control of the village of Vyshnove in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region as they pursue their advance toward its logistical centre of Pokrovsk.

Ukraine's General Staff made no mention of the village falling into Russian hands, but reported fighting in the vicinity.

Popular Ukrainian war blog DeepState acknowledged the loss of Vyshnove and said Russian forces were moving on an adjacent village. Ukraine's General Staff, in an afternoon report on Facebook, said Russian forces had launched 19 attacks on the Pokrovsk sector of the 1,000-km (600-mile) front line in eastern Ukraine.

"In contrast to the pressure, the defence forces repelled enemy attacks," it said. "The occupying forces are focusing their efforts on the villages of Promin and Vyshnove." DeepState said Russian forces were "becoming active near Hryhorivka," a village west of Vyshnove on the way to Pokrovsk.

"They are trying, with infantry, to advance in forested areas along a rail line and they wanted to move into the village and gain a foothold," it said. "Fortunately, this attempt was unsuccessful."

Vyshnove is near Selydovo, a major town whose capture was announced by the Russian military last week. On Saturday, the Russian defence ministry said it had captured two other villages on the eastern front.

Russian forces have focused on taking over all the Donetsk — made up of Donetsk and Luhansk regions — after making an initial successful push on the capital Kyiv in the days after their February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.—Reuters

US bomber joins air drill with South Korea, Japan

SEOUL: South Korea, Japan, and the United States on Sunday conducted a joint air drill involving a heavy bomber, South Korea's military said, in response to North Korea's latest long-range missile test.

The exercise took place three days after Pyongyang launched one of its most powerful and advanced solid-fuelled intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), which experts say could reach targets in the mainland US.

The drill mobilised the US B-1B bomber, South Korea's F-15K and F-16 fighter jets, and Japan's F-2 fighter jets, South Korea's military said.

"The exercise demonstrates the commitment of the ROK-US alliance to integrated extended deterrence in response to the advancing nuclear and missile threats from North Korea," said South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff in a press release.

During the aerial manoeuvres, South Korea and Japan's jets escorted the US strategic bomber to a designated location south of the Korean peninsula, "demonstrating an overwhelming capability to swiftly and accurately strike simulated targets," it added.

The B-1B Lancer is a supersonic heavy bomber known for its high-speed performance with a payload of 75,000 pounds (34,000 kilograms) of munitions, including both conventional and precision-guided weapons.

It was the fourth time this year the bomber was deployed to the Korean peninsula, the military said, and the second time for a trilateral aerial exercise to counter Pyongyang's military threats.

The North's latest ICBM launch is said to have flown higher and farther than any previous missile, according to North Korea as well as Seoul and Tokyo's militaries, which tracked it in real-time.

The official Korean Central News Agency hailed it as "the world's strongest strategic missile," and leader Kim

expressed great satisfaction at the successful launch.

North Korea "would never change its line of bolstering up its nuclear forces," the agency



A B-1B bomber of the United States (left), F-15K fighter jets of South Korea (centre), F-2 fighter jets of Japan (bottom left) and F-16 fighter jets of US (right) flying in formation during a joint air drill over the island of Jeju.—AFP

stressing the potential implications of a split vote in this election.

Similar Democratic teams have been canvassing nearby areas in Washington D.C., and Virginia, hoping to connect with young voters, both Muslims and Christians, especially those voting for the first time.

Electoral strategists have emphasised the critical role that young Muslim voters could play in tight races, particularly in swing states.

Despite the outreach efforts, some Republican-leaning Muslims remain sceptical. Jinnah Bahar, a PTI supporter who plans to vote for Mr Trump, commented that despite persistent Democratic outreach, many new voters, particularly Muslims, were hesitant to back Harris.

Political analyst Usaf Younas described these senti-

ments as "anecdotal", pointing to broader data trends showing strong support for Harris among young voters.

"While anecdotal evidence may suggest some erosion of support within sub-groups, data shows that young people are expected to come out in support of Kamala Harris," he explained.

He cited a survey released by the Harvard Institute of Politics (HIP) last week to back his point. The survey, which has tracked voter attitudes in the 18-29 age group since 2008, revealed a significant lead for Harris over Trump among young voters, with Harris ahead by 17 points (69pc to 52pc).

This contrast between individual anecdotes and broader polling trends highlights the challenges that campaign strategists face as they work to address the complex and diverse concerns of Muslim voters in the region.

First-time Muslim voters in US wary of two-party system

Continued from Page 1

journalists to engage with their mostly Muslim clientele to encourage discussions among young voters. In attendance was a group of young first-time voters, aged 18 to 22, who shared insights into the shifting political views of their generation.

Ms Khan, a young voter who provided only her last name, shared that her family's longstanding support for the Democrats is now uncertain. While her parents voted for the party in the previous election, they, like Ms Khan, are reconsidering this time.

"The government didn't have enough funds to help victims of this year's cyclone in the southern US, yet they're spending billions on wars in the Middle East and Ukraine," she said, expressing disappointment in the Democrats' current priorities.

Another first-time voter, Aaria, voiced support for the Green Party, citing environmental concerns and frustration over foreign policy as key issues. "I won't vote for Donald Trump because he is a lead for the environment," he said, adding that he also felt hesitant about voting for Kamala Harris due to her stance on Gaza.

Kamra, another first-time voter, echoed these sentiments. While acknowledging Israel as a US ally, he questioned the Biden administration's lack of action on the Gaza conflict.

"What prevented the administration from endorsing a ceasefire in Gaza?" he asked.

Despite this wave of dissatisfaction, many of the younger voters, besides Ms Khan's father, noted that American Muslims have historically leaned towards Democrats.

They attributed this to the party's generally progressive stance on immigration and

religious freedoms.

Older voters referenced a recent incident where Dearborn Mayor Abdullah Hammed publicly rejected an invitation to meet former president Donald Trump during his campaign stop.

Dearborn, Michigan — home to a large Arab-American population — has seen considerable political mobilisation within its Muslim community, and Hammed's

decision, they noted, was widely seen as a rebuke of Trump's "Muslim ban" during his first term.

This conservative order, which imposed travel restrictions on individuals from several Muslim-majority countries, including Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen, remains a sore point for many Muslim voters.

"Split-vote"

Amid these expressions of

frustration, Democratic Party campaigners recognise the urgency of retaining Muslim support. "That's almost like voting for Trump," argued David Byrne, a Democratic campaigner, when one first-time Muslim voter said he planned to support the Green Party.

"It won't bring the Green Party to power and will weaken Harris's support base," Mr Byrne added,

stressing the potential implications of a split vote in this election.

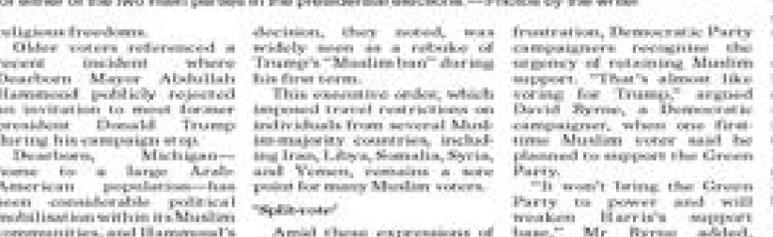
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FIRST-time voters (L to R) Ms Khan, Hamir, and Aaria indicated that they were not inclined to vote for either of the two main parties in the presidential elections.—Photos by the writer



Gutsy New Zealand complete historic series sweep in India

MUMBAI: New Zealand capped a tough tour of Asia with an unprecedented 3-0 series sweep in India, while the bruised and battered home side will face uncomfortable questions ahead of their trip to Australia for five Tests.

The Black Caps' spinners ran riot on a challenging wicket in Mumbai to dismiss India for 121 in the second innings and secure a famous 25-run victory on the third day of the third and final test on Sunday.

The last time India were blanked at home was in 2000, in a two-match series against South Africa, and Rohit Sharma's side were totally supplanted by the tourists in different conditions. "We're ecstatic, looking back to the start of the series to now be in this position, the boys have done a fantastic job over the last three Tests," said New Zealand's new permanent skipper Tom Latham, who took over after a 2-0 defeat in Sri Lanka.

"We spoke about it after each Test match, trying to back it up, and I guess to finally do it here in Mumbai on a completely different surface, one that challenged us with bat and ball, we're pretty happy. "Just being able to adapt to each

ground... Different grass stood up at different times. That's the beauty of team sport. It was an all-round great team effort. I'm proud of the guys."

India dropped to second below Australia in the World Test Championship table and will need a big effort to reach a third straight final next year. Rishabh Pant was the lone Indian batsman to show resistance as he made a sublime 64 after the hosts were reduced to 29-5 on a turning Wankhede

Stadium pitch. Mumbai-born man-of-the-match Ajar Patel finished with 6-57, his second five-wicket haul in the match, while left-arm spinner Glenn Phillips took 3-42 to help skittle the hosts for a low score again in the series.

"It's seriously special first of all to win a Test match here at this historic ground but also to win a series 3-0," said Daryl Mitchell, who scored 82 in the first innings. "It's something you dream of. To come over here and actually achieve it is pretty special against a world-class Indian team."

"We're just a bunch of Kiwis taking on the world." The tourists blew India away with pace to win the opening match in Bangalore by eight wickets in their first Test victory in India in 36 years, and wrapped up the series days later on a turning wicket in Pune with a 113-run win.

CONFIDENCE DENTED In Mumbai, New Zealand kept cool in oppressive heat and humidity to dismantle India, leaving the hosts' confidence dented before they face Australia from Nov. 22.

New Zealand's maiden series triumph in India going back to 1952 also snapped the hosts' home streak of 18 straight series wins since a 2-1 loss to England in 2012.

Sharma threw the first punch by stepping out of his crease to hit Matt Henry for a four in the first over, but the skipper's disappointing recent run of form continued as he fell for 11 after a rash shot against the same bowler.

He now has only one half-century in 10 innings, with six single-digit scores. Patel made it two wickets in two overs as Shubman Gill, who had scored a splendid 90 in the first innings, left a ball that crashed into the stumps and departed for runs.

The out-of-form Virat Kohli did not last long after arriving at the crease as he edged Patel to slip on one. The crowd fell silent again as Yashvir Jaiswal was trapped low for five by Glenn Phillips and Sarfaraz Khan hit a full toss from Patel straight to Ravindra Jadeja in the deep on one.

Ravindra Jadeja steadied the ship alongside Pant in a 42-run stand, but a stunning catch by Will Young meant India were on the ropes at 71-6. Patel dismissed Pant following a New Zealand review after lunch, although the batsman appeared to suggest that he had not made contact with the ball before it was caught.

The runs dried up after that and India collapsed in a heap, with Washington Sundar the last to go while looking to go big. "Losing a series, losing a test match is never easy. It's not easily digested. But we didn't play our best cricket and we accept that. New Zealand played better than us throughout," Sharma said.

"There were a lot of mistakes that we made, we accept it... As a captain, I wasn't at my best leading the team and with the bat as well."

New Zealand resumed their second innings on 121-9 earlier, but India needed only 14 balls to bowl the Black Caps out, as Jadeja had Patel caught in the deep to end with 5-55, after banging five in the first stanza. —Reuters



MUMBAI: New Zealand players celebrate with the series trophy after testing India in the third Test at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday.—AFP

With eyes on Champions Trophy, Pakistan take on World Cup holders Australia

MELBOURNE: Pakistan's bid at identifying their perfect combination for next year's Champions Trophy will open at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Monday, when they take on Australia for the opening fixture of the three-match One-day International series.

Set to be followed by as many T20s against the hosts, the cricketers are Pakistan's first white-ball assignment after their disastrous T20 World Cup in June this year.

But since then, a lot has changed in Pakistan cricket. Most importantly, they have a new captain in Mohammad Rizwan, who has replaced Babar Azam as the side's white-ball skipper. Moreover, their head coach of the two short formats during the T20 World Cup, Gary Kirsten, has resigned after just six months in charge last week. Meanwhile, the head coach and the captain have been stripped of player selection roles with a revamped and a fully-empowered selection committee in charge.

While red-ball head coach James Gillespie has been handed the interim duty to lead the team management staff for the

Australia tour, Asad Shafiq — a member of the national selection committee — is also Down Under. And the ex-Pakistan player named the playing XI for the first ODI on Sunday on behalf of the committee.

From a squad featuring a host of young, emerging players, Pakistan

Match starts at 8:30am (PST)

have picked a new-look playing XI with Abdullah Shafique and Naim Yousif — making his debut — forming the opening pair in the absence of experienced mainstay Fakhr Zaman, who was left out amid controversy.

Kamran Ghulam, who shared with a century in the second Test against England last month, will be playing only his second ODI in a middle-order featuring Babar, Rizwan and newly-appointed vice-captain Salman Ali Agha.

According to the line-up shared by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Mohammad Iftikhar Khan, also making his debut, will be placed in the lower-middle order when the side takes the field at the iconic MCG.

The bowling attack is all about pace, with struggling spearheads Shabeen Shah Afridi and Naveem Shah to lead the charge, while Haris Rauf and Mohammad Hassan — making a return to ODIs after January 2023 — as the third and fourth fast-bowling options.

"We believe that things will be easier for us heading into the Champions Trophy because we have youth coming up," Rizwan told reporters on the eve of the match, suggesting the series will be all about preparing for the big competitions. "We expect to be in a good position for the Champions Trophy."

Led by Pat Cummins, world champions Australia have gone with a full-broge side, featuring the likes of paces Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood along with batters Marcus Labuschagne and Glenn Maxwell.

With an expected huge crowd at the giant venue, it will be a challenge for a reforming Pakistan side.

"Australia is a good side, and they have the advantage of playing in home conditions," noted Rizwan. "The only thing they

have is the benefit of the home crowd, but we will try our best to not let it be of much use to them. "We don't want to prove anything, we just want to play normal cricket. We are here not just to compete, but to do our best against these guys."

About heading Pakistan for the first time as a full-time captain, Rizwan said it wasn't something that was totally new to him.

"As a captain, I've done it in franchise cricket and before that, at the Under-19 level, and other times as well," he observed. "So this isn't a new thing for me. "... it's basically like coaching your duty is to take things forward. You see the ability of players and utilize it well."

Pakistan's last ODI assignment was the World Cup in India last year, where the team couldn't make it through the league round, winning only two matches. Rizwan admitted the record wasn't something to be proud of.

"Yes, we lost those matches, but we might have lacked something in preparation or execution," he said. "I believe in focusing on the process, consistent, and hard work." —Agencies

Scoreboard table for the New Zealand vs India match, showing runs, wickets, and fall of wickets.

ground... Different grass stood up at different times. That's the beauty of team sport. It was an all-round great team effort. I'm proud of the guys."



SAO PAULO: Red Bull's Max Verstappen (L) in action during the Brazilian Grand Prix at the Autodromo Jose Carlos Pace on Sunday. In a chaotic, rain-lashed race Verstappen roared back from 17th on the grid to score fourth. This was regarded as his push for a fourth successive world title as he dealt McLaren's Lando Norris a shattering blow in their F1 title battle. The Red Bull driver came home ahead of AlphaTauri's Daniel Ricciardo and Pierre Gasly while McLaren driver plunged from pole position to sixth. The runaway victory of Interlagos, a crash-blown race which halted after 30 laps and re-started, lifted Verstappen 62 points clear with three rounds remaining. It also ended a 10-race losing streak for the 27-year-old Dutch driver dating back to Spain in June. —Reuters

United held by Chelsea in first EPL game since Ten Hag sacking

MANCHESTER: Moises Caicedo's strike denied Manchester United victory in their first Premier League game since sacking Erik ten Hag as Chelsea claimed a 2-1 draw at Old Trafford.

Interim boss Rudi van Nistelrooy, who will be replaced by Rafael Alvarez later this month, sprinted down the touchline in celebration after Bruno Fernandes put United in front from the penalty spot 20 minutes from time.

Caicedo quickly replied for the Blues, who edge above Arsenal on goal difference into fourth. A point leaves United still down in 13th, six points off the top four.

United were far more competitive than in 3-0 demolitions by Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur at home this season, but showed signs of the same flares that cost Ten Hag his job.

Chelsea, who have lost since their first Premier League game, provided a much stiffer test for a United side still short on confidence.

Nani Maduko came closest to opening the scoring for Chelsea in the first half when he headed Cole Palmer's corner off the post.

It took United time to find their feet as an attacking force but they were unfortunate not to go in from just before half-time.



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Rasmus Hojland (C) shoots at goal during the Premier League match against Chelsea at Old Trafford on Sunday.—Reuters

Martin Radulic hit the crossbar with a rushed volley in the last series of a disappointing first 45 minutes from both sides.

Pedro Neto's burst of pace nearly gave Chelsea a dream start to the second period but the Portuguese winger's shot flew just past the far post.

The Blues remain overly reliant on Palmer for inspiration. The halfback, United fan was kept quiet by Van Nistelrooy's pairing of Caicedo alongside Marcel Ugarte in midfield.

The lack of efficiency in front of goal that Ten Hag often bemoaned was in evidence again.

Garnacho wasted a glorious chance to open the scoring from Fernandes' cut-back with a tame effort that hopped into the arms of Sanchez.

United were gifted the chance to break the deadlock when Robert Sanchez clipped Rasmus Hojland inside the box. Fernandes kept his cool to send the Spanish international goal-keeper the wrong way and squeak

with celebrations from Van Nistelrooy.

United's joy was short-lived as Chelsea hit back within four minutes.

A corner was only cleared to the edge of the box, where Caicedo connected a sweet strike to fire into the bottom corner.

Chelsea should have struck again moments later when substitute Enzo Fernandez spotted over with Andre Onana stranded.

It was United who came closest in a frantic finale when Garnacho's acrobatic effort flew just over.

Earlier on Sunday, two second-half goals from Dmitri Solovki and a sublime James Maddison free kick helped Tottenham come from behind to overturn Aston Villa 4-1 and end the visitors' seven-match unbeaten run in the league.

Spain climbed to seventh in the table on 26 points, two points behind Villa who stayed fifth. Unai Emery's Villa led at half-time through Morgan Rogers, but Spurs were level again after the break when Brennan Johnson tapped in at the far post. "We are disappointed, frustrated but we are accepting it," Emery told Sky Sports. "We know our way, it is 38 matches, the league is very tight." —Agencies

Livingstone wins battle of century-making skippers in England triumph

NORTH SOUND: Captain Liam Livingstone cracked a maiden One-day International hundred to lead England to a five-wicket victory against the West Indies on Saturday.

Livingstone's blistering innings outshone a century earlier in the day scored by opposition skipper Shai Hope.

Chasing 129 to win, the England captain made his hundred off 77 balls with four boundaries and six sixes.

He ended the innings undefeated on 124 having added another boundary and three more sixes to his total as England claimed victory with 15 balls to spare.

From 140-4, Livingstone and Sam Curran put on a match-winning partnership of 140 for the fifth wicket. Curran made a run-a-ball 52 while opener Phil Salt (59) and Jacob Bethell (55) also

celebrated half-centuries. "At the end of the summer I felt I was getting back to my best, mastering a little and knowing my game," said Livingstone who is captaining the team in place of the injured Jos Buttler.

"I'm enjoying my cricket and I'm enjoying my cricket. I usually play well. Namanji played beautifully." He added: "We were sloppy in the field but our bowlers did well and took wickets throughout. We have got a lot of young guys learning the ropes in international cricket, this will do them a world of good."

West Indies fast bowler Matthew Ford took 3-48 but key off-spinner Gulsaksh Mohi went wicketless in nine overs, conceding 71 runs, the most expensive return of his ODI career.

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West Indies fast bowler Matthew Ford took 3-48 but key off-spinner Gulsaksh Mohi went wicketless in nine overs, conceding 71 runs, the most expensive return of his ODI career.

Scoreboard table for the England vs West Indies match, showing runs, wickets, and fall of wickets.

Both wickets fell to fast bowler Josh Turner, his first victims in the format on his second appearance.

Hope's innings included eight fours and four sixes. Keavy Carry hit 71 while Shoaib Rutherford gave

added impetus with a brisk 54 off 36 balls.

Hope drew level his century as "irrelevant, it is doesn't contribute to wins".

He added: "We need to be more disciplined, in the first game we showed that when for in our straps, things happen."

"We thought we had clear plans, but we did not execute our plans well. We gave them a lot of easy options to score and when you play international cricket, the guys will capitalize and that's what happened."

England need time bowlers in the West Indies innings with only wicket-keeper Salt and Jordan Cox set being thrown the ball.



ENGLAND batter Liam Livingstone cuts for a boundary as West Indies wicket-keeper Shai Hope looks on during their second One-day International at the Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium.—AFP

on Wednesday. "Back in the series, looking forward to Barbados, we will rest up and try to win the series," added Livingstone. The two sides will also contest a five-game Twenty20 international series.—AFP

METRO South



United held by Chelsea in first EPL game since Ten Hag sacking Pg.18 SPORT

Weather forecast table for Karachi: Karachi, Sunset 05:51 pm, Sunrise (Tomorrow) 06:40 am, Next 24 Hrs, Minimum 23°C, Maximum 34°C, Humidity 73%, Outlook Sunny.

Youth asked to join politics to 'change fate of nation'

Dawn Report

KARACHI: The Jam-ud-Deen chief Hafiz Naveem Rehman has said that a handful of politicians have held the entire nation of over 250 million people hostage.



A LARGE number of candidates take the aptitude test for free IT courses, organised by the Jammat-i-Islami under its BaroQadri initiative, at a ground in Federal B Area, on Sunday.—Shahid Aziz / White Star

Addressing to these words of inspiring parties... Hafiz Naveem delivered the keynote address at the ceremony.

Besides JI leadership, senior hon and comedian Ayaz Khan, gold medalist bodybuilder Ramiz Ibrahim, YouTuber Danish and several celebrities visited the venue to encourage students.

The celebrities also shared their views about the initiative and Alkhidmat Foundation.

Talking about the education sector in Pakistan, the JI chief said that quality education had been kept out of reach of ordinary Pakistanis...

He said that Alkhidmat's BaroQadri had facilitated over 50,000 students so far.

Experts urge govt to take effective steps to control rising population

Call for ensuring contraceptive security, ulema support

By Sumair Abdullah

KARACHI: Experts at a seminar have expressed concerns over the government's failure to take effective steps to control rising population and implement family planning strategies...

They emphasised that family planning was a societal issue rather than a religious one, and called for inclusion of sociologists in future seminars...

'Ethnic dimension of population growth' Addressing the gathering, renowned economist Dr Kaiser Bengali said that a research data which he had analysed, indicated an 'ethnic dimension' of the issue of population growth.

They also said that one-third of married women who were not using contraception methods intended to use family planning at some time in future. She said that the survey findings clearly indicated the urgent need for contraception.

She added that, according to the survey, 21pc of women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 17pc in Sindh had never used family planning methods, adding that in Balochistan and North, the figure stood at 18pc, while in Punjab it was 27pc.

SBCA unit responsible for demolition of illegal structures comes under fire 'from within'

Strongly worded letter by authority's top official reminds the demolition unit head of his duties

By Imran Ayub

KARACHI: The transparency and fairness of the South Building Control Authority's (SBCA) demolition drive against 'illegal constructions' in the city has come into question after it did not file the required reports to authori-

ties as a documentary proof of its actions against illegalities. For the past seven months the operation is under way by the SBCA demolition unit, during which it claimed to have razed over a thousand 'illegal structures'.

SBCA sources say that the demolition unit is supposed to keep record of all those 'illegal structures' which are razed to the ground for defying building by-laws. The officials are required to file a 'proforma' for each structure which is demolished.

'I have already issued several letters to you to submit the report about demolition taken place to remove all unauthorised constructions by duly filling up the above pro forma but you have abstained from submitting the required report.'

Murad finds govt land 'being grabbed' along Malir Expressway

• Orders Korangi DC, SSP to demolish illegal structures on state land • Asks officials to complete work on expressway's first segment by November-end

Dawn Report

KARACHI: South Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Sunday found that the state land along both sides of the Malir Expressway was being grabbed.

According to a statement issued from the CM House, Mr Shah paid a visit to the under-construction expressway and evaluated the project's progress from Zero Point—near Jam Shadiy Bridge.

On the way, he noticed that land grabbing had begun along the sides of the expressway. He stopped and called the deputy commissioner and SSP of Korangi district on the spot, inquiring why illegal structures had started developing

under their watch, the statement said. 'I'll not allow encroachment on even a single inch of government land,' he said, ordering them to demolish the illegal structures and report back to him, the statement added.

Earlier, the CM also expressed dissatisfaction over the inability of authorities concerned to relocate K-Electric (KE) installations due to which the opening of the first segment of the Malir Expressway has been delayed.

The CM had given multiple deadlines to the authorities to open the 15.4-kilometre first segment of the key transport project from Jam Shadiy Bridge to Shah Faisal Colony. In September, he asked the relevant officials to open the first segment by the end of

October, but in vain. At Zero Point, he was received by Mayor Mustafa Wahab, Public-Private Partnership Unit head Asad Zaman, Project Director Niaz Soomro, Engineer Khalid Mansoor and others.

While inspecting the site, CM Shah expressed displeasure upon discovering that completed spans were lying on the ground, as they could not be installed on the pillars to create a traffic ramp at Zero Point.

He pointed out that since KE had already been paid for the relocation of its installa-



CM Murad Ali Shah points an illegal structure being raised on the government land along Malir Expressway, on Sunday.—PPF

tions, their delays were unacceptable. The CM directed Mr Soomro to complete work by the end of November, as he intended to

open the first segment for traffic in the first week of December. Mr Shah and his team travelled along the expressway from Shah Faisal to Quaidabad

to inspect ongoing construction. During briefing, it was noted that while the expressway itself was ready, construction on the small interchange at Quai-

adabad had been halted due to issues with land acquisition. The chief minister stated that funds for land acquisition had been released and directed prompt payments to landowners to expedite the opening of second segment.

The CM also visited the toll plaza structures and triangular parks being developed at Shah Faisal and other interchanges, directing the plantation of grass and trees to enhance the area's aesthetics.

Furthermore, Mr Shah instructed the police department to prepare a plan for establishing police check posts to ensure the security of the expressway. The Malir Expressway, stretching from Zero Point to Kothrud, will feature six interchanges, three bridges, and five weigh stations. The project is scheduled for completion by the end of 2025.

Police rescue two suspected robbers from lynch mob in Surjani Town

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: Enraged people severely beat two suspected robbers and tried to lynch them but police rescued them in Surjani Town on Sunday, officials said. Surjani Town SHO Ghulam Husain Pirzada said that two suspects were committing a robbery in Sector 7-D near 'Juma Bazaar' when area people gathered there and overpowered them.

They were identified as Arman Qadeer, 20, and Imran Kaiser, 30. The police claimed to have recovered two pistols and one motorcycle from their custody. Meanwhile, three persons were shot at and wounded in a clash during a wedding ceremony in the Mewa Shah area late on Saturday night.

Woman hurt as friend's pistol goes off in car

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: A woman suffered a bullet wound when she accidentally fired the pistol of her friend in their car along the Seaview beach on Sunday morning. Police said that at around 5am a car crashed onto the Seaview Road footpath causing a tyre to burst. At the same time, a gunshot was also heard and a police patrol arrived at the scene and found a man and a woman who sustained a bullet wound to her hand.

SSP South Sajid Amir Sadozai told Dawn the injured woman, identified as Erum Aziz, told the police that she was checking the pistol of her friend when it accidentally went off. She said she didn't want to pursue any legal action. However, the police arrested the suspect, identified as Muhammad Umar Memon, as he failed to produce the licence of the pistol. A case was registered against him under Section 23-A of the Sindh Arms Act, 2013 at the Darakhshan police station.

PRAYER

Fajr	5:25
Zuhr	12:15
Asr	4:18
Maghreb	5:52
Isha	7:08

Starting time in Karachi

REFLECTIONS

‘‘ONE WHO GIVES UP A STRAIGHT PATH, HONEST AND RATIONAL WAYS OF THINKING, WILL HARM HIMSELF’’
— HAZRAT ALI (A.S.)

TRAH427

Second transgender festival to be held on 9th at Frere Hall

Dawn Report

KARACHI: The transgender community has announced that it will host the second ‘‘Hijra Festival’’ on Nov 9 at Frere Hall. This year’s festival theme is ‘‘Identity, Existence, and Empowerment of Transgender Individuals’’.

Speaking at a press conference here on Sunday, transgender activists Kamri Chaudhary, Dr Sarah Gill, Hina Pathani, Saba Haider, Raja Walood, Moazzam Batwana, Raziya Raza and others said that all community members, as well as civil society representatives from across the country and abroad, would be welcomed at the festival.

The activists explained the festival’s goals, describing

them as simple yet significant. ‘‘The primary aim of this festival is to provide a platform for one of the society’s most marginalised communities, giving them an annual opportunity to gather and celebrate,’’ they said.

The festival’s agenda also includes calling on the government to ensure transgender rights and to protect their identities.

‘‘There is no question that reforms in social and human rights policies are essential, particularly those that address the needs and demands of the transgender community,’’ they added.

The activists emphasised that their festival was not against anyone. ‘‘It will be a peaceful event, with complete adherence to laws and ethical values. Our goal is to promote harmony and peaceful coexistence in society,’’ they said.



TRANSGENDER activist Kamri Chaudhary speaks at the press conference, on Sunday.—PPF

The festival demands equal rights, identity recognition, and protection of the life and empowerment of transgender individuals.

They further explained the festival not only provides an occasion to celebrate but also reaffirms the community’s commitment to its ongoing struggle for rights.

‘‘On this day, we also honour our late transgender members who worked tirelessly for the welfare and rights of the community, offering prayers for their souls’’.

The festival will be a vibrant affair filled with traditional fair activities and colours, the organisers said, adding that transgender artists would showcase their talents, and there would also be food stalls and other attractions to attract attendees.

Effective steps to control rising population

Continued from Page 13

by The Population Council in 2023-24, which found that ‘‘women in Pakistan are using abortion as a method of birth control’’.

She recommended that there should be legislation on family planning and child marriage restraints.

She also called for ensuring contraceptive security and sought support from donors through training courses on family planning.

At the seminar, researcher and columnist Nikhat Sattar spoke about the misconceptions that family planning was against Islam.

She explained that the Quranic verse, ‘‘Do not kill your children for fear of poverty’’, which was often cited in this context, was revealed to stop the then prevalent practice of burying newborn girls alive out of financial fear. ‘‘Family planning is permissible in Islam,’’ she added.

Another speaker Dr Nighat Shah, head of the gynaecology department at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, said that family planning had been the domain of non-governmental organisations which got huge donations in its name. While they did carry out some good work, ‘‘sustainable’’ was missing in their work, she added.

She recommended that academic and industry heads needed to come together for the benefit of the economy and people while stressing the need for engaging youth, doctors of tomorrow through research and digital platforms.

‘‘Family planning should be an essential part of curriculum and assessments at undergraduate and postgraduate levels,’’ she said. ‘‘Academic institutions should involve youth for sustainable change and this can be done through digital or AI platforms.’’

Leftist intellectual, writer Rahat Saeed remembered

Dawn Report

KARACHI: The Irtiga Institute of Social Sciences has paid a heartfelt tribute to the visionary ideologue of the progressive movement, Rahat Saeed, acknowledging his significant contributions to the Irtiga Institute and Irtiga Publications.

A condolence reference was held in collaboration with the Progressive Writers’ Association (PWA) and the Pakistan Medical Association at the PMA House.

Prominent writers, intellectuals, labour leaders and a large number of people paid their respects to the leftist intellectual, scholar and writer who dedicated his life to promoting work-

ers’ politics and progressive literature until his last breath.

Kabeer Durrani of Irtiga Institute remarked that while everyone eventually leaves this world, historic personalities like Rahat Saeed live on in our consciousness.

He expressed pride in being part of a journey led by such a great man, highlighting his significant role in keeping the torch of Irtiga and the PWA alive.

Rahat Saeed’s daughter, Dr Arjumand, and son, Haider, said their father taught them honesty, courage, and self-confidence.

Professor Kiran Singh shared that Rahat had a dynamic life with both local and international connections and was a skilled organiser, playing a vital role in organising PWA’s continental cel-

ebrations and reportedly attempting to reorganise the PWA, though not succeeding.

Dr Tigo Sahian noted Rahat Saeed’s courageous life, maintaining his intellect and insight until the very end.

Kiaz Nadeem Durrani remarked that Rahat Saeed’s passing is a loss not only for his family but for the entire progressive movement, an irreplaceable void.

Notably, Rahat played the role of a bridge between Sindhi and Urdu speakers and had a deep love for Sindhi, Sindhi culture, and civilisation.

Dr Syed Jafar Ahmed described him as their ideological companion, dedicated to socialist values throughout his life, even while working for PLA.

Zubeida Mustafa stated that

Rahat never let his illness take over him.

Arif Zaidi credited him with a key role in initiating the first International Urdu Conference at Karachi Arts Council, through which national and international delegates participated.

Ghazal Salikuddin mentioned that Rahat was among those who lived their lives firmly rooted in their ideological beliefs.

Those who paid tribute online included Dr Hina, Rina, Nasir Mansoor, Dr Neel Karim, Dr Tausif Ahmed, Hussain Farooq, Ayaz Latif Durrani, Nadeem Sultan, Mansoor Razi, Shahjahan, Imdad Akash, Dr Badar Ajjaz, Khawar Nargis, Dr Mubtaza Ali, Husna Nargis, and Mumtaz, Vidvati Narayan Rai, Dr Roshna, and others.

Pact signed for infrastructure development at KU

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The Gulshan Town Municipal Corporation and the University of Karachi have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) under which the Town Municipal Corporation (TMC) would carry out various infrastructure development projects within the university premises.

The signing ceremony took place at the university, with Chairman Gulshan Town Dr Fawad Ahmed and KU Vice-Chancellor Dr Khalid Mahmood Inqub putting their signatures on the agreement.

The MoU says that the town administration will undertake renovation of Neelum Road adjacent to the Food Science Department, installation of streetlights on Neelum Road and tree plantation drive within the university premises.

Chairman Dr Fawad Ahmed expressed his commitment to restoring Gulshan Town’s reputation as Pakistan’s best town.

Dr Inqub commended Mr Ahmed and his team for their dedication and honesty.

SBCA unit

Continued from Page 13

action to remove all unauthorised constructions on plots that are referred to the demolition section by the concerned districts,’’ he said.

‘‘If the officers of the districts present during the demolition operation of plots give verbal directions to the assistant director of demolition not to demolish unauthorised construction or stop the demolition operation and assistant director (demolition) stops the demolition operation then this is an act of convenience with the builder. It is your responsibility to ensure that this does not happen and initiate disciplinary action against the assistant director (demolition) working under your control.’’

Meanwhile, despite repeated requests and queries the information section of the SBCA didn’t come up with details about the operation going on in the city since March 2024.

The SBCA sources said the additional director general had written ‘‘a series of reminders’’ for the required pro forma.

In reply to one of his reminders, the demolition unit had claimed that they had already filed reports of action against illegal structures.

However, the reply fell short of satisfying the SBCA top brass who insist on filing the pro forma.

‘‘It’s a common perception that officials associated with this department take half-hearted action against illegal constructions only to defuse pressure or strike a deal with those who’re involved in the business of illegal construction and mint millions of rupees,’’ said another SBCA officer.

‘‘It has been observed that in case of any complaint, they respond immediately. They reach the site and seal the place to make an impression about an action. In order to make a deal, they would demolish those areas which will not affect the basic structure or cost the builder much.’’

‘‘They would demolish sidewalks or windows or entrance or exit. They won’t demolish columns or pillars or foundation in order to keep the structure intact,’’ he added.

THIS WEEK 50 YEARS AGO

National monument and Iqbal’s message

By Faizazada Salman

TEEN Towers (three towers) is one of Karachi’s well-known landmarks. When exactly was it built and who was involved in its construction? On Nov 4, 1974, Dawn in its report highlighted that a national monument sanctioned for the city was being built at Girani Chowk on Clifton Road. The Rs1.2 million project was being handed by the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) and was likely to complete by end of 1975. Progress to date (Nov 1974) was stated to be 10 per cent.

The report added: ‘‘The monument consists of three pylons symbolising the Qaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s motto of unity, faith and discipline. Each of three pylons resembles a sword with its tip in the ground representing the valor and bravery of the Pakistani nation. They are interconnected 14½ feet above ground to convey that ‘United we stand’. They are not in a straight line. The second is eight feet ahead of the first, while the third is a

further eight feet ahead of the second — to signify the nation’s will to keep a constant onward march to progress, stability and strength. The pylons will rise to a height of 62 feet from the crown of the road and will therefore be visible from a long distance.’’ Architects claimed that the beauty of the monument rested on its sculptural and well-balanced forms which would produce different perspectives as vehicles passed around the chowk.

The country was in focus the same day in another event as well when the chief minister of Sindh, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi called upon the students to prepare for supreme sacrifices for the sake of Pakistan’s solidarity and independence. He was addressing the students of the University of Karachi (KU) at a ceremony held to mark the handing over of a fleet of new buses for the institution. The chief minister remarked: ‘‘Our generation gave sacrifices in blood and tears to establish a homeland for Muslims. It is now the duty of the younger generation to see that no harm is done to it.’’ He asked the pupils to have a ‘‘sentimental’’ view of issues facing them

or the country.

In a similar vein, on Nov 8, Justice Nurul Arif urged the scholars of the country to revive Allama Iqbal’s message of Islamic brotherhood to make the country stronger. Speaking at a National Centre function which marked the beginning of Iqbal Day celebrations in Karachi, he opined that Iqbal’s message had the vision and solutions for present social and political problems faced by the nation.

On the cultural front, on Nov 5, an exhibition of renowned painter Colin David’s artworks opened at the Indus Gallery. The show, containing a dozen canvases focusing on human anatomy, spoke about the artist’s overall approach to life and art. In a critic’s words, ‘‘In painting the female form, the artist seems to exercise considerable sensual restraint, concentrating all the time on compositional details and overtones rather than beauty of the flesh. In order to highlight a sense of distance between human and abstract images, David makes the skilful use of geometrical forms — squares and cylindrical chequered blocks.’’

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SAUDI ARABIA

In the Court of Khalid Hussain Jaffer Family Court Islamabad (FSC). Suit for Dissolution of Marriage. Mr. Azeem Khan vs. Ms. Azeem Hussain Khan. Mr. Azeem Khan vs. Ms. Azeem Hussain Khan. Case No. 111/2024. Filed on 05-11-2024 at 09:30 am. All requests proceedings will be taken against Mr. Azeem Khan. (11/07/2024)

KARACHI

ALHAMDULLILLAH our client has succeeded in purchase Open Lease Plot No. 24, Beach Street Islamabad measuring 500 square yards. Area: Dns Phase-VI, Karachi. From Mrs. Farah Iqbal W/o. Mr. Azeem Khan. CNIC: 420291-2671478, P.O. Karachi Through India Post. Please find all enclosures, disputes. Any Person / Authority, having any claim / objection, please send property should notify us along with documentary evidence within seven days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which objection will be deemed to have been waived and the said property shall be transferred to the client. MR. IBBRAHIM BAKHTI ADVOCATE HIGH COURT # 407 & 702, Same Town Towers, U. Chughtai Road Karachi, 7500076700

NOTICE TO PUBLIC

KARACHI

ALHAMDULLILLAH our client has succeeded in purchase Plot No. 108 A, Mayapore (Bager Phase) V-10 Dns Karachi measuring 1000 square yards from Mr. Muhammad Farooq W/o. Abdul Qadir (Late) CNIC No. 420111002059 / D/o Karachi. Free from all claims, mortgages and encumbrances. Any Person, Bank, Authority, having any objection, whatsoever should notify to Administrator DHA Karachi with documentary evidence within seven days from the publication. SADEEN 021-27-0205 AL-RABIEE ASSOCIATES, (7102703007)

KARACHI

MY client has succeeded in purchase of the Plot No. 432, 4th Floor, measuring 2300 sq. ft. in ‘Grand Residency-II’ that Survey No. B-1, Situated at Street No. 2, East Island Quarters Karachi. Free from all disputes, mortgages, with complete vacant possession from its owner Mr. Iqbal Farooq Ali (W/o. Saeed Ali, Saeed, C.N.I.C. No. 42021-2450881-5, through the attorney Mr. Saad Ali Ibrahim, S/o. Ibrahim Razaan, C.N.I.C. No. 42001-247001-5, resident of Karachi. Any Person, Bank, Authority, having any claim, right or share in the said property should notify to the undersigned, along with documentary evidence within seven days, failing which objection will be deemed to have been waived and the said property shall be transferred to the client. MR. IBBRAHIM BAKHTI ADVOCATE HIGH COURT # 407 & 702, Same Town Towers, U. Chughtai Road Karachi, 7500076700

The public is hereby notified that (1) MR. WAQAR ISMAIL, son of Muhammad Iqbal and (2) MRS. SABA ISMAIL, wife of Mr. Shahid Iqbal, have agreed to sell, assign, convey and transfer to the client of the undersigned premises **PLOT NO. 1, MELBURN FLOOR, ADELAIDE SQUARE 1.01 SQUARE FEET, WURULI RESORTS ALONG WITH UNDIVIDED PROPORTIONATE SHARE IN SUB-LOT NO. A-141-B-142 OF PLOT NO. 25-B, BLOCK-B, GOLDEN SQUARE, KDA SCHEME NO. 24, KARACHI,** together with said and adjoining marketable title, benefits, privileges, interests, easements, appurtenances attached or appurtenant thereto, free from all encumbrances, charges, taxes, dues, duties, liabilities, disputes, mortgages, in pending, liens, etc., along with vacant peaceful and physical possession. (‘‘Said Property’’). All Persons / Institutions having any claim, right, title, interest, lien, encumbrance or objection of any nature whatsoever, in respect of any of the said Property, should notify the same, in writing, supported with documentary evidence to the undersigned, as well as the Assistant Director (Gen. Cell, Land Department, KDA, through e-mail service with registered acknowledgment delivery, within seven (7) days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which any claim, lien or objection, whatsoever, shall be deemed to have been waived and released, and the said Property shall be sold, transferred, assigned and conveyed to the client. TUFKAL, M. IBRAHIM, Advocate High Courts & Corporate Counselor Address: F-47 Block-5, Clifton, Karachi-75000, Pakistan. Telephone: 021-35476201-4, 10173274620

The public is hereby notified that (1) MR. WAQAR ISMAIL, son of Muhammad Iqbal and (2) MRS. SABA ISMAIL, wife of Mr. Shahid Iqbal, have agreed to sell, assign, convey and transfer to the client of the undersigned premises **SHOP NO. 1, GARDEN FLOOR, ADELAIDE SQUARE 1.01 SQUARE FEET, WURULI RESORTS ALONG WITH UNDIVIDED PROPORTIONATE SHARE IN SUB-LOT NO. A-141-B-142 OF PLOT NO. 25-B, BLOCK-B, GOLDEN SQUARE, KDA SCHEME NO. 24, KARACHI,** together with said and adjoining marketable title, benefits, privileges, interests, easements, appurtenances attached or appurtenant thereto, free from all encumbrances, charges, taxes, dues, duties, liabilities, disputes, mortgages, in pending, liens, etc., along with vacant peaceful and physical possession. (‘‘Said Property’’). All Persons / Institutions having any claim, right, title, interest, lien, encumbrance or objection of any nature whatsoever, in respect of any of the said Property, should notify the same, in writing, supported with documentary evidence to the undersigned, as well as the Assistant Director (Gen. Cell, Land Department, KDA, through e-mail service with registered acknowledgment delivery, within seven (7) days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which any claim, lien or objection, whatsoever, shall be deemed to have been waived and released, and the said Property shall be sold, transferred, assigned and conveyed to the client. TUFKAL, M. IBRAHIM, Advocate High Courts & Corporate Counselor Address: F-47 Block-5, Clifton, Karachi-75000, Pakistan. Telephone: 021-35476201-4, 10173274620

NOTICE TO PUBLIC

KARACHI

OUR client has succeeded in purchase Apartment No. 0-102, Crest Villa, 11th Floor Type 4 3bedrooms measuring 3750 square feet, Phase-VI, DHA Karachi, from Mrs. Nuz Jehan Azeem W/o. Azeem Farooq CNIC No. 420004020100 Resident of Karachi. Free from all claims, mortgages and encumbrances. Any Person, Bank, Authority, having any objection, whatsoever should notify to Pakistan Defence Officers, Housing Authority Karachi, with documentary evidence within (7) days from the publication. ALI USMAN KHALID ENTERPRISES, Suite 05, Ground Floor, Building 20-C, Iqbal Commercial Lane 3, Phase-VI, DHA Karachi, 021-35241201, 3333-2300571, 10142780223

KARACHI

OUR client has succeeded in purchase **RESIDENTIAL PLOT NO. 24, SA-4-PANAL, SQUARE-VI, MELBURN 1000 SQUARE YARDS, DHA, KARACHI FROM MRS. ZEBA NADEED W/O MOHAMMAD REEED, CNIC NO. 42011107121-5, RESIDENT OF SBA.** Free from all claims, mortgages and encumbrances. Any Person, Bank or Authority, having any claim / objection should notify Administrator DHA Karachi, and us within seven days along with documentary evidence, failing which all claims shall be deemed to have been waived and the transaction will be completed in favor of our client. PROPERTY EXPRESS, 710-C, 1st Floor, Plot Coran Street Phase-VI, DHA Karachi, 3300-213844, 11040903640

OUR client has succeeded in purchase Bungalow No. 2015, Shepherds Area, Phase-III, measuring 500 square yards, DHA, Karachi from Mrs. Saad Bito W/o. Abdul Qayyum CNIC No. 34201-320700-5 Resident of Karachi. Free from all claims, mortgages, liabilities etc. Any Person, Bank, Authority, having any claim / objection should notify to / Sub-Register / DHA Office, Town Karachi within 07 days of the publication otherwise transaction shall be completed in favor of our client. PEAR ADOR INVESTMENT Under Order 0204-077472, 1000200140

OUR client has succeeded in purchase Open Lease Plot No. 101 B, Iqbal Commercial Street Phase-VI, DHA Karachi measuring 500 square yards from Mr. Muhammad Mubtazir Bary CNIC No. 42002747097 Lateral Attorney of Mrs. Lata Raza W/o Saad Raza Haya CNIC No. 420144010024 R/o United States. Free from all claims, mortgages and encumbrances. Any Person, Bank, Authority, having any objection whatsoever should notify to Sub-Register / DHA Office, Town Karachi, with documentary evidence within seven days from the publication. UNITED REAL ESTATE & BROKERS, 11th Floor, 12231-2302/3, 11027703020

DAWN
the complete newspaper

Local councils to get Rs160bn this year as OZT share, PAC told

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Sindh Assembly was informed that the share of Octroi Zila Tax (OZT) fund amounting to Rs160bn was being released to the local councils in the current year.

Additional Chief Secretary Local Government Khalid Haider Shah told the PAC meeting, held with Chairman Nisar Khuresh in chair, that the local councils had Rs120bn rupees OZT share last year, which was increased by Rs40bn this year.

The PAC chairman said that despite providing Rs160bn to local councils across the province, people were questioning the performance of local bodies institutions.

He said that there were at least 70 employees in each LC, including Muslim sanitary workers who did not even do sanitation work. "We want the local councils to spend the funds for the betterment of the people and the perception of the department will improve, otherwise the concept of local government will fail," he remarked.

Mr Khuresh said that salaries of the employees of the local government department and local councils should be made online so that development work could be done only at the grassroots level with OZT funds.

He further said that due to the fact that the salaries were not paid online, the complaints of deduction in the salaries of the employees were being received separately.

The additional chief secretary said that an integrated financial system was being introduced to pay online the salaries of the employees.



HYDERABAD: A vendor arranges corn cobs on his pushcart in an attempt to attract attention of customers to earn livelihood on Sunday — PPI

SAB rejects construction of 'six strategic canals' over Indus River in Punjab

Announces to start protest against project from 24th

By Muhammad Hussain Khan

HYDERABAD: Describing the construction of 'six strategic canals' over Indus River in Punjab as controversial as previous ones, the Sindh Assembly Board (SAB) has rejected the project.

The plan was opposed at a meeting of the board held here on Sunday under the chairmanship of SAB President Mahsood Nawaz Shah, attended by growers of different districts of Sindh.

It observed that the three so-called canals to be constructed on Indus River on a free-tract basis were like that of Jalajpur and other ones.

It discussed the subject after talking with experts in the field. It seemed as if project were being pushed through without proper due diligence which included feasibility, availability of water, provincial approvals, environmental studies etc, it said.

The meeting observed that out of those canals, the Central Development Working

Party (CDWP) had given approval for Phase-I of Cholisthan canal. There was apparently a Phase-II and in order to irrigate Cholisthan desert, 170km canal at a cost of Rs220bn was proposed, which included enhancing capacity of link canals to bring water to Sukkur's head works from where Cholisthan canal would be built. The phase I and II of the canal would irrigate 1.2m acres of desert land, it observed.

The SAB said it seemed as if the water availability certificate given by the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) lacked credibility and the project was approved without proper due diligence. The certificate of water availability from April to September was issued on the assumption of floods and if there were no floods, the province would have to adjust/reduce supply from other irrigated areas.

It said that while issuing the certificate, IRSA did not consider many aspects, including perpetual shortage of water from March to May in Sindh and surplus water if it became surplus in few years.

It said IRSA ignored that delayed rising of temperature in the catchment areas of climatic change, which perpetuated droughts, was already affecting delta and lower riparian. IRSA also did not take into

account that water quality of upper was depleting as water in the river had reduced over a period of time, it added.

It said IRSA also did not consider that the link canals constructed in the past on the assumption of floods had created a permanent demand of water, thus affecting agriculture and population downstream.

The meeting noted that PC-4 says that Cholisthan canal would run for the whole year (potential) whereas the controversial IRSA certificate was only for six months (April to Sept). How water would be made available for Cholisthan canal without depriving the lower riparian of water in the rest of the months, it questioned.

The SAB said the project clearly depended on floodwater and water reduced/diverted from other canals to provide flow to Cholisthan canals. Therefore, it was important to mention Jalajpur canal that was another viable and controversial canal that was already under construction, taking off from Rasool Barrage with the same assumptions. It would reduce water as link canals taking water to Cholisthan canal were also taking off from Rasool Barrage. Hence, the existing command irrigated area of the barrage would be deprived of water, it added.

That all led to the point that the exist-

ing canal capacity in Punjab was much more than the water allocated in the water accord, it said. The six strategic canals, therefore, were only a figment of someone's imagination, which was tantamount to destroying the whole irrigation system and it would affect lower riparian the most, the meeting learned.

It said the SAB, therefore, was deeply concerned that the canals which were based on floods for water availability and the botched data would eventually lead to reduction in the river water and therefore, they were not good for the country and were unacceptable for people at large.

It said that despite reservations from Sindh and other stakeholders, there seemed to be unreserved haste in going forward with the project.

The SAB after detailed deliberations decided to start a campaign with other grower organisations against the project from Nov 24 in front of the local press club.

Prominent among others attending the meeting were Dr Bashir Nisar, Dr Zulfiqar Younis, Saifur Jarojo, Imran Booder, Muhammad Tahir, Omer Bhaghin, Mustafa Nawaz Shah and Mansoor Ali Shah.

Zulfikar Jr visits houses of PPP-SB activists

By Our Staff Correspondent

HYDERABAD: Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Junior arrived at Hyderabad and visited the houses of various party activists to offer condolences over deaths of their family members on Sunday.

He went to the residence of late Shahab Durrani, according to the PPP-SB leader Pervez Majidani. He said Zulfikar consoled with the brother of Shahab. He then met Inshad Khushkhal, district president of the PPP-SB, to offer condolences on the death of his father.

Later Zulfikar Junior reached Wahdat Colony where he visited the house of Wajahat Jakhio, Jakhio was one of the trusted comrades of late Mr Murtaza Bhutto and among those seven killed with Mr in Karachi outside his residence in September 1998. He met Amir Jakhio, brother of Wajahat.

He also met Asghar Abbasi to offer condolences on the death of his sister. Mr then reached Unit-8 of Laffahad where he inquired after the health of Shahab Sheikh, an old party activist. He is ill for a long time.

Livestock breeding lab planned

KARACHI: The Sindh government has planned to establish a laboratory at the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) of the University of Karachi, to advance livestock breeding and boost agricultural productivity.

Supported by a World Bank-assisted project, the \$62 million initiative will focus on livestock genomics to improve livestock breeds through genomic selection.

This decision was made in a meeting held at the Dr Panjwani Center for Molecular Medicine and Drug Research.

In the meeting, CM's Adviser Najam ALam emphasized the importance of breed improvement to enhance food security and livestock efficiency.

He also encouraged further ICCBS collaboration in critical areas such as quality assurance for drugs and vaccines, and monitoring of circulating pathogens.

— Dawn Report

Well-known doctor killed by nephew in Badin

By Muhammad Hashim Khan Bhurgari

BADIN: A well-known doctor of Nindo Sheer was gunned down on Sunday by his nephew when he was examining patients in his private clinic at Nindo Sheer taluqa of Badin.

The armed assailant identified as Sikandar Ali alias Pappu Memon also injured Hydar Ali Memon and Sherwaz Memon, the brother and nephew respectively of victim Dr Abid Memon.

After the incident, the attacker reportedly went to the Nindo Sheer police station, confessed to the killing and handed himself in to police, along with the weapon of crime.

On receiving information, police reached the crime scene and transported the injured to the Health Center of Nindo Sheer. After first aid, they were taken to the Saigatar Ali Memon Hospital Badin where the doctor pronounced Dr Memon dead. Condition of the other injured was stated to be out of danger.

Police said no FIR was registered as no one came forward to file the case.

Some villagers said the killing was the result of a monetary dispute over property. The assailant reportedly had a personal grudge against the victim, who was his uncle, over agricultural lands and shops in Nindo Sheer town.

After completion of medico-legal formalities, the body was handed over to his relatives.

Dr Abid has left behind a son, Dr Shafrak, daughter Dr Zahra Memon, and a widow. The town was completely shutdown after the incident.

Tharis demand justice amidst coal project's expansion

By A.B. Arisar

UMERKOT: Thousands of people affected by the Thar coal project held a significant protest at the Iskander Press Club, urging the government and project authority to address their long-standing grievances.

Villagers from areas surrounding the coal mining site walked over six kilometers, carrying banners and placards, chanting slogans to echo their voice raised against displacement, environmental damage and economic injustice in the aftermath of the expansion in the coal mining project.

Demanding fair treatment under the law with equitable share in the benefits derived from the coal project, they expressed frustration over the exploitation of their ancestral lands without proper compensation and concerns of their wellbeing.

Many protesters voiced concerns about loss of the project, touted as a symbol of progress, had disrupted their lives and left them in poverty.

Led by Nahi Bahad Dars, Suro Bheel, Waryam Langoo and local lawyer Hameez Bheel, the protesters condemned the project's operations. "This is the land of our ancestors, yet we are treated as strangers here," Dars said. "We are the rightful custodians of this soil, but our voices are ignored while the land is ravaged for coal. All this progress has left us impoverished and marginalized."

They highlighted that while Thar's resources derived national development, Tharis were denied basic amenities, including the electricity generated from their own land. Water resources had been polluted, grazing lands destroyed, and many residents were forced to abandon their homes as the area became increasingly uninhabitable, they added.

Sohrab Rabbani, another prominent protester, said "The slogan 'Thar Will Change Pakistan' is hollow if it doesn't uplift the people of Thar. We're losing our livelihoods, dignity and future to this project, ignoring our plight risks destabilizing the region."

The protest spotlighted villages like New Serli, Tharis Halapota, Gorano and Bhatti Jo Tar, where residents face forced displacement, water scarcity and environmental degradation because of coal mining.

It was an irony that Thar's coal was subsidizing other parts of Pakistan while leaving Thar villages in darkness, a local elder noted. "This project may light up the cities, but our villages are left in hand for themselves," he lamented.

A key demand was a fair share of royalties from the Thar coal project.

The protesters argued that profits should fund the local development. They also called for a comprehensive 'Thar Land Grant Policy' which would allow families to lease their lands to the project instead of facing permanent displacement.

"This is about more than land; it's about preserving our heritage and way of life," said Hameez Bheel, a lawyer and activist. "The government must protect us."

The protesters presented a Charter of Demands, listing their grievances and needs, including a comprehensive survey of the affected areas and inclusion of the displaced communities in the updated resettlement plans.

They also called for immediate allocation of 1,000 acres for grazing and 500 acres for reforestation to support the displaced villagers besides equitable distribution of royalties and job priority for locals as promised by the Thar and government agreements.

The protesters also demanded a rigorous environmental policy to reduce pollution and protect local vegetation, wildlife and human health. Provision of clean drinking water, scholarship for youth and permanent employment opportunities for Thar residents were also on their charter.

Unshamed Bheel, a protester, demanded respect and opportunities for self-reliance, saying "We deserve dignity as contributors to the national economy. Give us work, and let us contribute as equal citizens of Pakistan."

Protesters highlighted the project's environmental damage, citing respiratory diseases, contaminated water and ruined crops. They claimed that the project's lack of safeguards had devastated local ecosystems and threatened community health.

SHC seeks report if public schemes launched 'to siphon funds'

Over 4,500 projects out of around 5,600 completed during last 15 years, did not require approval of SNEs, court told

By Ishah Tanol

KARACHI: Expressing concern over release of funds for schemes launched without the approval of schedule of new expenditures (SNEs), the Sindh High Court has sought report from the provincial government to explain if such projects were launched to 'siphon public money'.

A two-judge bench comprising Justice Salahuddin Panhwar and Justice Khadim Hussain Noonani directed a committee, comprising various secretaries of different

departments, to examine this aspect and submit a detailed report with descriptions of these schemes and the causes thereof as well as to determine whether such schemes were created and launched to siphon funds from the public exchequer.

In the light of a previous court order, the committee comprising secretaries of planning & development and works & service departments as well as the special secretary of health department, filed compliance reports regarding details of public schemes.

The bench said these reports reflected that 5,608 public schemes of around 35 departments had been completed during last 15 years out of which 4,593 schemes did not require approval of SNEs while in 863 schemes SNEs had been approved and in 152 schemes SNEs were required to be approved.

The head of the committee requested the court that at the first instance, the com-

mittee may be tasked to work out the SNEs at provincial level and its second phase it would carry out the schemes initiated from district-wise level.

The bench allowed the same and also ordered that since SNEs had not been approved yet in 152 schemes, the same must be approved within a month.

"It is alarming that such a large number of schemes have been completed which, according to the chart submitted by the committee, do not require approval of SNEs, meaning thereby that the main focus of the government is only to initiate projects which are not institution-based. Therefore, the committee shall examine this aspect and submit a detailed report with descriptions of these schemes and the causes thereof, as well as determine whether these schemes were created or launched to siphon funds from the public exchequer," it added.

The bench also noted that as per commit-

tee's report, some of the departments had not provided the required data and therefore, the secretaries concerned must provide such details to the committee before the next hearing.

The committee in its report has also highlighted the causes and technical hurdles behind the delays in SNEs approval as well as the recommendations in this regard, however the secretaries of departments concerned, whose SNEs have not been approved, must also submit their detailed reports to this effect, it added.

The bench further said that earlier, the secretary of works and services department was directed to submit comprehensive details of all public projects, including high and higher secondary schools and livestock buildings and other schemes which had been completed but the SNEs had not yet been approved and an explanation was also sought for such delay in approval.

The compliance report filed by the secre-

tary indicated that 2,390 schemes of road sector and eight schemes of building sector had been completed during last 15 years thereby no SNE was required, but list of those schemes was not attached with the compliance report, it noted and directed the secretary of works & services department to place on record the list of such schemes by Nov 30.

The special secretary of health in a statement asserted that 184 schemes were initiated by the department since 2009-10 and 177 of them had been completed as SNEs related to 77 were mentioned whereas for 73 schemes approval of SNEs was not required while 20 schemes were operationally in the Sindh Institute of Child Health and Neonatology, Sindh Institute of Cardiovascular Disease, Sindh Institute of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, SIUT and KMC whereas seven schemes required Schedule of New Expenditure (PC-IV) and as many schemes had been dropped.



United held by Chelsea in first EPL game since Ten Hag sacking Pg.18 SPORT

ISLAMABAD
Sunset 05:16pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 06:25am
NEXT 24 HRS
Minimum 18°C
Maximum 28°C
Outlook Mainly Sunny

METRO North



ARTISTS decorate carts with truck art while workers set up the Punjab Pavilion at Lok Virsa in Islamabad on Sunday. Preparations are underway for the annual Lok Meela which is scheduled to start on Nov 8. — Photos by Mohammad Asim

Govt still undecided about revision of Islamabad's master plan

Latest summary sent by CDA to interior ministry on Sept 10 carrying 15 names of experts for submission to cabinet

By Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: It seems the federal government is still undecided about the long-delayed revision of Islamabad's master plan. The Capital Development Authority (CDA) during the last few years had sent several summaries for reconstitution of the master plan commission, but to no avail. After approval of the federal cabinet, the commission will be notified to start the revision of the city's blueprint. The latest summary dated September 10, carrying 15 names of experts was sent to the Ministry of Interior for onwards submission to the federal cabinet. Meanwhile, another summary dated October 23, available with Dawn, with some new names was being discussed in the CDA. However, sources said the CDA management had decided not to send this summary rather to follow the summary already sent to the ministry. "We have been observing this drama of making and receiving summaries for the last several years, but no serious

action is being taken to get the summary approved from the federal cabinet to constitute the master plan commission," said a deputy director of CDA. The issue was also taken up by National Assembly recently. In response to a question from PPP MNA Dr Shazia Sobia Adam Saeed, Interior Minister Syed Muzaffar Raza Naqvi in his written response on October 25 had shared details of the proposed revision of the master plan. The minister said the cabinet had constituted a commission to review the master plan in the light of directions issued by the EBC on April 19, 2018, after which the Ministry of Interior issued a notification for the commission on January 18, 2019, including its terms of reference. The commission, after detailed deliberations and working, prepared some documents/reports. Subsequently, the CDA based on December 2, 2019 adopted the interim report on the review of the master plan (2020-2040). The federal cabinet in its decision dated August 17, 2021 made several additions/deletions to the composition of the commission. "The commission later suggested to hire the services of consultants to review the master plan and also revised the RFP/TORs document. After the change of the federal government, some members quit and the remaining stopped responding." Reassuredly, the work of the commission was held up. The federal government was informed about it and sum-

mary for the constitution of the revised commission was forwarded to interior ministry on December 2, 2022, he added. The cabinet in its meeting held on January 26, 2024 considered the summary regarding reconstitution of the commission and decided as under: "The Cabinet considered the summary titled 'Reconstitution of the Federal Commission to review the Master Plan of Islamabad' submitted by the Interior Division and directed the division to deliberate on the matter holistically in consultation with the cabinet members and to then present a well-thought out proposal for consideration of the cabinet which should include inter alia the option to engage private sector professionals of international standing. The minister in his reply stated that in compliance with the above decision, an amended summary was submitted to the interior ministry on February 16, 2024, by the CDA. Sources said on September 10, the CDA sent another summary, reducing the number of members from 20 to 15. Several names of experts of previous panels were replaced with new ones. As per this summary, the CDA chairman will have three urban planners (Aslam Mughal, Jehangir Sherpao, Khuram Faridi), Executive Vice President Nopak Lahore Dawood Raza will be a member as a transportation planning specialist. Meanwhile, the summary also carried the name of a retired bureaucrat of

Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) Syed Razaan Mehtob as an environmentalist. The sources said Dr Naveed Iftikhar will be new member as urban economist while the name of a resident of Islamabad, Raja Changzeb Sultan - from Village Shokarparian - had also been proposed as a representative of the villages in Islamabad. The names of Barrister Qasim Chaudhry, lawyer of the Supreme Court, and Abdullah Khan (architect) were proposed as members. In addition, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Member Planning CDA, Member Environment, Director General Pakistan Environment Protection Agency and the Director General Planning will be ex-officio members of the proposed commission. Divindia Associates, a Gurgaon-based firm that prepared the master plan, had recommended its revision after every 20 years in accordance with the needs of the time. However, successive governments did not bother to make proper revision rather kept focusing on selective changes without any input from professionals, resulting in poor planning in the capital city. So far, 45 changes have been made to the original master plan by federal cabinets. On the other hand, Islamabad has been facing rapid growth in its population. CDA's Director Media Shahid Khan said the civic agency had recently sent the summary to the government which will be approved by the competent authority.

HEC awards 200 scholarships to S. Lankan students

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan has awarded 200 fully and partially funded scholarships to the sixth batch of Sri Lankan students under the Atama Mohammed Iqbal Scholarship Programme, says a press release issued by the HEC on Sunday. It said that around 500 Sri Lankan students, apart from these awardees, were already pursuing their undergraduate, MSc and PhD studies in leading universities in Pakistan. "HEC in collaboration with the Pakistan High Commission, Colombo held a ceremony for the newly selected students in Colombo General Sherendra Silva, Chief of Defence Staff was the chief guest. High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka Maj Gen. (R) Fakhim Ullah also graced the occasion," the press release said. Speaking on behalf of the HEC chairman, Project Director, Pakistan-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme, Jehanzeb Khan congratulated the Sri Lankan students and briefed the participants about various aspects of the scholarship. He highlighted the importance of education in bringing regional economic stability and enhancing collaboration between the two friendly countries. The Pakistani high commissioner said awarding these scholarships to Sri Lankan students was yet another testament to the excellent brotherly relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. He urged the students to embrace this opportunity with determination and resilience. "As you pursue your studies, remember that you are ambassadors of your country and culture. Engage with your peers, share your experiences, and be a bridge between our two nations. The knowledge and understanding you gain will be invaluable as we work together to address the challenges we face in the ever-changing world," he said. The ceremony was attended by prominent personalities from various walks of life including businessmen, academicians, parents of the awardee students, and government officials.

FDE handed over 10 rural area schools after facelift

ISLAMABAD: After renovation and provision of new facilities, 10 schools in rural areas have been handed over to the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE). According to the FDE, the month-long renovation and facelift work has been completed and new education facilities have also been provided to students in 10 schools in rural areas of the capital territory. Education Secretary Mubynuddin Ahmed Wani said that work in 10 schools had been completed. "Work in 86 other schools of rural areas is in progress. Every month a batch of 10 schools seen completion," he said and added that the ministry wanted to get the rural area project completed within this fiscal year. Besides renovations, "we have established new state-of-the-art labs and libraries and furniture," the secretary said, adding that 26 newly appointed subject specialists had also been deputed in rural area schools. The secretary claimed these steps would end the disparity between urban and rural area schools and also increase enrollment.

The 10 schools, which have been handed over to the FDE after the completion of works included Islamabad Model Schools for Boys (IMSB) Chatter Bakhtawan, Islamabad Model School D-12, IMSB Tamasan, IMSB Dera, Tarnol, IMSB Hamak, IMSB Maghal Sibala, IMCG Rawal Town, IMCG Tarnol, IMSB Jhang Noolan, and IMCG Taoda Peri. Meanwhile, renovations are underway in 86 other schools, which included 16 schools located in the Sibala region, 45 in the Nilore area, nine in the Bhara Kalan area, and 16 in the Tarnol area.

It is relevant to note that under the Rs7 billion project, the education ministry upfitted around 170 schools and provided new facilities. The schools in urban areas had already been facelifted and now work was being conducted in rural areas. A few months ago, the issue of shortage of basic facilities in rural areas was also highlighted by the National Assembly Standing Committee on Education, which formed a sub-committee to visit schools. Subsequently, the FDE shifted its focus from urban to rural areas.

It may be noted that amid these renovations, the teachers' union of the education ministry in June to pay heed to their concerns, citing financial hardship and administrative neglect. One of the teachers said Dawn that physical upgrades alone were insufficient to uplift the standard of education in these schools as the most crucial element in this equation is the teaching staff, whose welfare and professional growth were being overlooked by the government. — Staff Reporter

Clinical cadre eligible to vie for Pims executive director slot

FST refuses to interfere in seniority list containing doctors from admin, clinical cadres

By Ikram Jureidi

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Service Tribunal (FST) refused to interfere in the seniority list of the Pims doctors vying for the executive director slot has paved the way for doctors belonging to the clinical cadre to become the head of one of the largest public sector hospitals. The admin cadre at the hospital had been demanding an exclusive right to the administration posts, claiming that they had received relevant training and that only they should have the right to promotion to such posts, for instance, the executive director (ED). They claimed a clinical doctor could not do justice to administrative posts, as

such an appointment would not only affect their performance but also leave them with little time for clinical practice or teaching as faculty members. Eventually, Pims Joint Executive Director Dr Muhammad Iqbal Khan Durrani (BS-20) filed a petition, along with others, with the FST, stating that the petitioner was an officer of the administrative cadre. "After comparing MRBS and joining Pims, [the] petitioner and others decided to pursue a career in public health administration and in this regard, they got their high[er] education in [the] public health administration. Consequently, we were placed in [the] administrative and general cadre of the Pims with the legitimate expectation of career growth and promotion in the same cadre till the highest post of ED. While the respondents (clinical cadre) chose clinical or teaching cadre and pursued their career in clinical or teaching and promoted as professors," he stated. He stated that he got promotions from BS-18 to 20 on separate seniority lists

and he was on the second spot in the seniority list. However, all of a sudden a combined provisional seniority list was circulated in which he was dropped to the 14th slot. He said the Pims ED, who has the acting charge, forwarded the case of the top three doctors, including himself, for the appointment as the permanent ED. In response to the petition, the FST said it did not see any reason for interference. "We see no reason to interfere in the seniority list, however, the respondents are directed to forward the working papers for consideration of promotion against the post of executive director (BS-25) of those individuals who strictly fulfill the conditions of eligibility prescribed in the Service Rules. With this direction, the appeal at hand stands disposed of." A doctor of the hospital, wishing not to be quoted, said that the joint seniority list was challenged in the tribunal and it was pleaded that only the admin cadre had the right to the ED post. "Now, names of clinical cadre officers can also

be considered for the post. However, officers of BS-20 should have three years [of] experience to become ED. Now the health ministry can retain the already sent summary for the appointment of the ED or can send a fresh one," he said. Another doctor said that there was no doubt that only Dr Muhammad Iqbal Khan Durrani had the experience to become ED and others lacked the three years of experience or relevant qualifications required for the top slot. According to the seniority list available with Dawn, Dr Tariq Iqbal is at the top of the list and Dr Raza Inam Sikander, the acting ED, is in the second spot. The other doctors on the seniority list are Prof Dr Maqbool Badohah, Shajeer Ahmed Siddiqui, Shabaz Hussain Waqar, Muhammad Anjum Chaudhary, Maqbool Hussain, Muhammad Shafiq, Ayaz Hussain, Naveed Fatima, Nuzhat Yasmin, Mumtaz Ahmed Khan, and politician Dr Durrani on the 14th spot.

Week-long anti-polio drive concludes in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI: A week-long anti-polio campaign wrapped up in the garden city on Sunday, with the health authorities vaccinating over 950,000 children less than five years of age out of the set target of one million. District Health Authority Chief Executive Officer Dr Anif Arbab Niaz told Dawn that more than 90 per cent children were immunised in the third national polio immunisation drive of the year. Punjab completed the anti-polio campaign in 33 districts on Friday whereas the drive in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad concluded on Sunday. Dr Niaz said all children in bus stands, railway stations and entry and exit points of the district were administered anti-polio drops. He reiterated the pledge to eradicate polio from the district and underlined that genomic sequencing results indicated that virus was linked to Afghanistan and other endemic zones. He said the government was planning to stop transmission of polio virus by June 2025, and reach zero polio by the end of next year. — Staff Reporter

Pakistani, Korean archaeologists embark on excavation of Mankiala Stupa

By Jamal Shahid



A BPO'S eye view of Mankiala stupa, which has been encroached upon by settlements and fields.



ARCHAEOLOGISTS reveal steps leading into a meditation cell.



CHAMBERS can be seen following the first phase of excavations of Mankiala.

A joint team of archaeologists from Pakistan and South Korea has embarked on an ambitious three-month excavation of the Mankiala Stupa believed to be one of the largest and most historically significant in the Potohar region, potentially rivaling the renowned Buddhist remains of Taxila. "We suspect that the Mankiala Stupa, dating from the 2nd to 5th century AD, could be surrounded by an ancient city much like Taxila. Previous efforts to excavate the site were left incomplete. We are aiming to change that in the coming months," said Dr Abdul Ghafoor Lone, Incharge of Museums at the Department of Archaeology and Museums (DOAM).

This collaborative initiative, "Tracing the link between Korea and Pakistan through Gandhara Cultural Heritage" brings together the Korea Heritage Service and the Korea Heritage Agency in partnership with DOAM.

The joint project which began on October 7 and runs through December 6 seeks to explore the Stupa's lower structure and surrounding areas. In the first phase, archaeologists are focusing on revealing meditative cells around the main Stupa with steps already discovered leading down into one such chamber.

The second phase will target areas such as fields that have been encroached upon over time. Located 36 km southeast of Islamabad, the Mankiala Stupa is historically significant, visible from the nearby Rawat Fort, roughly three km away. It is traditionally recognised as the site associated with Prince Sattva or Salva, who, according to legend, sacrificed himself to feed a starving tigress and her cubs.

This grand Stupa stands as one of the four major structures that thrived during the Gandhara period. Dr Abdul Azeem, Director General DOAM, lauded the collaboration. "The Korean government's support in

preserving our cultural heritage is commendable. This project will not only build our capacity for preservation but also train a new generation of archaeologists," he said.

In addition to the excavation, seven students from Pakistan are participating in the project, receiving hands-on training in using cutting-edge archaeological tools such as drones and total stations. This initiative marks the most significant archaeological undertaking since 2016, according to Professor Ghanjur Rahman from Quaid-i-Azam University, who described the opportunity as "an excellent step forward for students and researchers alike."

The Mankiala excavation is part of a broader Korean Official Development Assistance (ODA) project with a total budget of \$4 million aimed at conserving and promoting cultural heritage in several countries, including Pakistan.

Bunhwon Jeon, senior researcher with the Korea Heritage Agency, expressed the hope that the project will inspire young Pakistanis to develop a passion for archaeology and the preservation of cultural relics.

"Mankiala Stupa was first brought to the world's attention by British emissary Mountstuart Elphinstone in 1809. Subsequent excavations in 1830 led to the discovery of relics now housed in the British Museum," explained Dr Park, director at the Korea Heritage Agency. He said South Korea had been actively supporting archaeological preservation and tourism initiatives in various countries through ODA projects since 2021. As the joint team continues its meticulous work, there is growing anticipation that the ancient site will yield invaluable insights into the region's Buddhist history and further strengthen cultural ties between Korea and Pakistan.



LABOURERS seen working at the Buddhist site.



KOREAN archaeologists work with their Pakistani colleague at the excavation site. — Photos by Department of Archaeology and Museums



United held by Chelsea in first EPL game since Ten Hag sacking

Pg.18 SPORT

LAHORE
Sunset 05:13 pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 06:19 am
NEXT 24 HRS
Minimum 19.0°C
Maximum 31.0°C
Outlook Mainly Sunny
AQI
Maximum (Yesterday) 1173

METRO Central



PLAYERS take part in the second Shalimar Chess Championship organised by the district administration. — APP

Cotton arrivals surge but quality challenges remain

LAHORE: An unexpected rise in the arrival of raw cotton at ginning factories for the second consecutive fortnight has surprised market watchers.

According to a Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association report covering Oct 16 to 31, a total of 4.291 million bales of raw cotton arrived at ginning units nationwide. Of these, 1.842 million bales were reported from Punjab and 2.449 million bales from Sindh. Out of the total 4.291 million bales, 1.181 million arrived during the past two weeks.

Cotton Ginners Forum chairman Ishtiaq Haq attributed this unexpected increase in arrivals to a decline in the undocumented trade of lint, as the Federal Board of Revenue has begun scrutinising ginning units' records more closely.

Based on field surveys, Khashif Islam from Islam and Sons foresees a gradual decline in raw cotton arrivals. He points out that extended hot weather and lower seed quality have impacted both the quality and quantity of the crop, while the mixing of cotton from various areas has further harmed its quality, causing variations within and between bales.

The textile industry now faces a dual challenge of low production and reduced quality. In anticipation of these challenges, mills have secured a substantial quantity of cotton from other sources at favourable prices, leveraging a global market downturn. As a result, Mr Islam says prices are likely to remain stable within the current range despite the reduced domestic crop.

Naseem Usman of the Karachi Cotton Brokers Association is hopeful for a better harvest than initially expected. According to him, if the current trend holds, total white lint production in the country could reach seven million bales, up from the earlier forecast of up to 5.5 million bales.

He predicts that with a potential decline in cotton arrivals, the rate for quality cotton could touch Rs19,000 per bale by the end of this fortnight. — Amjad Mahmood

Polio programme gets new head as fight against disease hits a low

By Asif Chaudhry

LAHORE: Amid reports of aggravating poliovirus situation in several districts, the Punjab government has appointed the new head of the Polio Programme & Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).

The officer, Adeel Taseer, is already holding multiple positions and assignments in the primary and secondary healthcare departments, including additional secretary development & finance, project director of the Project Management Unit (PMU) and head of the strengthening of development wing. Mr Taseer has been picked as the programme coordinator on the recommendations of Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department Secretary Nadia Saeed, and an official, privy to the information.

He said Punjab also reported its first case of poliovirus in four years, marking a significant setback to the province's

fight against the crippling disease when a six-year-old male child from Chakwal was reported to be carrying the virus in August this year. Before that, the last case in Punjab was reported in 2020. Similarly, he said, environment samples for wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) had been tested positive in various cities, including Lahore, Rawalpindi, Attock, Mianwali and Bahawalpur, posing at risk to the health of hundreds of thousands of children under five in the nearby districts of the province.

The detection of environmental samples in many districts of the Punjab province in a year raised serious concerns among the higher authorities who expressed utter displeasure at the performance of the officers associated with the polio programme.

The official said the programme had been in the limelight as it persistently missed thousands of children during each campaign for polio drops.

In a statement, the spokesperson said the new head of the polio programme

and EOC Coordinator of Punjab, Adeel Taseer, reiterated pledge to eradicate polio, saying the commitment shown by the top leadership of the province, including Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department Secretary Nadia Saeed by holding campaigns reviews every day, showed that polio eradication was top priority of the government.

Mr Taseer stressed an alarm that Punjab's children were at the risk of imported virus circulation, which could not be allowed at any cost. He underlined that genomic sequencing results indicated that the virus was linked to Afghanistan and other endemic zones. As final data continued to pour in on Sunday, the preliminary stats showed that over 2.5m children had been vaccinated till the sixth day of the campaign, the EOC coordinator said.

Lahore topped the list of most vaccinated children with over 2.2m children getting vaccinated till the sixth day of the campaign. It was followed by

Faisalabad and Bahim Yar Khan with over 1.5m and 1.1m vaccinations, respectively.

The national campaign was launched across Punjab on Oct 28, targeting 23.3m children. The campaign continued for seven days in mega districts including Lahore, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad.

The spokesperson for the polio programme said Punjab hit a key milestone on Sunday, wrapping up its third and last national polio immunisation drive of the year. He said the polio teams vaccinated thousands of 'missed children' on the final day of the campaign to block off any possibility of poliovirus circulation in the province.

Punjab had already wrapped up the polio campaign in 33 districts of Punjab on Friday except Lahore, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad where it was completed on Sunday.

Over 200,000 teams were seen rushing to houses in their respective areas, which were marked as having 'non-available' children.



PARTICIPANTS in a cycle rally held to raise awareness about smog passers through the Walled City. — White Star

Accidents in Lahore, Sargodha Three die, 36 injured as buses from Raiwind overturn

Dawn Report

SARGODHA/LAHORE: At least three men died and seven others were injured when a vehicle carrying a Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) group overturned near Iqbal Interchange on M2 motorway on Sunday, while 29 persons returning from the event suffered injuries in another accident in Lahore.

According to Route 1122 officials, in the first incident, the vehicle bringing back people from the Tablighi Jamaat gathering held in Raiwind, Lahore, overturned when one of its tyres burst.

Most of the passengers in the vehicle were returning to DLR in

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

On being informed of the accident, a Rescue 1122 team reached the spot and shifted the injured persons and the dead bodies to the Iqbal Tabah Roadquarters Hospital.

Those who died were identified as Naik Muhammad (33), son of Pir Baddah, Sahib Shah and Sultan (53), while the injured included Anwar, Gul Salim Umar, Hidayat Allah, Akhbar Wahab, Abdul Wahab, Noor Shah and Azam Khan.

Following the accident, teams of National Highway and Motorway Police and Punjab police also reached the spot.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz

Continued on Page 14

141 test positive for dengue across Punjab

LAHORE: Punjab witnessed a surge in the number of dengue cases as 141 people tested positive for the virus during the last 24 hours across the province.

A spokesperson for the health department said that most of the total cases were reported from Rawalpindi where 118 people carried dengue virus while others emerged from Lahore, Attock, Chakwal, Vehari, Faisalabad, Mianwali, Sukkot etc.

He said the province has recorded a total of 954 new positive cases of dengue fever during the last one week.

The total number of dengue cases in Punjab reached 5,897 since Jan 1 of this year, he said. — Staff Reporter

PPP flag-hoisting drive

LAHORE: The central Punjab chapter of the Pakistan Peoples Party has launched a party flag hoisting campaign.

Under the campaign being launched on the direction of chapter president Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, party flags will be hoisted at least at 10 new houses per day in divisions, districts, tehsils and towns till Nov 30.

In this regard, general secretary Syed Hasan Mustafa hoisted flags at the houses of Mahr Siddique, Shujaat Younis, Ilyas Shah and Maher Ashiq in Fakhwan Gardens, Defence and Green Town Bagatyan.

— Staff Reporter

Masstransit authority proposes aerial tram service for Gulberg

By Khalid Hashmi

LAHORE: The Punjab Masstransit Authority (PMA) has proposed the aerial tram service instead of the at-grade (road) tram service in Gulberg, as suggested by the Lahore Development Authority (LDA).

However, a final decision to either go for an at-grade or aerial tram service will be taken after conducting studies related to the project's feasibility.

The PMA says since the project falls under the scope of masstransit, it should not be executed by the LDA.

On the other hand, the LDA has asked the transport department and the PMA to make conducting the project's feasibility study part of the studies already being carried out by the PMA for introducing an integrated urban transport system in the Punjab capital, Dawn has learnt.

"In fact, our traffic system in Lahore doesn't support or allow trams running on roads in Gulberg and other busy areas. We have told them (the government & LDA) that Canal Road is the only road where the tram service can be feasible," a senior official source in the PMA explained while talking to Dawn on Friday.

According to the official, who wished not to be quoted, the at-grade tram service/system has become obsolete — over 100 years old. Moreover, it is very expensive in terms of building, owning, and operating. On the other hand, the aerial tram/tramway system is cheaper than the road trams and can be operated smoothly without being stuck in road traffic congestion.

"We have shown the aerial tramway system to the government in a recent briefing. But this is not yet final, as we will decide to go for an aerial or at-grade tramway system after having feasibility studies of this project. However, we are the authority to

execute this project," he said, adding that a lot of steps, including feasibility, project concepts (PCs), approval of the project at the levels of departments concerned, provincial and central development working parties and ECNEC, finalising of tenders, allocation and transfer of funds, etc., will take a considerable time ahead of the start of the civil, mechanical, and electrical works.

He said the aerial tramway was built at around 15/20 feet height. He said since the project comes under the domain of masstransit, it would be implemented by PMA after approvals.

On the other hand, in a letter to the transport department and PMA, the LDA has proposed a tram network in Gulberg, claiming that it will help address the growing demand for convenient and environmentally friendly public transit while reducing traffic congestion in the area. According to the letter, the system

will seamlessly connect key commercial spots along M4 Alam Road, Near Jahan Road, and other major thoroughfares, making the commute hassle-free for shopkeepers, shoppers, and the public at large.

"The connectivity of the tram with the metro bus system at Kabra Chowk station will connect the important commercial hub of Gulberg with the commuters of other cities through Shalimar and Gajpura stations and suburbs of the city through the Orange Line Metro Train system," the letter explains.

The route of the scheme titled "Gulberg Tram Network Project," according to the LDA, consists of a total 8.2km long route — Kabra Chowk Liberty-Gaddafi Stadium Roundabout-Gulberg Main Boulevard, Main Market Roundabout-Main Boulevard -MM Alam Road-Near Jahan Road-Kabra Chowk.

The project, as the LDA suggests,

involves conducting a reconnaissance survey & route selection, traffic and commercial survey, topographic survey, geotechnical studies, environmental and socio-economic impact studies, engineering design of selected alignment, signalling and telecommunication study, rolling stock study, electrical traction study, electric power study, economic & financial analysis, draft feasibility study report and feasibility study report besides preparing and submitting PC-1 and tender documents and tender design.

Besides these, the feasibility studies would include demand analysis, route & network planning, technical feasibility, financial & economic analysis, legal & regulatory considerations, public & stakeholders' consultations, risk assessment and mitigation, traffic impact, urban planning, socio-economic, operation & maintenance, computer-aided design, and type of tram studies.

METRO

North



United held by Chelsea in first EPL game since Ten Hag sacking
Pg.18 SPORT

PESHAWAR
Sunset 05:21pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 06:34am
NEXT 24 HRS
Minimum 15°C
Maximum 30°C
Outlook Mainly Sunny



A CHEF barbeques chicken at a food outlet on Khan Mast Road, Peshawar, on Sunday. — *Webi Star*

Over 5,000 community schoolteachers without salary for eight months

Cash-starved govt spends huge amounts on protest rallies

By **Mohammad Ashtiq**

PESHAWAR: Although Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has been spending huge amounts on holding protest rallies for release of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder Imran Khan and showing interest in purchase of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), it has failed to pay salaries to 5,238 teachers of girls' community schools during the last eight months.

The non-payment of salaries in informal schools for girls functioning in far-off areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has endangered the future of 275,000 students enrolled in such institutions. These schools have been functioning under the auspices of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elementary and Secondary Education (E&SEF) for the last many years. The institutions have been established in far-off areas where no government schools exist. "The teachers, who have not received salaries, are posted to 2,209 girls' community schools, 541 basic education center schools (BECs) and 275 National Commission of Human Development (NCHD) schools," sources told this scribe. The provincial government has

fixed Rs36,000 as minimum wage for unskilled labour, however, government is paying Rs21,000 salary to teachers of these schools. A senior official in E&SEF told Dawn that the foundation required Rs2 billion to pay salaries to teachers but the provincial government was reluctant to release funds to it. He said that since the transfer of the then managing director of E&SEF, Zareef Maazi, in September 2023, the foundation was not working efficiently owing to frequent transfers of its managing directors and lack of efforts to get the funds released. "Mr Maazi had made tireless efforts for putting life in the otherwise dead foundation because managing directors in the past had taken no interest in it as

they had just taken handsome salaries," said the official. He said that after the transfer of Mr Maazi in September 2023, the foundation was headed on additional charge basis by the then special secretary of elementary and secondary education department till appointment of Atiqar Rehman as managing director in December 2023. He said that Mr Rehman was transferred in August 2024 and the charge of E&SEF was given to the managing director of Merged Areas Education Foundation, Mian Aizuddin, till appointment of Khawaja Tabassum Sajjad as its managing director in mid-September. One of the teachers of girls' community schools told Dawn that teachers of the community

schools were more hard workers than the regular teachers of government schools. She said that people had more trust in them than that was why each GCS had enrolled 100 to 300 students. "We are in troubles as we have not received our salaries since March," she said, wishing not to be named. She said that she covered a distance of 10 kilometres to reach the school and changed several public transport vehicles as teachers of these schools were unable to hire a Suzuki van or rikshaw for pick and drop. Earlier, she said, the teachers of other schools had hired a rikshaw for their pick and drop. However, they were unable to pay the driver since the government

Continued on Page 14

Hazara province movement decides to mobilise people

By **Our Correspondent**

MANDEHRA: The Subah Hazara Tehreek has decided to hold public gatherings across the country to mobilise the people before presenting a resolution in the National Assembly, demanding a separate province. "Our core body has decided to adopt a multipronged strategy for the Hazara province's cause. We will reach out to parliamentary leaders of political parties to seek their support for the approval of the Hazara province resolution from the National Assembly," Saadur Mohammed Yusuf, chief of the movement, told reporters here on Sunday. Accompanied by other leaders of the Tehreek, he claimed that people from across Hazara, which comprises eight districts, were united for the cause of a separate province regardless of their political affiliations. Mr Yusuf, who is also an MNA and central vice-president of PML-N, said that their core body had recently decided to hold public gatherings across Hazara and the rest of the country. "The complete schedule of our public meetings, which will likely begin from Karachi, will be issued shortly," he said. Mr Yusuf, who is also a former federal minister of religious affairs, added that a committee had been formed under his chairmanship and comprising former lawmakers Murtaza Javed Abbasi, Gasim Ali Shah and Captain retired Mohammad Saeed to engage parliamentary leaders of all major political parties in the National Assembly to persuade them for the passage of the Hazara province resolution, which has already been submitted to the lower house of the parliament. "We are optimistic that our struggle, in which we have lost many precious lives since the renaming of the North-West Frontier Province to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010, will soon achieve a breakthrough," Mr Yusuf said. He said that creating more federating units was essential to address the country's socioeconomic challenges.

KPRA posts 40pc growth in revenue collection

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) collected Rs14.84 billion on account of sales tax on services and Infrastructure Development Cess (IDC) in the first four months of the ongoing financial year 2024-25, marking a 40pc growth compared to the same period last year. A statement issued here on Sunday said that the authority collected Rs11.25 billion from the sales tax on services as compared to Rs9.5 billion collected last year (FY24). KPRA collected Rs3.59 billion on account of IDC as compared to Rs1.28 billion collected in FY24. This reflected a 21pc growth in sales tax on services and 180pc growth in IDC year-on-year. KPRA director general Fouzia Iqbal appreciated the authority's efforts and expressed confidence that with continued efforts, not only would the annual target be met, but it would be surpassed by a significant margin. "If we continue with our current approach, we will exceed this year's target," she said. She said that the provincial government's support was instrumental in developing effective strategies for achieving its targets.

Swat villagers unwilling to give land for cantonment

Jirga pledges to resist any move of forcible eviction by govt

By **Fazal Khaliq**

SWAT: The residents of 13 villages in Kabal tehsil declared here on Sunday that they would not give any portion of their land for the planned extension of cantonment. They pledged to resist any such attempt by the government. They took the decision in a jirga, convened by elders and organised by local social organisation Namsa Lash. Hundreds of people including MPA Niazuddin Khan, Sher Shah Khan, Sultan Ali Khan, Riaz Ahmad, Sahar Khan, Zahid Khan, Imran Khan and Khalid Ahmad Swati attended the jirga. They said that a large portion of their land had already been acquired over the years for projects like airport, cantonment, bypass and Swat Expressway.



ELDERS of 13 villages hold a jirga in Swat on Sunday. — *Dawn*

Now, they said, the state was seeking additional residential and agricultural lands for extension of cantonment. The local elders recalled that several years ago, approximately 4,000 kanal of land was taken for the cantonment by invoking Section 4, with the government

compensating them at a rate of just Rs250 per square foot. They said that the rate was far below the market price, which stood at around Rs1,700 per square foot for residential land and Rs25,000 per square foot for commercial areas. They added that many locals felt that their

land had been forcibly seized. They said that 13 villages including Nangol, Rara Bando, Kama Bando, Hwari, Karji, Daragram, Mandherai, Soondherai, Ghwaraja, Dalar, Dughlan, Nigam, Lalo Bando, Kama Bando, Malakda, Jankot, Kara and Khan Tangay would be impacted by the proposed extension of cantonment. Villagers said that these lands were the only source of livelihood for many, which they were unwilling to sacrifice. "If government insists to seize our land, we are prepared to sacrifice our lives rather than surrender our homes and farmlands. We are deeply rooted in this land and we have no intention of leaving," they added. The participants of the jirga voiced fears of displacement, saying that there was insufficient land in Swat to accommodate more than 45,000 people, who would be affected. "We don't want to become refugees in our own land. If forced to leave, we would rather die on our land than be driven away," they said. They said that any attempt by state to forcibly evict them would be met with strong resistance.

Official transferred after levelling corruption charges against hospital MS

Hospital head accuses accounts officer of running parallel administration

By **Ashtiq Yusufzai**

PESHAWAR: The accounts officer of public sector Nasserullah Khan Baber Memorial Hospital Peshawar has been transferred after he accused the medical superintendent of misappropriation of hospital's Rs40 million funds, according to documents. However, the medical superintendent

said that the official was creating hurdles to operation of the hospital and requested the director general health services to never appoint him again at the same hospital. Muhammadullah, accounts officer in SPN-17 of Nasserullah Khan Baber Memorial Hospital (NKBMH), wrote a letter to Dy Peshawar, the medical superintendent of the same hospital, on October 28 and asked him to deposit Rs15.90 million to the government's kitty otherwise he would approach higher authorities for recovery of the 'misappropriated' sum he had sighted off. The letter titled "Illegal withdrawal of specialists' share in lieu of Senior Card Plus, hospital management committee and trustee consultants' fee" stated that the medical superintendent had withdrawn illegally the amount during his three and half years tenure. It said that the MS was requested to deposit the same.

The officer alleged that these irregularities had also been pointed out by audit teams during inspection of record of 2023-24 but the MS gave Rs2.5 million as bribe to auditors to bury the issue. He said that the MS illegally changed the hospital management committee (HMC) and stuffed it with relatives and home servants without following of audit formalities as per rules. He also alleged that he had brought into his notice that a junior clerk had passed fake arrears bills to the tune of Rs10 million but instead

of launching disciplinary proceedings against him, he was awarded the opportunity to do everything and bypass the accounts officer. He said that recently, a nephew of the same clerk was appointed as ward orderly at the hospital despite ban on recruitments imposed by the government. He said that other major irregularities were also committed by the MS which he would reveal during a high level inquiry. Responding to the allegations, the MS in a letter surrendered the services of Muhammadullah to Director-General Health Services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on administrative grounds for further posting anywhere in the province with the request that he should never be posted to Nasserullah Khan Baber Memorial Hospital Peshawar in future, in the best interest of public. "Muhammadullah is making hindrance and interference in the smooth functions of hospital affairs," he said. The MS alleged that the accounts officer was interfering in hospital administration, especially in radiology department and elaborated that he concocted a written complaint of sexual harassment of a female staffer against Muhammad Khan of radiology section. "Then the employee came to my office and admitted that she submitted a written complaint in the presence of senior administrative officers," he added.

He alleged that the attitude of the officer with all the employees including doctors, pharmacist, nurses, paramedics and other staff was unethical as he had set up a parallel administration in the hospital, which was tantamount to misconduct and disobedience under the prevailing rules. The copy of the letter has also been sent to local MPA, secretary and director general health and other concerned officials whereas manager of the bank have been requested not to entertain the signature of Muhammadullah. The account section has been instructed to stop his pay immediately. The MS didn't respond to message sent by this scribe to seek his version.

PRAYER

Page 05:12
Zuhar 12:00
Aar 03:44
Maghreb 05:22
Isha 06:46

Starting time in Peshawar

REFLECTIONS

COONE WHO GIVES UP A STRAIGHT PATH, HONEST AND RATIONAL WAY OF THINKING AND WORKING, WILL HARM HIMSELF.

— HAZRAF ALI (A.S.)

TRAHADT

Malakand university approves promotions of faculty, staff

By Our Correspondent

LOWER HER: University of Malakand syndicate approved the promotion of 45 faculty members and administrative officers to next grades, said a press release issued on Sunday.

It said that Vice-Chancellor (VC) Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad presided over the syndicate's 57th and 58th meetings, which were held virtually, mostly in the university's committee rooms.

Following extensive deliberation and consideration of the board's recommendations, the forum authorized the promotion of current faculty members and administrative officers as well as the hiring of new faculty members.

Speaking at the meeting, the VC stressed that the university worked to maintain the high standards of education and that the compliance of all parties involved would be gradually resolved to guarantee equality.

In addition to congratulating the promoted teachers and administrative officers, he expressed his hope that they would all continue to provide high-quality work, the statement concluded.



RESCUE 1122 personnel engaged in extinguishing fire at a shop in Bannu on Sunday. — Photo by Ghulam Mursaleh Marwat

Gas cylinder shop gutted; man killed in Bannu festive firing

By Our Correspondent

LAKKI MARWAT A huge fire destroyed a gas cylinder outlet in Miryakhel area of Bannu district on Sunday.

The fire, which erupted due to gas leak, engulfed the shop within minutes, shopkeepers said, adding they immediately called Rescue 1122 and police to help extinguish the flames.

By the time the police and rescue personnel reached the venue, the fire caused the shop's roof to collapse.

A Rescue 1122 official said they dispatched a team of firefighters along with fire trucks and ambulances to the site when the control room received information about the incident.

He said the firefighters put out the

fire after an effort of half an hour and saved the adjacent shops and markets from being caught by the flames. He said though the shop was damaged extensively no human loss occurred.

Meanwhile, festive firing at a wedding function took the life of a young man in Bannu on Sunday, police said.

Marwan police station Assistant Sub-Inspector Mir Shah Johari said he was along with a party when he heard gunshots in Kafikhel locality.

He said after initial investigation he came to know that a bridegroom, Qasim Khan and his relative, Umar Hayat and others resorted to festive firing.

The official said the firing panicked the residents.

He said before the police could arrest the suspects, a man was killed by

celebratory firing in the rural locality.

The ANI said two hours after the registration of a case against the suspects, a complainant, Muzam Khan, a resident of Kafikhel locality, informed the police that his son, Jamroz Khan, 30, was killed in the firing.

The complainant told the police he was at home when someone informed him that the body of his son was lying in the District Headquarters Hospital.

He said he immediately reached the hospital and found the body of Umar, who had been killed with a firearm.

The complainant told the police that his son was allegedly killed by Umar Hayat.

The police said the body was handed over to relatives after postmortem.

A case was registered against the suspected killer under section 302 of

Pakistan Penal Code.

SIX ARRESTED The police arrested six suspects and seized arms and ammunition from their possession during a search and strike operation in Damsel area of Bannu on Sunday.

An official said the operation was launched on the directives of district police officer Yasukhin Ahmed following credible information about the presence of anti-social elements in the area.

He said that a party of Damsel police station raided the hideouts of criminals and held six suspects without being any resistance.

"The cops also seized two Kalashnikovs, a Kalashov, three pistols and bullets from the arrested men and registered separate cases against them," he claimed.

Over 5,000 community schoolteachers without salary

Continued from Page 13

stopped paying them salaries, she added.

The teacher said that she knew that several GCS schools had been closed owing to non-payment of salaries to teachers. She added that there were also possibilities of closure of more schools if the government didn't release salaries to teachers immediately.

"Now we are taking loans from our relatives to fulfill our basic needs as we have no other source of income," she said.

On one hand, the provincial government has not

been paying salaries to teachers but on the other, the district programme officers have made their lives miserable on one pretext or other, according to a teacher.

Officials in E&SEF told Dawn that as per government's criteria for establishment of GCS, local community would provide a building of two or three rooms for the school while government would provide teachers, books for students, chairs for teachers, table, white board and other school related materials to the institutions.

However, several teachers of GCS told Dawn that community had not provided building for

schools instead teachers hired buildings and paid rent collectively from their salaries.

They said that owners of the buildings were also putting pressure on them to pay the rent or vacate the building. "How we will pay the rent as the government has stopped our salaries," they questioned.

Sources in E&SEF confirmed to this section that 40 per cent rents of schools were paid by teachers from their salaries.

An usual Minister for Education Faizal Tarakai didn't respond to the queries forwarded on his WhatsApp regarding non-payment of salaries to teachers.

Bomb defused in Bajaur's Mamond tehsil

By Our Correspondent

BAJAUR The local police on Sunday recovered and defused an improvised explosive device in Mamond tehsil of Bajaur tribal district.

According to a statement issued from the office of the district police officer, the IED, which was placed in a field in Ismail area, was recovered by personnel of the bomb disposal squad.

The statement said that the bomb, which was placed for unknown miscreants for sabotage purposes, was later defused peacefully.

DELAY IN BRIDGE REPAIR The district administration and the Highway Department came under fire from local residents and political figures for failing to begin repairs on a damaged bridge on the key Bajaur-Mardan highway, even though the authorities had stated on October 21 that the repairs would be finished in two weeks.

Due to numerous damaged portions from previous floods, the appropriate department decided two weeks ago to block the aforementioned bridge in the Jar area to all types of traffic, which caused major inconvenience for commuters and shippers, local residents told Dawn.

They blasted the relevant authorities for not even starting the repairs on the bridge that connected the entire district to the rest of the province via the Lower Dir district's Munda area.

The commuters and transporters told this correspondent that the closure of main Bajaur-Mardan highway's bridge had a negative impact on them because the alternative route was in poor condition.

According to Farhad Khan, a resident of Mula Kallay area, the unnecessary delay in bridge repair work had greatly alarmed the people of the entire region.

He added that the absence of security measures made the Hajyat bypass route exceedingly dangerous.

PMEN provincial vice president Shahabuddin Khan expressed his profound concern about the delay in repair of bridge and called for the repair work to commence with our further delay.

A Highway Department's official verified that work on the damaged bridge had not yet begun, even though it was agreed that the repairs would be finished in two weeks.

According to him, the bridge's repair work, which included rebuilding damaged piles, girders, and other components, was expected to begin on coming Tuesday.

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COURT NOTICE

CHAKRAWAL
In the Court of Hon'ble Mr. Justice Judge Chaudhry for Recovery Jirana Bili Eo Vo Magd Ahmed Eio Ahmed Khan, Ahmed Khan Eio Sarwar Khan Eio Khawar Tah & Dast Chaudhry you are inform to attend the Court personal through counsel or in person on 05-11-2024 at 10 am to avoid ex-parte proceedings. (21412776394)

ISLAMABAD
In the Court of Adnan Hussain Qazi Judge (recovered) for Recovery Eio, 15/05/2024, Ch. Adnan Hussain Eio, Muhammad Iqbal Eio Eo, 188, Eio 40 Eio Eio Islamabad in Muzam Chaudry Eio Mahmood Chaudry Eio Eio No. 01, Plot No. 22-A, Street No. 16, Khan Market, Sector G-10/3 Islamabad, Permanently resident of Qam Shorawan the Plaintiff Qam Jiang, also Eio Care of Help Aid Anon son of Akbar Farooq Anon, Qam No. 16, Shumail, Tihar and District Begowala, Eio is proclaimed of the said defendant does not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in this Court on 20-11-2024 at 09:00 am, ex-parte proceedings will be taken against him / her (21502776395)

SAUDI ARABIA
In the Court of Khalid Hussain Jallo Family Court Islamabad (West), for Disolution of Marriage Mst. Aina Awan Eio Ali Ahmed Hassan Ahsan Eio Ahmed Eio Al Basha Fatima Saad Awan, Eio is proclaimed of the said defendant does not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in this Court on 05-11-2024 at 09:00 am, ex-parte proceedings will be taken against him / her (21502776396)

MANSHERRA
In the Court of Shehena Gul Judge Eio Manshera, Case No. 48/1 Institution 2/2024 Muztar Khan versus Muhammad Ahmed, The appearance of Muhammad Ahmed Eio Ali Zahra Case Anon Eio Disturbed Gahs Eio and district Manshera currently settled in America couldn't personally attend through any means. He is directed to appear before Court personally or through attorney on 16/11/2024 otherwise case decided ex-parte. (21502776397)

DOMAIB
In the Court of Additional District Judge J. J. Azim Zia Qazi (Senior) at Dappal Appar Eio, 10/11, Vo institution 2/1/2024, Date of hearing: 16/11/2024, Said Poo Khan, in Mst. Jirana Eio, Awan Eio No. 2, Sakh Manshera Eio Nur Bahman resident of Khyber tribal Dappal district Manshera, Whereas in the above mentioned

Muqam accuses PTI of misleading people with false slogans

SHANGLA: Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (Safroz) and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs Eng Amir Muqam said here on Sunday that PTI government was misleading the public with hollow slogans and engaging them in politics based on lies.

He was addressing at a peace jirga after turning the 30 years old enmity into friendship between families of Paran Sardar.

The families of Ayaz Khan and Amroz Zameen Khan announced an end to a 30 years long enmity due to reasons (the two efforts of Eng Amir Muqam).

Mr Muqam was proud of the great regard he received from the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly Shingla, and said he always put the needs of others before his own.

The minister said the people problems related to Nadra, electricity, gas and natural lightness authority were addressed.

On the other hand, he said that PTI has deceived people on the name of change and hollow slogans. He said that despite the third term in government, PTI had failed to address people's problems.

Eng Amir Muqam heard about people problems and issued spot orders on some applications. — AFP

SAEP stands firm against PIA privatisation

Bureaucracy report

PESHAWAR: Society of Airedair Engineers of Pakistan (SAEP) termed Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) a vital national asset and vowed to protect it.

SAEP members voiced their concerns about the possible privatisation of the national flag carrier in a statement released here on Sunday, stressing that the action would have an overall negative impact on both passengers and the country.

Mr Khan restated their shared determination to defend the national airline against privatisation and other harmful measures, saying, "SAEP plays an essential role in PIA's development."

SAEP president Abulqasim Jadoon Khan stated that they would not abandon PIA since it was their responsibility to preserve this national resource, which offered passengers reasonably priced tickets and represented

decreased bodies back to the country without charge.

Mr Khan criticised the airline's administration for poor decisions which led to PIA's operational setbacks, including the grounding of two aircraft in Karachi and two others that remained stranded in Indonesia for 26 months.

"The PIA's challenges are compounded by the closure of international routes, which is unfair to the dedicated employees working for the national airline's prosperity," the statement quoted SAEP vice president Erga Shamsun Shah Afridi as saying.

According to the statement, the society remained unwavering in its resolve to protect the airline's reputation and make sure it continued to be a source of pride for the country while the PIA's future was being considered.

"SAEP is a robust organisation with over 600 members across all airports in the country, dedicated to maintaining and improving PIA's operations," the statement added.



A VENDOR sells balloons on QT Road, Peshawar. — White Star

Pashto short stories termed true reflection of society

Book launching ceremony held at China Cultural Centre

By Sher Alam Shinwari

PESHAWAR: The participants of a literary function have termed a newly-published collection of Pashto short stories a true portrayal of the society plagued by numerous issues and evils.

Addressing a book launching ceremony, they said that Pashto women literati were doing their best to depict true image of the society and the social evils people, especially women, were grappling with.

The ceremony was held at China Cultural Centre to unveil Pashto short stories book titled 'Tash Laxana', authored by Shabeen Amin. Poets, writers and literary critics attended the event.

Speakers shed light on various

aspects of the newly-published book and appreciated the choice of topics and critical portrayal of all the issues showcased in the stories. They said that Shabeen Amin enlisted her name among the top fictionists, who were devoted to a true depiction of the society's image.

Prof Gulzar Jalal Yousofzai, who was chief guest on the occasion, drew on three aspects of Pashto fiction.

He lauded Ms Amin with noted women fictionists of the sub-continent and even European literati.

He said that her style of expression and treatment of every single story in the context of societal issues could best place the stories of 'Tash Laxana' on the high podium of literary pieces.

Naz Perveen, noted Urdu writer and host of the China Window, in her opening remarks said that China Cultural Centre not only promoted Chinese arts, history and culture but also worked for

uplifting local cultural and linguistic diversity.

"Cultural and literary events on wide range of topics are arranged at China Window every now and then and the launching ceremony of Shabeen Amin's book is a good example in this regard," she said.

Atiya Hidayatullah, another writer, remarked that Ms Amin's stories served as representation of real life characters drawn from the society.

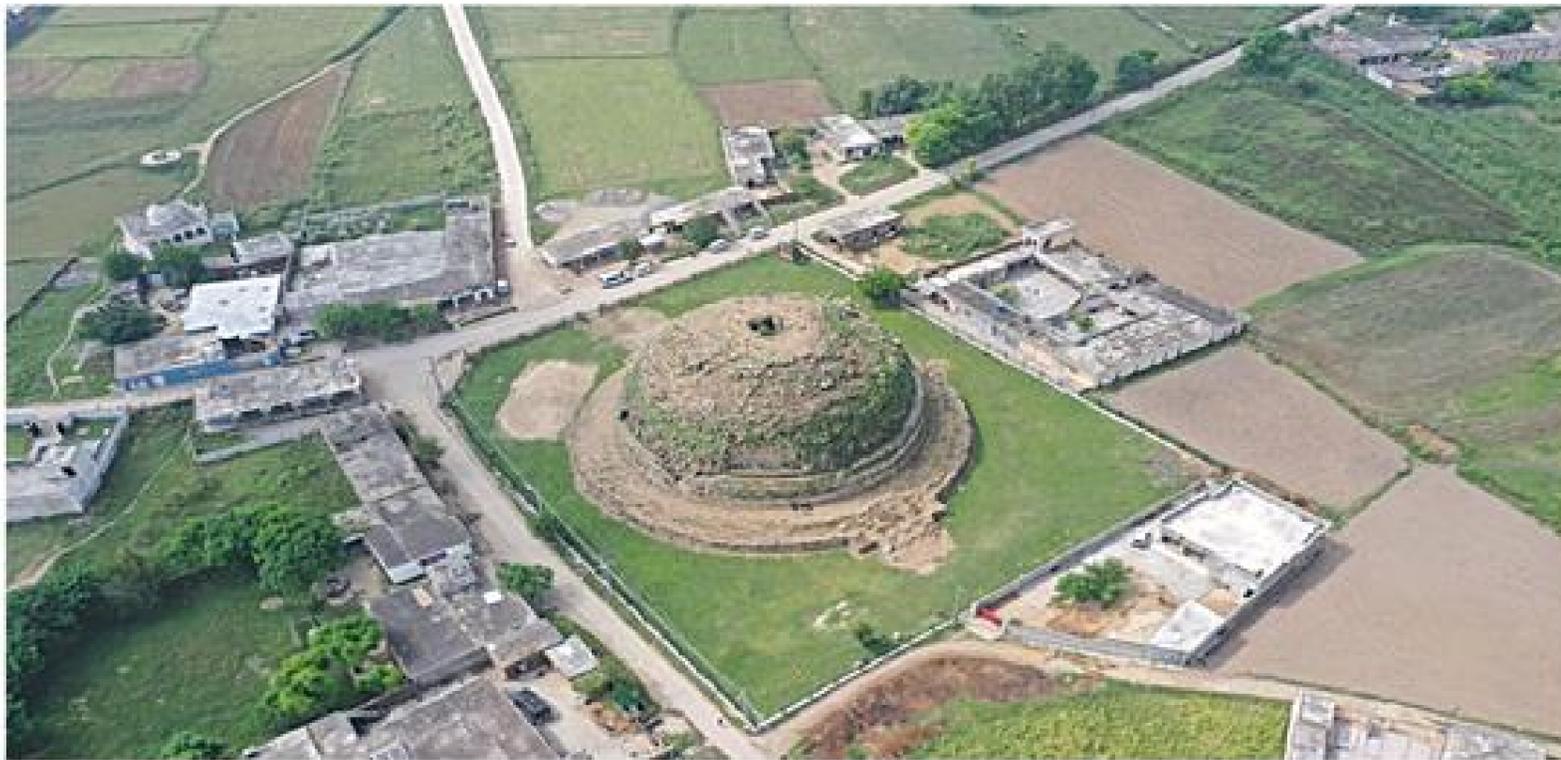
"It is in fact a very fine commentary on plight of women and the author should be credited for her creative strength of storytelling art," she added.

Poet and rights activist Dr Robban Kalim said on the occasion that the new collection of short stories crafted image of society and the author deserved their kudos.

Pashto writer Samina Qadir, anchorperson Khawra Rahman and social media influencer Afzar Afghan also spoke on the occasion.

Pakistani, Korean archaeologists embark on excavation of Mankiala Stupa

By Jamal Shahid



A BPO'S eye view of Mankiala stupa, which has been encroached upon by settlements and fields.



ARCHAEOLOGISTS reveal steps leading into a meditation cell.



CHAMBERS can be seen following the first phase of excavations of Mankiala.



LABOURERS seen working at the Buddhist site.

A joint team of archaeologists from Pakistan and South Korea has embarked on an ambitious three-month excavation of the Mankiala Stupa believed to be one of the largest and most historically significant in the Potohar region, potentially rivaling the renowned Buddhist remains of Taxila. "We suspect that the Mankiala Stupa, dating from the 2nd to 5th century AD, could be surrounded by an ancient city much like Taxila. Previous efforts to excavate the site were left incomplete. We are aiming to change that in the coming months," said Dr Abdul Ghafoor Lone, Incharge of Museums at the Department of Archaeology and Museums (DOAM).

This collaborative initiative, "Tracing the link between Korea and Pakistan through Gandhara Cultural Heritage" brings together the Korea Heritage Service and the Korea Heritage Agency in partnership with DOAM.

The joint project which began on October 7 and runs through December 6 seeks to explore the Stupa's lower structure and surrounding areas. In the first phase, archaeologists are focusing on revealing meditative cells around the main Stupa with steps already discovered leading down into one such chamber.

The second phase will target areas such as fields that have been encroached upon over time. Located 36 km southeast of Islamabad, the Mankiala Stupa is historically significant, visible from the nearby Rawat Fort, roughly three km away. It is traditionally recognised as the site associated with Prince Sattva or Salva, who, according to legend, sacrificed himself to feed a starving tigress and her cubs.

This grand Stupa stands as one of the four major structures that thrived during the Gandhara period. Dr Abdul Azeem, Director General DOAM, lauded the collaboration. "The Korean government's support in

preserving our cultural heritage is commendable. This project will not only build our capacity for preservation but also train a new generation of archaeologists," he said.

In addition to the excavation, seven students from Pakistan are participating in the project, receiving hands-on training in using cutting-edge archaeological tools such as drones and total stations. This initiative marks the most significant archaeological undertaking since 2016, according to Professor Ghanjur Rahman from Quaid-i-Azam University, who described the opportunity as "an excellent step forward for students and researchers alike."

The Mankiala excavation is part of a broader Korean Official Development Assistance (ODA) project with a total budget of \$4 million aimed at conserving and promoting cultural heritage in several countries, including Pakistan.

Bunhwon Jeon, senior researcher with the Korea Heritage Agency, expressed the hope that the project will inspire young Pakistanis to develop a passion for archaeology and the preservation of cultural relics.

"Mankiala Stupa was first brought to the world's attention by British emissary Mountstuart Elphinstone in 1809. Subsequent excavations in 1830 led to the discovery of relics now housed in the British Museum," explained Dr Park, director at the Korea Heritage Agency. He said South Korea had been actively supporting archaeological preservation and tourism initiatives in various countries through ODA projects since 2021.

As the joint team continues its meticulous work, there is growing anticipation that the ancient site will yield invaluable insights into the region's Buddhist history and further strengthen cultural ties between Korea and Pakistan.



KOREAN archaeologists work with their Pakistani colleagues at the excavation site. — Photos by Department of Archaeology and Museums

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The Week...

All bets on new world order

BRICS summit criticises Western trade barriers while reiterating its goal to encourage the use of local currencies in international trade

By Nasir Jamal

GEORGE Galloway, a British politician, has likened the Kazan summit of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) group to the 1944 Bretton Woods conference. "The children's union will grow up in a world shaped by BRICS 2024," he said in a video posted on social media during the bloc's conference in the Russian city last month.

"This is the future; this is a new world that is struggling to be born, no doubt. But it is being born inevitably. Once the process of labour has begun a birth is inevitable. People will be exchanging commodities within the BRICS countries in local currencies. The dollar is beginning to die," he concluded.

Mr Galloway may appear to come a bit too excited about the ascent of BRICS — or conversely, the diminishing US global economic influence. Yet the fact remains that the group's growing influence is signalling a shift away from Western dominance and towards a more multipolar world, helping shape a more just and democratic future.

Essentially, BRICS comes across as an initiative fundamentally based on equality among its member states. What also makes it unique is that it is the first major international initiative not led by the US since World War II that can help shape the new world order.

All Kazan member countries reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation in various areas, including trade, investment, finance, technology, and culture as they have already established a number of mechanisms for cooperation: the BRICS New Development Bank, the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement, and the BRICS Business Council. They also discussed ways to address global challenges, such as climate change, poverty, and inequality.

In recent years, the organisation has successfully projected itself as an alternative to Western-led models of global governance. It is becoming more prominent and influential as it capitalises on the growing dissatisfaction with the US policies of using unilateral economic sanctions against others as a political weapon and protectionist trade policies to boost competition.

The goals espoused by the group are more or less the same as articulated by the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, of which Pakistan is

also a member, in its Islamabad meet a week before the Kazan summit.

BRICS is a group of countries with different political and economic systems that have demonstrated a remarkable capacity for cooperation and consensus-building despite their internal differences, as they share a common interest in challenging the existing global order, which they see as unfair and unjust.

One of the most significant outcomes of the summit was the decision to accept 13 new partner countries to join the group: Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey (a NATO member), Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates have already joined the bloc.

This expansion reflects the growing interest in joining the group and its challenge to the existing, dying global order. The requests of 21 countries to join the group are still pending. The addition of these new members will significantly increase the geographic and economic diver-

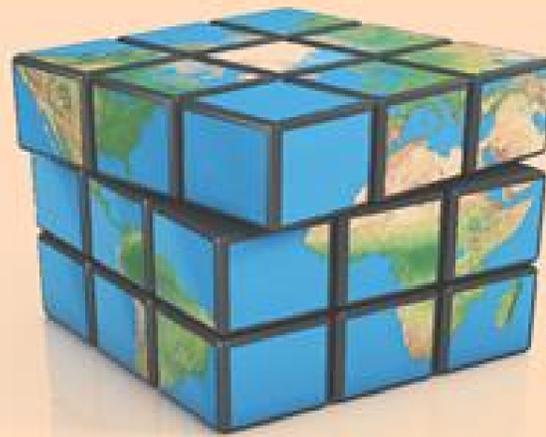
The organisation has broadened its geographic and economic diversity by welcoming 13 new member states, while 21 others await approval

sity of the BRICS group.

If anything, the Kazan communiqué is a blueprint for strengthening multilateralism, emphasising a cooperative global approach towards establishing a "more just and democratic world order" as the discussions ranged from geopolitics and narratives to alternative payment systems to the dollar to artificial intelligence and even the preservation of big cats.

It focuses on three verticals: promoting international peace and security; encouraging international economic and financial cooperation; and fostering social and cultural

Continued on Page 3



Strengthening agricultural credit

Sustainability is a major concern as Kissan card's funding is currently limited to FY25 with no provisions for the future

By Khalid Saeed Wattoo and Dr Waqar Ahmad

TO achieve higher crop yields and boost overall productivity in Pakistan's agriculture sector, which currently lags behind comparable countries, it is essential for farmers to apply agricultural inputs such as seed, fertiliser, and pesticides in recommended quantities, at the right times, and with assured product quality.

With over 90 per cent of Pakistan's farmers holding less than 12 acres, their financial constraints often lead them to use inadequate quantities and lower-quality inputs. For this reason, all circles concerned have been strongly advocating for developing an easy and affordable agricultural credit system in the country — one that is free from exploitation and procedural barriers.

The recently launched Punjab Government "Chief Minister's Kissan Card" scheme, with a budget of Rs1 billion for FY25, has been well received by the farming community, with a large number of farmers enthusiastically opting into the initiative. The card enables smallholders to purchase agricultural inputs hassle-free from approved outlets, worth Rs20,000 per acre, with a maximum limit of Rs150,000, payable after six months.

The bank of Punjab will provide these short-term, interest-free agricultural loans to the tune of around Rs100m (in a crop season), while the Punjab Government covers the markup component.

Previously, individual farmers had a few options for a production loan (running a finance facility), in the formal sector, the primary option was Zari Tarqat Bank Ltd, however, farmers regularly report that its loan process-

ing procedures are cumbersome, time-consuming, and corruption-ridden. The second option was commercial banks, which charge high interest rates.

Even then, smallholders have relatively low access to agricultural credit, primarily due to their inability to provide the required collateral and the relatively small loan sizes, which increase administrative costs as a percentage of the loan amount for banks, making these farmers unattractive clients.

Alternatively, microfinance institutions offer relatively simple and farmer-friendly procedures; however, their average loan sizes are insignificant, and they charge prohibitively high interest rates. Several research studies indicate that the interest-based credit system is one of the major causes of creating a poverty trap. Such loans entail high rates for farmers, given the climate-related uncertainties that make crop yields increasingly unpredictable.

Consequently, a large number of farmers turn to informal (non-institutional) credit sources, primarily relying on arifwallas or input dealers for cash or in-kind credit. While these informal sources are quick and responsive, they often exploit farmers heavily. Another hitherto unexplored option for farmers that the government should actively promote is contract farming as a means of financial assistance. However, in Pakistan, its scale and scope remain very limited.

In the given agricultural credit market, the Kissan Card offers smallholders a valuable new option for securing quick, hassle-free, and interest-free agricultural credit. However, sustainability remains a major concern, as funding for the initiative is currently limited to 2024-

25 only under the Annual Development Programme, with no provisions or projections for future years.

Thus, farmers are concerned that the widely praised health card initiative introduced by the previous government, this scheme may be curtailed or discontinued if a new political party comes to power in Punjab. That is why, business circles and development professionals believe that, regardless of personal or political biases and party manifestos, political parties should agree on some basic policy agenda, which is highly essential for the country's economic and social development.

Another significant challenge for policymakers is the limited outreach of the scheme, currently capped at 500,000 farmers on a first-come, first-served basis. The scheme is intended for farmers with landholdings from 1 to 12 acres, a group that comprises over four million farmers in Punjab (Agricultural Census 2019). With the current legal, only 12.5pc of farmers will benefit.

Therefore, the government must devise a concrete plan to extend support to the remaining farmers to ensure equitable access across the farming community and to create a substantial impact within the budgetary constraints.

One possible option to increase outreach is to lower the landholding limit from 12 acres to 5 acres, prioritising subsistence farmers. Another sustainable approach for the government to partially fund this scheme is to negotiate volume discounts (5 to 10pc) with manufacturers of agricultural inputs — particularly seeds, pesticides, and macro-nutrients — whose products are authorized for sale under the Kissan

Continued on Page 3

Shoring up local finances

Provinces extending their operational boundary instead of delegating funds keeps cities and smaller urban centres from becoming financially autonomous

THE World Bank launched an important report titled "Realising the Potential of Pakistan's Secondary Cities" that discusses the challenges faced by urban centres in the country. On a similar theme, the Asian Development Bank unveiled "Pakistan National Urban Assessment". Both documents focus on a multitude of issues, including local finances.

The reports found that Pakistan is urbanising at a fast pace. The present urban population is 93.8 million or 36 per cent of the national total. However, it will reach 99.4m in 2030 or 40.7pc of the total figure. To realise the full potential of this vast population, urban basic services need to be

By Dr Noman Ahmed

extended in an operationally and financially sustainable manner.

Cities require commensurate financial resources on a continuous basis to extend the benefit of a healthy life to their residents. At present, all the cities are starving of resources. Given the fact that urbanisation is irreversible, it will be apposite to examine the core factors that can help our cities become financially viable and autonomous entities.

After the passage of the 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010, the financial control of the provincial governments in urban affairs has significantly increased. With a greater share in the National Finance Commission (NFC) awards, provinces now enjoy greater financial allocations

when compared with the pre-18th Amendment times. As per budget documents of FY25, Punjab will receive \$1.74pc (Rs2,676 billion), Sindh 24.55pc (Rs1,854bn), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 14.62pc (Rs1,221bn) and Balochistan 9.09pc (Rs 894 billion).

The spirit of the 18th amendment was to devolve financial and administrative powers to the districts through provincial financial commissions. While the provinces consistently engage and negotiate with the centre for an enhanced and smooth flow of funds from centre to province, the same does not happen from province to district.

Cities and smaller urban locations, which share jurisdictions with districts, tehsils/talukas/ towns, suffer due to limited availability of financial resources for carrying out essential functions. In an interesting policy move, provinces extend their operational boundary into essential municipal functions due to enhanced financial leverage.

Thus, provinces form provincially controlled authorities and entities for waste management, water and sewerage, urban regeneration (such as Ravi Urban Development Authority), urban area conservation (such as Walled City Authority), mass transit authorities and more. These entities are driven by subsidies extended by the provincial government and eventually become a drag on the provincial budgets.

Political expediency and pressure from international development partners also lead to the creation or alteration of the institutional structure of provincial and local entities. Since the province maintains administrative authority in most of such situations, the performance accountability of these entities at the hands of service users at the local level becomes a difficult possibility.

The existing local authorities suffer from crippling financial crises. Overstaffing under political influences, high operational costs, weak sources of revenue generation, and poor performance with respect to recoveries are some common ailments. Urban Immovable Property Tax (UIPT) and motor vehicle tax (MVT) are two important moneys for cities. Both taxes are collected by provincial governments and then distributed to local municipal councils as per the rules that are laid down.

The rates and efficiency of the collection are highly questionable. Karachi, which has locations possessing very high real estate value, ended up collecting Rs10m in UIPT. A World Bank study informed that this can be enhanced to Rs40m without enhancing the tax. Similarly, the rising number of motor vehicles in our cities is a huge cause of concern due to climate change and environmental costs. The MVT can become a deterrent for regulating the number of vehicles to a manageable tally.

Many other types of levies and taxes can be imposed in urban areas for the cumulative betterment of the city areas. In addition, utility charges for water and sewerage need to be diligently collected. Most of our cities lag behind on this count.

Social and physical infrastructure in medium and small cities is falling apart. It may be mentioned that the number of such urban locations is over 500 in Pakistan. In the usual outlay of budgets, more than 70pc of allocation is barely enough to meet the establishment cost. Smaller municipalities are left with no funds to look after and maintain the crippling infrastructure. They are left with no choice except to keep applying to federal and provincial governments.

In rare cases, funds from the members of the

national assembly, members of the provincial assembly, or the donor come to the rescue but in an irregular manner. The operational situation of social facilities is adversely affected due to poor governance and the acute shortage of human and monetary resources.

Sights of abandoned public buildings, ghost schools and deserted clinics/hospitals are commonplace. The scenario merits some innovative financial and governance initiatives to address the grave issues.

We need urban development support organisations that can guide the planning and development functions of our cities as well as the financial restructuring that is essential to keep them financially sustainable.

Some interesting examples from the region include the Jawaharal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission, which functioned from 2005 to 2014. It was a massive initiative of the Government of India for city modernisation with a financial outlay of over \$20bn. It helped various small, medium and even larger cities through capacity building, financial strengthening and dealing with specific issues such as urban poverty.

The mission also provided a catalytic role of a federal initiative in other provincial and local government domains in different locations. It was succeeded by the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation in 2015. Perhaps the Planning Commission of Pakistan may consider launching initiatives for the comprehensive up-tenment of our cities and towns with finances drawn from NFC outlays. ■

The writer is an academic and researcher based in Karachi

Federal Board of Revenue raises property valuation rates to up to 80pc across 56 cities, aiming to boost revenue collection and redirect investment into more productive sectors of the economy

Gas utilities (NGPL and SOGCL) seek a

54%

increase in prescribed prices to meet their revenue requirements for FY25

National Electric Power Regulatory Authority announces electricity rates for consumers of Discos will be higher by 15 paise per unit next month despite lower fuel costs, provided the regulator approves 71 paise per unit in refund demanded by Discos in November

Pakistan's foreign assistance inflows plunge by 60pc to

\$2.3bn

in Q1FY25, down from about \$5.73bn in the same period last year

Gold continues to shine as 10-gram and one-tola rates hit a new all-time high of Rs246,828 and Rs287,900, up by Rs2,486 and Rs2,900, respectively, day-on-day

Saudi Arabia signs seven more memoranda of understanding investing another

\$600m

in Pakistan

Iranian and Afghan onions and tomatoes enter local markets as domestic supply shortages push demand higher

Consumer inflation rate reaches

7.2%

in October from 6.9pc in September, driven by an increase in prices of perishable food items

Pakistan's merchandise exports rise 13.45pc to \$10.88bn in 4MFY25 from \$9.59bn in the same period last year, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

Federal Board of Revenue's collection falls short of target by

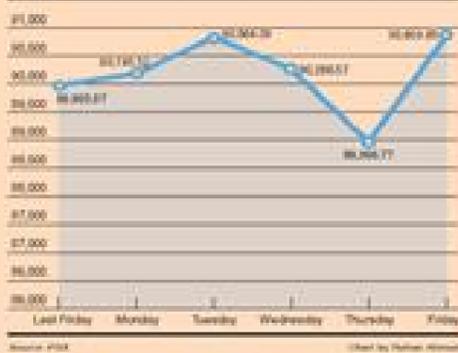
Rs 101 bn

in October owing to falling imports and a sharp deceleration in inflation

FINANCE

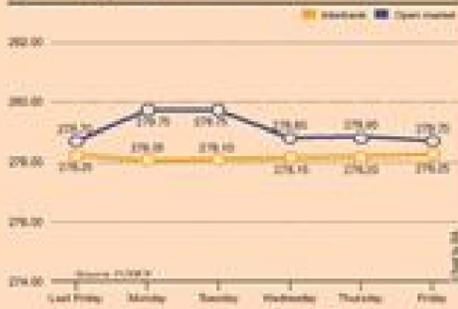


KSE 100-share index fluctuations



Rupee report

Weekly rupee-dollar parity



Navigating economic perils

The country must tread carefully and foster national unity while managing potential fiscal dangers

By Mohiuddin Aazim

DURING the first quarter of this fiscal year (July-September 2024), corporate profit fell 14 per cent compared to the last year if you measure it in terms of profits earned by the 95 top-performing companies that make up 90pc of the Pakistan Stock Exchange's 100-index market capitalisation. And that is a very appropriate measure.

The finding of a Topline Securities research has already made headlines in major newspapers across the country. But, for the optimist, there is a reassuring aspect: the cumulative profits of the top 95 companies earned during July-September 2024 are 15pc higher than the profits earned in April-June. What does this mean?

It indicates that corporate profitability has begun to rise from the start of this fiscal year, though things are not as good as last year. The year-on-year decline in profits are chiefly due to compressed demand paired with a higher cost of production thanks to back-breaking energy prices and a less-than-required easing in interest rate.

The State Bank of Pakistan has already brought down the interest rate in phases from a peak of 22pc to 17.75pc, and a further cut is expected this week. If the central bank goes for a greater cut, the corporate sector will feel it, but it is up to a moderate reduction, corporate lobbies will continue to lament.

However, if the central bank drastically cuts interest rates, that will jeopardise the current exchange rate stability, more so because the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has already been pushing Pakistan to adopt a truly market-based exchange rate regime. Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq

Dar, however, believes the rupee is still undervalued.

Unusual interest rate easing will bring in another trouble: foreign portfolio investment in the government treasury bills and bonds — often called hot money — will start evaporating. Pakistan has exported

\$7 billion loan after much difficulty.

But why can't fiscal room be created for subsidies that are crucial for economic growth? The plan answer is, despite the enormous volatility increase in revenue, the total revenue collection falls massively short of being able to afford any such

of previously promised foreign investment is encouraging. But the \$2.6bn is not going to come in immediately, it will come over a few years even if all the 34 feasible projects that the Saudis have agreed to invest in remain feasible in future.

The future is always uncertain, and with the rising Middle Eastern conflict, it seems even more so. Pakistan needs to tread carefully, not only in the geopolitical arena but also in local politics and economic development.

Nothing could be more rewarding at this stage than fostering national unity and working jointly to avert some lurking dangers on the economic front.

These include the IMF taking a tougher stance on what it views as non-implementation of some of its conditions; independent power producers opting for legal recourse if pressed too much to negotiate capacity payment agreements; an escalation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan militancy; and friendly countries including China, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar offering lesser than desired support in our balance of payment support.

These are, of course, in addition to the obvious threat of slower-than-expected economic growth, industrial recovery becoming more distant than the economic managers currently project, and the agriculture sector losing some of its resilience in the wake of growing environmental challenges.

The performance of the overall economy, particularly that of the industrial sector, in the coming months will reveal the efficiency or lack thereof of the current hybrid regime. ■



since the multiple times, most recently during the PTI government.

Moreover, energy tariffs will continue to rise, though not as fast as in the recent past, because circular debts of the energy sector remain high and capacity payments to independent power producers continue.

The efforts to tackle this twin problem are underway but will take a long time to bear fruits. This means that the corporate sector cannot expect any significant relief in energy costs because there is neither fiscal room available to subsidise them nor will the IMF approve of it. And Pakistan cannot diverge IMF conditions since it received the first \$1.1 billion tranche of a three-year

respite after meeting local and external debt servicing requirements, spending money on the functioning of the government, and financing growing security and defence expenses.

Furthermore, the growth in revenue collection compared with the last year is coming at a very heavy price: the imposition of new taxes and increase in the existing ones have broken the backs of small and medium enterprises and heavily burdened even large companies struggling with low demand for products and higher energy and financial costs.

The recent promise of Saudi Arabia to add another \$800 million to \$2.6bn worth

Unacknowledged pillars of rural economies

Women in Kohistan struggle with a lack of resources, inadequate healthcare, and ineffective schooling despite making significant contributions to the agricultural community

By Dr Anesha Hameem Memon

WOMEN'S participation in agriculture has long been a pillar of rural economies, especially in developing countries. From managing crops to livestock, rural women are key contributors to households' livelihoods and the community's well-being. Their involvement is crucial, yet despite their substantial labour, their contributors often go unrecognized due to social norms, limited access to resources, and inadequate policy support.

Around the world, women in agriculture face disproportionate barriers to land ownership, financial services, education, and healthcare. Addressing these challenges is essential for sustainable agricultural development and rural uplift. Addressing food security challenges, maintaining ecosystems, and reducing poverty. Pakistan offers a compelling example of these issues, where rural women, including those from arid and semi-arid regions, play essential roles in farming systems but remain among the most disadvantaged groups.

Pakistan's agriculture is the main economic sector, employing over 40 per cent of the labour force and significantly affecting rural livelihoods. Women play a crucial role in farming, livestock care, and household management. However, gender disparities persist, with rural women receiving less credit, education, and technical support. Sindh, known for its agricultural productivity, provides a case study of rural women's resilience in farming

systems, particularly in Lower Kohistan, despite challenging circumstances. Lower Kohistan is a major agricultural region in the hilly terrain located in the northeast to southwest of Sindh, covering an area of 5,204 square kilometres. It falls in a climate zone where rainfall is scarce, and the absence of canal irrigation makes agricultural practices highly dependent on spate irrigation.

With very small pieces of land farming, from 2-25 hectares, individually cultivated by the farmers, agriculture is

In rural Kohistan, women have a 60pc participation rate working 16-hour days in 22 identified crop-related tasks

possible only through the utilisation of seasonal water flows or marginal quality of the groundwater recharge, forcing farmers to rely on limited crop varieties. Livestock rearing complements farming as a significant income source.

According to the 1998 Population Census, the total population of the Taluk Thana Bada Khan (Taluk Headquarter of Lower Kohistan) was 103,826, with 52.7pc male and 47.3pc

female. Among these, about 27,890 lived in rural areas, with a literacy rate of 16.5pc — far lower than the urban rate of 62.7pc. In such a challenging setting, women's participation in agriculture becomes even more crucial, as they contribute nearly 50pc of the labour required for various on-farm activities.

Agriculture is the backbone of life in lower Kohistan, and women are at its core with a 60pc participation rate. Their work spans 16-hour days sowing, weeding, preparing seedbeds, sowing,



ing, weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest processing. Although men handle more physically demanding tasks like ploughing, bund making, and irrigation system maintenance, women engage in 22 identified crop-related tasks.

When crop production is insufficient due to drought or erratic rainfall, men often migrate to urban areas for employment, leaving women to manage both the agricultural workload and

household responsibilities. This added burden exemplifies the resilience and adaptability of rural women in such environments.

Furthermore, livestock rearing is a vital aspect of rural families' livelihood strategies, with women and children managing livestock such as cattle, goats, poultry, and sheep. These animals provide income, nutrition, and draft power.

According to door-to-door survey visits, apart from agriculture and livestock, women also engage in cottage

industries to supplement household incomes. Handicrafts, such as embroidered clothing, Sindh caps, and rugs, are produced by about 10-12pc of women in the area. However, due to the absence of proper marketing channels, the earnings from these activities remain meagre.

For instance, the net income from a month's work on handicrafts averages around PKR 500 (Pakistan rupees, or

approximately PKR 136 per day) — barely enough to buy two kilograms of flour. Despite the low financial returns, these women persist, driven by the need to support their families in any way possible.

The Kohistan region faces water scarcity and health challenges, with women collecting contaminated water from distant sources. This affects not only women's health but also their families and livestock. Diseases like diarrhoea, tuberculosis, and eye infections are prevalent, worsened by poor

health, agriculture, and family welfare. Educated mothers ensure their children attend school and receive proper care, creating a ripple effect benefiting future generations.

Women in the region face challenges in agriculture and economic activities due to lack of institutional support, inadequate market access, poor health facilities, and water scarcity. To improve livelihoods, the government and non-governmental organisations must work together.

Implementing rainwater harvesting systems, drip-irrigation canals, and public water schemes can alleviate the water crisis. Basic health units and veterinary services are also crucial. Promoting cottage industries and improving marketing systems can help women earn fair prices for their products. Expanding educational opportunities for girls is equally critical to empower women and build more resilient communities.

The women of the Kohistan region exemplify the strength and resilience of rural women across Pakistan. Their contributions to agriculture, livestock management, and household responsibilities are vital for the survival and progress of their communities. Recognising and supporting these efforts is essential not only for improving their livelihoods but also for achieving broader development goals. ■

The writer is a senior agricultural engineer at the Pakistan Agriculture Research Council, Tandojam. Email: aneshahameem@gmail.com

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AGRICULTURE



Jeopardising the future of the Indus delta

Degradation of the Indus Delta costs around \$2bn annually as little effort is made to monitor or mitigate damage

By Nasir Ali Panhwar

THE proposal to construct six new canals on the Indus River to irrigate the Chhotan desert in Punjab is being seen as a direct threat to Sindh's already fragile ecology and irrigation system. These canals were intended to bring water to an arid region that had historically relied on rainfall and underground reservoirs for irrigation. Therefore, diverting water from the Indus to Chhotan is unjust, especially when Sindh's water needs are not met.

Any new canals on the Indus River would not only impact Sindh negatively but would further jeopardise the future of the Indus Delta. The Sindh government has already expressed serious concerns about the proposed new irrigation project in Punjab, Sindh, being a lower riparian province, has been demanding adequate water flow for downstream Kotli to maintain ecological balance in the Indus Delta.

The Indus Delta, the fifth largest delta in the world, is characterised by its rich biodiversity and valuable ecosystem services, including productive fisheries and coastal storm protection by mangrove forests. The Indus Delta was designated a Ramsar wet-

land of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on November 5, 2002.

The reduced Indus River flows, and sediment loads coupled with sea level rise are driving a multi-faceted environmental crisis for the Delta, including seawater intrusion, soil salinisation, mangrove forest loss, reduced freshwater supply, and depleted fisheries. The 17 creeks that once delivered freshwater to the Delta have been reduced to one, and no freshwater reaches the delta for 138 days per year on average, and even longer periods during drought years.

The water-dependent ecosystems in the country are under increasing stress from high levels of water withdrawal, widespread pollution, rapid urbanisation, and agricultural expansion. Biodiversity loss, declining fish stocks, and degradation of the ecosystems of the Indus Delta, which offer valuable ecosystem services, are increasing, with little effort to monitor or mitigate the damage.

According to a World Bank study, the cost of degradation of the Indus Delta is estimated to be over \$2 billion annually because of long-term ecosystem services. Environmental degradation in Sindh alone costs an estimated

four per cent to 6pc of the provincial GDP. Unfortunately, the upstream diversion of the Indus by unchecked development of water infrastructure during the 20th century has

The 17 creeks that once delivered freshwater to the Delta have been reduced to one, and no freshwater reaches the delta for 138 days per year on average

caused a gradual reduction in the water flow of the river. It is ultimately affecting its uniqueness and economic value and has seriously affected riverine and coastal ecologies and their associ-

ated and dependent communities.

The Water Accord in 1991 recommended at least 10 million acre feet (MAF) perpetual water supply in the Indus River for the downstream deltaic ecosystem. The International Union for Conservation of Nature recommended an essential release of 27 MAF for the continued well-being of the deltaic ecosystem. These recommendations, however, have not materialised so far.

Given the level of water resource development upstream, flows downstream of the Kotli barrage are now limited to August and September, allowing seawater to penetrate the delta for hundreds of kilometres for much of the year. The mangrove forests support the livelihoods of more than 0.1 million people, and further shrinkage would put these livelihoods at risk.

Shrimp production and the catch of the prized Palla fish have fallen by more than 50pc. The reduction of the mangrove forests has had significant impacts on biodiversity because they are an important wintering habitat for migratory birds on the Central Asian flyway. The loss of mangrove forests has also compromised their ability to act as an active

barrier against tropical cyclones and storms, leaving the delta at greater risk of coastal erosion and flooding.

Currently, Pakistan does little to protect water-dependent ecosystems such as rivers, lakes, wetlands, forests, and the Indus Delta through either water quantity or water quality management. No environmental flow regime has been agreed upon or implemented for the Indus River. The delta has witnessed meagre environmental flow, and the number of 'no flow days' has increased substantially.

The environmental flow is essential for controlling seawater intrusion. Therefore, enough water flow in the river Indus, as well as canals originating from the Kotli barrage, should be ensured to minimise surface and subsurface seawater intrusion in the entire delta. It will not only minimise surface and subsurface seawater intrusion but also provide drinking water to coastal communities, fulfil the freshwater needs of flora and fauna, and mitigate the adverse impacts on the ecosystem of the delta. ■

The author is a development professional and author of the book 'Earthly Matters'

CORPORATE WINDOW



Catapulting into a cashless society

Redirecting P2P usage towards P2M could bring unregistered traders into the formal financial sector and encourage digital transformation

By Murtaza Ali

MORE than 15 years ago, Pakistan's financial services landscape saw a seismic shift with the introduction of branch-less banking regulations. Around that time, the country had just over 10 million personal accounts with scheduled banks, and the overwhelming majority relied on informal networks to move money around. However, with growing mobile phone penetration, the traditional brick-and-mortar branches were no longer necessary.

Any neighbourhood karyana store could now be a financial services agent, a model that had been validated in other emerging markets. Through the impact could be seen from the get-go, it took some time before things snowballed and achieved a certain scale. In 2023, almost four billion transactions were processed through branchless banking, while the total number of registered accounts was 114.6m.

A second and even bigger change came at the onset of the pandemic, which acted as a catalyst in accelerating app-based payments as people sought to avoid cash. The results were quicker as the share of digital transactions in scheduled banking jumped to 26 per cent in Q1 FY21 from 17pc in the same period of 2020. Since then, mobile phone banking and m-wallet transactions have now touched a cumulative \$4m on an annualised basis.

However, this was only the beginning. With the launch of fastest person-to-merchant (P2M), Pakistan has now entered the third phase in its digital payments journey. The upcoming revolution can be better understood by looking at similar transformations in other developing markets. India, for instance, went through a seismic shift with the introduction of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in 2016.

While person-to-person (P2P) transactions initially drove adoption, the widespread acceptance of P2M payments catalysed



growth. By 2023, UPI was processing a staggering \$17.6bn transactions, emerging as the world's most popular alternative payment method. Similarly, both giants Alipay and WeChat Pay started with P2P transfers in China but saw exponential growth after introducing P2M capabilities, transforming the country into a largely cashless society.

Pakistan's trajectory is unlikely to be different. The country boasts a strong retail sector that makes up almost 40pc of the gross domestic product, spread across an estimated 2.7m shops. Traditionally, this segment has remained largely unbanked. But the recent push from the International Monetary Fund has renewed the government's drive to bring them into the formal net.

To that end, several measures have already been taken, including the point of sale registers and the Tap Good app. By pushing for digital payments more actively, the govern-

ment can significantly speed up that progress and move towards a cashless economy.

Fortunately, we are on the right track, with financial inclusion accounts increasing by approximately 127pc between FY19 and FY24.

Approximately 60pc of Pakistan's 247m population are adults, and with 37m unique financial institution accounts, roughly two-thirds of the adult population still lacks access to formal financial services.

This ratio is typically far higher in major urban centres, where most of the retail sector is concentrated. Across these big cities and towns, everyone from a kiosklike driver to a laptop vendor already receives digital payments through online fund transfers. The only impediment is that the underlying channel is P2P instead of P2M.

Admittedly, reforming the P2P usage towards P2M will be a challenge initially, as users are already familiar with the technology

and its various limitations. Therefore, the first step is to build a seamless experience for consumers and merchants to conduct transactions instantly and validate them without any back-and-forth.

This is where fastest P2M becomes a major upgrade, as it offers real-time payments and includes QR and request-to-pay functions, which are undoubtedly better suited for commercial transactions.

One key regulatory intervention to encourage merchants to adopt digital payments is offering working capital loans based on a strong financial history. Financial institutions also need to step up with innovative products and solutions, such as tap-and-pay or buy-now-pay-later, to drive retailer adoption.

Moreover, we already have a strong retail infrastructure that is well-versed in receiving money and facilitating transactions. Pakistan already has almost 0.65m registered branchless agents, who are quite well-placed to be the early adopters of fastest P2M provided the right incentives.

In this regard, the government can take a leaf out of India's playbook and help subsidise transaction costs to attract acquirers towards the sector. In the long term, the added documentation will more than pay for any initial incentives and put the country towards sustainable growth. For example, accepting digital transactions would help document their financial history better and unlock access to financing from formal financial institutions.

The question is not whether Pakistan will undergo the digital transformation but how quickly it will embrace this change and reap its many benefits. With the right policies, incentives, and continued innovation, the country is poised to write its success story in the global narrative of digital financial transformation.

The writer is President of JazzCash and a member of the Forbes Finance Council

COMPANY NEWS



Lums inaugurates incubation programmes

THE Lahore University of Management Sciences Centre for Entrepreneurship (LCE) has inducted its inaugural cohorts for two signature programmes: the LCE Idea Launch Incubation programme and the SingShot Accelerator programme as per a press release.

Start-ups inducted into both programmes will have the opportunity to pitch their ventures to a panel of investors, successful founders, and venture capitalists at the Investor Summit held at the conclusion of their training. The summit will offer participants a platform to secure potential funding, forge strategic partnerships, and gain insights that can accelerate their growth.

The inaugural cohorts comprise 25 start-ups in the LCE Idea Launch Incubation programme and 10 start-ups in the SingShot Accelerator programme, all facing challenges ranging from educational technology and artificial intelligence to sustainability and financial services.

Pakistan Cables expands ASCEND

PAKISTAN Cables announced partnering with two Pakistani engineering universities for a second round of ASCEND, the company's flagship technology, engineering and math (STEM) subjects among women in Pakistan as per a press release.

Launched in 2021 in collaboration with NED University, Karachi, ASCEND is focused on empowering talented female electrical engineering students and offers industry exposure to students. With the addition of Mahon University, Pakistan Cables aims to broaden its impact by providing more opportunities for female students to excel in STEM fields by offering need-based scholarships and mentorships to talented female students leading up to their graduation.

Pakistan-China B2B investment meeting

PAKISTAN and China's first business-to-business (B2B) investment meeting on fisheries, organised in Qingdao, Shandong province on Oct 29 and sponsored by Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, was the first in a series of sector-specific meetings to foster joint ventures and partnerships between Pakistan and Chinese companies as per a press release.

The event is a follow-up to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China in June 2024 to further promote trade and investment between the two countries. Of the companies that participated in the event, 45 were Chinese companies and 28 were Pakistanis.

Crackdown against illegal products

DIRECTOR Conformity Assessment, Islamabad Zone, Ati Durr Soomro assigned Conformity Assessment Officers of Islamabad Zone to conduct a crackdown against illegal/sub-standard and non-certified products as per a press release.

In this regard, Mohsin Khan, Assistant Director and Husam Bin Taseem, Field Officer conducted a market surveillance of food and non-food mandatory products.

Managers of departmental stores were given notice to avoid stocking unlicensed mandatory food and non-food items/brands. They were also warned that in case of non-compliance, the illegal/sub-standard items will be confiscated and strict legal action will be taken.

According to the spokesperson, the Director General PSQCA, Tausiqe Ali Abbasi has directed a massive crackdown to eradicate illegal, sub-standard and non-compliant items from the market. She emphasised that it is the topmost priority of PSQCA to ensure public health, safety and to protect the rights of consumers across the country.

PIDC house branch renovated

REHMAT Ali Hameed, President NBP inaugurated the newly renovated Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation House Branch as per a press release.

The President congratulated all those who worked tirelessly for completion of the project and recognised the efforts of Logistics, Communications, and Marketing Group and especially the Engineering team. He emphasised the importance of upkeep of Branches and enhanced customer experience.

Enhancing the productivity of small farms

Cooperatives can make mechanised farming possible in small holdings that are otherwise neither feasible nor possible

By Jawaid Bokhari

ANATIONAL policy dialogue on strengthening agriculture innovation systems for providing agricultural machinery to Pakistan's small farmers — initiated by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) — has identified the absence of a national policy on agriculture mechanisation as a prime reason for low farm productivity.

The government should promote the formation of farmer cooperatives to pool resources, share knowledge, and jointly invest in machinery, according to an FAO document released on Oct 22. It recommended developing and disseminating low-cost mechanisation solutions through partnerships, cooperative models, and policy dialogues. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) notes that Pakistan's agriculture policies have a very minor portion related to agricultural mechanisation.

Farm experts say that mechanised farming is neither feasible nor possible on small farms. It is cooperative farming, which can be made possible by consolidating small holdings into

imported farm goods worth \$8.5bn and exported goods worth \$7.4bn in FY24.

Countries that introduced effective land reforms to unleash the potential of corporate and cooperative farming based on the latest technologies increased their crop yield per acre at an unprecedented pace and created a huge middle class while widening prosperity in the countryside. High economic growth in China and India can be explained by timely land reforms.

Though weakened by the country's industrialisation and urbanisation, the outdated agricultural mode of production in Pakistan — a legacy of colonial rule — is the major obstacle to raising farm productivity.

A cooperative, as defined by FAO experts, is an autonomous association of men and women, united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. It is a business enterprise that seeks to balance between pursuing profit and meeting the needs and interests of members of the community.

Based on a tiny scale, according to studies by Pakistani experts, cash crop farmers who were part of a cooperative in Punjab witnessed an increase in the yield, with a 38 per cent higher benefit-cost ratio than non-cooperative growers. Similarly, a cooperative set up in Khaipur, Sindh, saw farmers adopt modern techniques for growing vegetables and fruits.

The cooperative also linked the farmers with vegetable exporters and supermarkets in Karachi and Lahore, thus helping their sales. The cooperatives pool resources by acquiring management of member's land and/or acquiring rights to provide seeds, fertilisers, water, machines, and/or sales of farm produce.

To quote Dr Hafiz A. Pasha, the distribution of land in the country is very skewed: 1pc farms account for 22pc of the farm area at the top of the distribution. It is worth noting here that lands resumed by the state under land reforms and allotted to small farmers, many of whom had no funds and no financing facility to bring the holdings under the plough, were bought by big landowners.

In a report on "Protection issues faced by women farmers in Pakistan", FAO researchers point out that female labour tends to be under-remunerated, and they are rarely referred to as 'farmers', unlike their male counterparts. The current understanding of who a 'farmer' is tends to consider that these individuals own the land they work on.

However, this excludes huge numbers of farmers — particularly women — which prevent them from accessing vital benefits and services. The contributions of women farmers to the agricultural sector, food security and the economy are largely unrecognised.

As national and international discourse tends to focus on ideas and solutions with a future, countries lacking natural outlooks, like Pakistan, are trailing behind the march of events.

Today, more than 12pc of the world's population are members of three million cooperatives, providing 200m jobs worldwide. The world's 300 largest cooperatives have a global turnover of about \$2 trillion.

Democrat vs Republican for Pakistan

ALL eyes are on the US now because, as the adage goes, when America sneezes, the world catches a cold. Eyeballing historical data suggests a correlation between the two nations' GDP growth trajectories, especially in the 2000s.

Over the last half century or so, there has been no clear trend of the economy doing better under Republicans or Democrats. Since 1981, both parties have enjoyed a roughly equal share of power in terms of number of years.

Under Biden, the economy has with-

ered the aftermath of the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war but remained largely resilient. However, higher grocery prices have led the average consumer to believe otherwise, media reports indicate.

Despite overarching policies such as Trump's tariffs and Biden's pro-union stance, external factors have often significantly influenced the overall economic landscape. As such, the outcome of the US elections may not drastically alter Pakistan's economic trajectory in the near future.

Source: World Bank Note: The highlighted years are under the Republican Party — Fatima S. Akhmed

All bets on new world order

Continued from Page 1

cooperation involving people-to-people exchanges. BRICS opposes the Western countries' use of sanctions and wants to increase the use of local currencies in member states' financial transactions to decrease their reliance on the dollar. At the same time, however, it calls for reforming the Bretton Woods institutions, rather than creating full-blown alternatives.

The main issue discussed at the summit was the creation of a BRICS-led payment system to rival Swift. "We recognise the widespread benefits of faster, low cost, efficient, transparent, safe and inclusive cross-border payment instruments built upon the principle of minimising trade barriers and non-discriminatory access. We welcome the use of local currencies in financial transactions between BRICS countries and their trading partners," the communiqué said.

The organisation's members also agreed to discuss and study the feasibility of estab-

lishing an independent cross-border settlement and depositary infrastructure, BRICS Clear, an initiative to complement the existing financial market infrastructure, as well as BRICS independent remittance capacity, including BRICS (Re)insurance Company, with participation on a voluntary basis. Many members are already using local currencies in trade transactions among themselves and also with other willing trading partners.

As the communiqué observed, "We are deeply concerned about the disruptive effects of unilateral coercive measures, including illegal sanctions, on the world economy, international trade, and the achievement of the sustainable development goals."

At the same time, the group has asserted the need for preservation of, and improvements in existing global financial governance. "We reaffirm our commitment to maintaining a strong and effective Global Financial Safety Net with a quota-based and adequately resourced IMF [International Monetary Fund] at its core," the communiqué said.

The organisation's members also agreed to discuss and study the feasibility of estab-

Strengthening agricultural credit

Continued from Page 1

Card through approved dealers.

Enhancing farmers' purchasing power through this credit instrument will boost the sale of fertilisers, certified seeds, and pesticides in the country, ultimately supporting the growth of the upstream agro-industry. However, the government must ensure that only quality products are supplied through the Kissan Card. This is particularly crucial in the pesticides sector, where farmers are at high risk of receiving substandard, counterfeit, expired, or unsuitable products due to the high margins associated with pesticide sales.

One notable shortcoming of the Kissan Card scheme is its exclusion of millions of landless farmers who cultivate rented lands or work under crop-sharing arrangements.

Although verifying their creditworthiness is complex and involves many challenges, they should not be excluded from its benefits.

In conclusion, farm sizes are shrinking in Pakistan due to land division among successive generations, which negatively impacts the financial strength of farmers. If we aim to foster a more productive and resilient agriculture sector, strengthening the agricultural credit system in the country should not be treated as a temporary, one-time populist intervention, rather, it must become a cornerstone of both federal and provincial agricultural policies.

Rhaid Wattoo is a farmer and a development professional, and Dr Waqar Ahmad is a former Associate Professor at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad

Tracing & Tracking

Weak US job report

In the weakest jobs report of the Biden administration, the US economy added just 12,000 new positions in October due to hurricanes and the flooding strike, as per the *Financial Times*.

12,000

A 'scary' business

The Halloween and Costume Association says that haunted houses are a \$500 million industry in the US.

\$500m

'Haunting' attractions

A National Retail Federation survey showed that approximately 18pc of US adults visited a haunted attraction last year, or about 46 million people.

18%



EMERGENCY and rescue personnel work at the site where a concrete outdoor roof of a train station collapsed in the northern Barbican city of Nablus last week killing at least eight people, according to the interior minister said.—AFP

Data points



PEOPLE burn a cardboard cutouts of Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa during a protest in Quito against the extension of power cuts to 14 hours a day, the most restrictive measure taken by the government to face the worst drought in 60 years.—AFP

Weed and elections

America's politicians don't agree often — but cannabis is emerging as an exception in this election. For the first time, marijuana reform has bipartisan support from presidential candidates, as both former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris have voiced support for easing restrictions around the drug and reclassifying it as a less dangerous substance. Cannabis and medical marijuana is expected to hit \$32.3 billion in sales this year and reach \$45.4 billion in 2028, according to the cannabis data firm BDSA. Lowering pot's drug classification could drastically cut the tax burden of cannabis companies, open the door for more marijuana research and put pressure on Congress to provide the industry with wider banking access. As of Aug 31, 24 states and Washington, DC, have legalized adult-use cannabis. Seven other states have decriminalized its recreational use.

(Adapted from "The Race Bipartisan Issue in This Year's Election: Recreational Weed" by Dawn Seal, published on October 21, 2024, by the *Wall Street Journal*)

China's reaction to Trump

Of all the people anxiously watching America's presidential election, spare a thought for Chinese investors, whose economy is already contending with a property slump that began more than three years ago and persistent deflation that began over 18 months ago. Now, investors most contemplate a possible return of Donald Trump to the White House, bringing the threat of steep tariffs in his wake. After the election, attention in China will focus on a gathering of officials in Beijing three days later on November 8. The standing committee of the country's legislature will approve a much anticipated package of fiscal measures. The figures released will reveal much about the mindset of China's leaders. However, the details that China's policymakers approve on November 8 will be tongue to what Americans decide on November 5, with the Communist Party possibly founding fiscal firepower to offset a possible trade war.

(Adapted from "Why China May Be Saving Its Muskets For Donald Trump," by The Economist, published on October 28, 2024)

OpenAI takes on Google

OpenAI has launched a search feature within ChatGPT, its viral chatbot, that positions the high-powered artificial intelligence startup to better compete with search engines like Google. Microsoft's Bing and Perplexity ChatGPT search offers up-to-the-minute sports scores, stock quotes, news, weather and more, powered by real-time web search and partnerships with news and data providers, according to the company. It began beta-testing the search engine, called SearchGPT, in July. The release could have implications for Google as the dominant search engine. Since the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, Alphabet investors have been concerned that OpenAI could take market share from Google in search by giving consumers new ways to seek information online. The move also positions OpenAI as more of a competitor to Microsoft and its businesses.

(Adapted from "OpenAI Launches ChatGPT Search, Competing With Google And Microsoft," by The Economist, published on October 24, 2024)

Hoodwinked by deepfakes

It seemed like just another video call. Earlier this year, a finance worker based in Hong Kong for Anup, a British engineering firm, logged in for what he thought was a routine team meeting. On the screen, he saw several colleagues, including the firm's chief financial officer, who instructed him to transfer \$20m to five different bank accounts. He complied. But the man on the call was not Anup's CFO: it was a deepfake. Deepfake technology, which manipulates images and video using artificial intelligence, is increasingly realistic. It is rapidly being adopted by criminals mostly based in South-East Asia. Generative AI and machine learning are making the scams more effective and the deepfake scam explosion seems to have only just begun.

(Adapted from "Stack Up To Your Fake CFO," by The Economist, published on October 24, 2024)

UK's declining population

The fertility rate in England and Wales was just 1.44 births per woman in 2023 — the lowest figure since records began in 1938, official data show, according to *The Economist*.

1.44

 births per woman

S&P 500 index soaring

Faced with fat profits in the present — and the promise of later ones in the future thanks to AI — investors have sent the S&P 500 index up by 23pc this year, its strongest performance since 1997, according to *The Economist*.

23%



PEOPLE clear mud and debris from streets in the town of Alcala, in the region of Valencia, eastern Spain, following deadly floods last week. Spain will deploy 10,000 more troops and police officers to the eastern Valencia region devastated by floods that have killed 211 people, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said.—AFP

US election ripple — Pakistan's future

Difficult to predict election outcome leads industry experts to hypothesise the potential impact of the new US government on Pakistan's trade and economy

By Afshan Suboti

TOMORROW, US citizens will vote to choose their next leader, a decision that will shape not only US domestic policies but also impact a turbulent world grappling with wars, conflicts and transformative shifts in artificial intelligence and global information flows.

Will Kamala Harris carry forward the Democratic Party's commitment to maintaining the US role as a global power despite mounting challenges, or will Donald Trump's 'America First' stance sway voters toward conservative Republican policies? Independent polls show a nation and voter base evenly divided, making the outcome difficult to predict with any certainty.

Pakistan, still grappling with the legacies of its role as a US frontline state in the 1980s, remains sensitive to political shifts in the world's largest economy and most influential power. Public sentiment towards the US in Pakistan is complex: while anti-Americanism can be politically popular, the US remains a top destination for Pakistani youths pursuing higher education and families seeking residency abroad.

Additionally, American cultural influence is evident through household names like McDonald's, Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Google, Facebook and YouTube, which have substantial market presence in Pakistan. This blend of political scepticism and cultural affinity underscores the multifaceted nature of Pakistan's relationship with the US.

The US hosts a large Pakistani diaspora, with over 625,000 Pakistani-Americans contributing roughly one-third of Pakistan's annual remittances. The US is also a key trade partner, underpinned by deep economic ties and the presence of dozens of American companies across diverse sectors in Pakistan.

In FY24, Pakistan's trade with the US saw notable growth. Pakistan's exports to the US rose to approximately \$8 billion, led by textiles and garments, reflecting a significant boost in export revenues. While comprehensive data on total imports from the period isn't readily available, imports typically remain lower than exports and include machinery, electronics, and agricultural goods, reinforcing Pakistan's dependence on American technology and equipment for key industries.

The US government's stance towards Pakistan, including its immigration policies, has a direct bearing on Pakistan's security, trade and economy. To gain insights from diplomatic, business and economic experts in Pakistan on how the US election outcomes could impact the

country and the world, several were approached. Diplomats expressed optimism about maintaining a positive trajectory in US-Pakistan relations, regardless of the party in power in the US. However, some voiced concerns about potential interference in Pakistan's internal affairs under the Trump administration.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's business class hopes to expand trade and economic partnerships with the US, and economists emphasise that Pakistan's economic strength will ultimately shape its terms of engagement with international partners, including the US.

Jamil Akbar, former Pakistani Ambassador to the US, expressed confidence in the continuation of the positive trajectory in the bilateral relations. "I have no doubt that this

country will be guided by American priorities, where China figures prominently. The Indo-US strategic partnership requires Pakistan to take steps to mend its relations with India.

"There are also the Afghanistan and Iran factors and the conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon. But primarily, the internal fall out of a Trump victory could be most consequential. With Kamala, relations would remain steady. A low-tempo relationship that could shift only if Pakistan advances economic consolidation and political stability, enhancing its regional relevance. As for legal immigration, I don't foresee major changes with Trump in office."

Ahmad Akram, Secretary General, Overseas Investor's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), also underscored the importance of economic and political stability in strengthening ties with the US.

"A Democratic US administration might continue to support Pakistan's climate action, regional stability, and multilateral aid, potentially enhancing fiscal stability," he noted. "In contrast, a Republican leadership could prioritise bilateral trade over development aid, with a stronger focus on transparency and regulatory reforms, an area where OCCI could actively contribute to attract greater FDI."

"Diversifying FDI beyond China and traditional sectors is essential for Pakistan. A US pro-trade policy stance could create new opportunities for diverse investments, particularly if Pakistan aligns with global trends, drawing sustained interest in sectors like technology and clean energy."

"Additionally, US immigration policies will impact the Pakistani diaspora; a Democratic government may be more favourable to skilled workers, which could in turn strengthen remittance flows back to Pakistan."

Dr. Nadeem ul Haque, former Vice Chancellor, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics and Director, Socioeconomic Insights and Analytics, cautioned the tendency to blame external factors for Pakistan's challenges. He argued that many issues are of the country's own making, highlighting that, "We are a closed economy with limited interaction with the global market," as evidenced by a low trade-to-GDP ratio of just 30 per cent, one of the lowest in the world.

"No global events impact a closed, highly bureaucratic country. We risk stagnation by remaining in our cocoon, not growing or developing," he stated, emphasising the need for liberalising trade and implementing reforms. ■



momentum will be sustained after the forthcoming elections. There is a bipartisan consensus in the US that Pakistan holds strategic importance in South Asia, and fostering a relationship based on mutual respect and shared interests is crucial for both nations," he stated.

Former foreign secretary Salman Bashir was candid in his assessment, emphasising Pakistan's commitment to its relationship with the US despite the ongoing challenges it faces. "Since the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan has struggled to maintain its relevance with Washington, a key factor is the US proclivity to overlook Pakistan's internal happenings. This approach might shift if Trump is elected."

"The Pakistani expatriate community largely backs Trump. The Pakistan-US relations will

Using the ADR playbook

With the return of the tax on failing to meet the minimum threshold of advances to deposits ratio, banks have gone on a lending spree

By Mutaheer Khan

FOR businesses around the world, quarter ends are usually a busy season. Sales teams are rushing to pump orders, marketing departments are trying to maximise reach, their performance benchmarks and accountants are working to keep the books in order. It's the adult version of pulling all registers to salvage exams after a semester of procrastination.

In financial institutions, this comes with a slightly different flavour as some of the key performance indicators relate to the sale of not actual products, but the line items on balance sheets. Consequently, there's an opportunity to pump up numbers relatively easily, as long as you have liquidity from a few sources. A lot like when you are applying for a student visa and get that rich relative to deposit the required sum in the account as proof of income.

The technical term for this is "window dressing" — a practice that financial institutions have been engaging in since time immemorial. Typically, deposits and the asset base are the indicators of preference for the bragging rights they bring, but it can be anything. What happens is that banks are offering loans to their friends in corporations or funds and seek short-term liquidity towards the end of the quarter.

However, the degree and type of window dressing at the end of September was a little different. Sure, a few funds and corporates may have placed a couple hundred billion in short-term deposits, but the more noticeable change was on the asset side — particularly in advances. According to the State Bank of Pakistan, loans to non-banking financial institutions (NBFI), such as micro-finance or development finance entities, reached Rs446.4 billion — surging by Rs259.7bn in a single month. In other words, the increase was bigger than August's outstanding amount.

For context, the aggregate increase in net advances of microfinance banks between FY17 and FY24 has been Rs296.3bn — translating into a quarterly average of Rs9.5bn. Similarly, development finance institutions had a net loan book of Rs190.6bn as of June, having increased by an average of Rs4.1bn per quarter since FY17.

In simpler words, the NBFI can't

absorb this much capital during a single month, at least for onward lending. So what's happening here? Unfortunately, the story is both quite simple and familiar. In August, the tax on failing to meet the minimum threshold of advances to deposits ratio came back, which meant serious penalties for the sector as the figure stood at just 38.76pc by month-end.

Assuming the deposits maintain their post-growth trajectory, they will reach Rs21.79 by year-end. This means that the minimum advances by year-end to escape the tax altogether need to be at Rs15.85b, compared to August's Rs11.81b. Thus began the effort to close the gap with just four months left.

To state the obvious, there's no way banks could, or even would, lend Rs.4b in such a short duration. So what can they do? Simple, turn to their less well-off buddies with smaller incomes and write them some big cheques, thus pumping the loans to NBFI. In turn, those funds can be used by micro-finance and development finance players to invest in government securities.

Remember, these are aggregate numbers with noticeable variance between banks. According to a previous analysis by Data Darbar, only four out of the 20 listed banks had an ADR of more than 50pc, as of June. Now faced with the additional tax, the loan-swap seems to be doing whatever possible to get over the finish line, and one sure path is window dressing on assets.

Data backs up the claim: between August and September, credit to the non-government sector increased by a total of Rs447bn, of which 60pc is made by loans to NBFI. The remaining beneficiaries are probably the big corporates, particularly manufacturing which saw an uptick of almost Rs 60bn.

Curiously, this may not be the first time either. The banks did the same back in December 2022, when loans to NBFI helped improve the ADR by 423 basis points in a single month to avoid the tax, which was eventually deferred. Almost two years later, the playbook hasn't changed at all and neither has the government learned anything. ■

The writer is the co-founder of Data Darbar