

QUETTA VOICE

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Afghanistan Earthquake: Urgent Wake-Up Call for Pakistan

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The deadliest earthquake in Afghanistan sent alarm bells across the globe. As per the US Geological Survey, the earthquake was recorded at 6.3 on the reactor scale. However, the scale of devastation is high as the earthquake has claimed 2,100 human lives so far, with thousands of injured battling for their lives in hospitals.

Unprecedented Devastation in Afghanistan

The powerful earthquake caused the collapse of thousands of mud-walled houses in Herat province and other western provinces of the war-torn country. Rescue workers as quoted by the media narrate heartbreaking stories about the survivors in villages.

Vulnerable Regions in Pakistan

In the context of Pakistan, most parts of the country are located in the Red Zone when it comes to earthquakes. Most parts of Azad Kashmir and other parts of the country were razed to the ground on October 8, 2005, when a powerful earthquake struck.

Balochistan's Ongoing Risk

When we speak about Pakistan, Balochistan province, which covers half of the country in terms of area comes first. The province is prone to all-natural disasters including floods, earthquakes,



droughts, and high temperatures.

Ignored Building Codes in Quetta

Quetta, the current capital of Balochistan province was razed to the ground in the deadliest 1935 earthquake when Britains were ruling on the sub-continent. The English rulers introduced a specific building code to avoid human loss in the case of future earthquakes.

Nevertheless, more than 1,000 buildings in Quetta have been constructed in the violation of building code. They all were constructed right under the nose of the officials concerned.

Impending Threats from Fault Lines

Experts have warned of earthquakes in Quetta and other parts of Pakistan. Especially, Chaman Fault, Ghazaband Fault and Chilian Fault pose a serious threat to Quetta and other parts of Balochistan. This needs the urgent attention of the federal and provincial governments.

Inadequacy of Provincial Disaster Management

The poorly equipped Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) can distribute flour and sugar but it is not in a position to tackle such natural calamities. Rulers must learn a lesson from the Afghan earthquake and ensure the best preparations for any future natural calamities.

Afghanistan earthquakes kill 2,053, Taliban say, as death toll spikes

NEWS DESK: Powerful earthquakes in Afghanistan have killed more than 2,000 people and injured more than 9,000, the Taliban administration said on Sunday, in the deadliest tremors in years in the quake-prone mountainous country.

Amid the confusion, the death toll from Saturday's quakes spiked from 500 reported on Sunday morning by a Red Crescent spokesperson and 16 from Saturday night.

The quakes hit 35 km (20 miles) northwest of the city of Herat, with one measuring 6.3 magnitude, the US Geological Survey (USGS) said.

Mullah Jaman Sayeed, spokesman for the Ministry of Disasters, told Reuters that 2,053 people were dead, 9,240 injured and 1,329 houses damaged or destroyed.

More than 200 dead had been brought to different hospitals, a Herat health department official who identified himself as Dr Danish told Reuters, adding most of them were women and children.

Bodies had been "taken to several places — military bases, hospitals," Danish said.

The quakes caused panic in Herat, resident Naseema said on Saturday.

"People left their houses, we all are on the streets," she wrote in a text message to Reuters, adding that the city was feeling follow-on tremors.

Herat — 120 kilometres east of the border with Iran — is considered the cultural capital of Afghanistan. It is the capital of Herat province, which is home to an estimated population of 1.9 million, according to 2019 World Bank data.



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Afghanistan is frequently hit by earthquakes, especially in the Hindu Kush mountain range, which lies near the junction of the Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates. In June last year, more than 1,000 people were killed, and tens of thousands rendered homeless after a 5.9-magnitude quake — the deadliest in Afghanistan in nearly a quarter of a century — struck the impoverished province of Paktika. Afghanistan is already in the grip of a grinding humanitarian crisis, following the widespread withdrawal of foreign aid since the Taliban returned to power in 2021.

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Pakistan offers support

The Foreign Office (FO) on Sunday said that Pakistan was deeply saddened by the devastating earthquake in the western regions of Afghanistan that resulted in the tragic loss of life and widespread damage to property.

"We extend our sincerest condolences to the families of those who lost their loved ones and pray for the early and complete recovery of the injured," the statement added. The FO said Pakistan stood in complete solidarity with "our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan" during this difficult time, adding that it will extend all possible support to the recovery effort. "We are in contact with the Afghan authorities to get a first-hand assessment of the urgent needs of those affected by the earthquake," the statement concluded. Separately, Ubadur Rehman Nizamani, the head of mission at the Pakistan embassy in Afghanistan, said Pakistan was prioritising the dispatch of search and rescue teams, medicines, food and shelter items. "We stand with our Afghan brethren in these difficult times," he added in a post on X. Meanwhile, ex-prime minister Shehbaz Sharif said he was deeply grieved to learn about the deaths and injuries caused by the earthquake in Afghanistan. "My heartfelt condolences are with the bereaved families! I also pray for the early recovery of the injured," he said.

Almost 1,000 killed as Israel declares 'long war' with Hamas



ISRAELI INGAZA: The death toll surged to almost 1,000 since Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel with a barrage of rockets and a large-scale ground assault, officials on both sides said on Sunday.

The conflict's worst escalation in decades has claimed more than 600 lives on the Israeli side, the government press office said, while Gaza officials reported at least 370 deaths, with thousands more wounded on each side.

Thousands of Israeli forces were deployed to battle holdout Hamas fighters in the south and the air force again pounded targets in the Gaza Strip as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned of a "long and difficult" war ahead. "We are embarking on a long and difficult war that was forced on us by a murderous Hamas attack," Netanyahu said on X, formerly Twitter, early on Sunday. Gun battles raged in towns and on highways as the Israeli army sought to secure desert regions near the coastal enclave, rescue Israeli hostages and evacuate all areas near Gaza within 24 hours.

"We'll reach each and every community until we kill every terrorist in Israel," vowed military spokesman Daniel Hagari, a day after hundreds of Hamas fighters launched their shock offensive and surged into Israel using vehicles, boats and even motorised paragliders. As fighting raged on Sunday, Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah movement said it had fired "large numbers of artillery shells and guided missiles" at Israeli positions in a contested border area "in solidarity" with Hamas, while in Alexandria, two Israeli tourists were shot dead along with their Egyptian guide. Overnight Israel attacked the Gaza Strip with air strikes as rockets from the blockaded Palestinians territory rained on Israel. In southern Israel, Hamas fighters were still fighting Israeli security forces 24 hours after the surprise attack. Israeli air strikes hit housing blocks, tunnels, a mosque and homes of Hamas officials in Gaza. Hamas has labelled its attack "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood" and called on "resistance fighters in the West Bank" and "Arab and Islamic nations" to join the battle. NEWSDESK

PMDC manager killed, driver injured in Sorange Quetta blast

Staff Reporter:

QUETTA: The Manager of the Pakistan Minerals Development Corporation (PMDC) was killed in a bomb explosion in the Sorange area of the provincial capital on Sunday morning. Police sources said the vehicle of Shabahaat Mirza, the Manager of the PMDC was targeted through a blast in the colony.

The injured driver was rushed to hospital

The manager was dead on the spot. However, his driver sustained serious wounds. The

injured driver was rushed to the hospital for medical treatment. Police and personnel of Frontier Corps reached the spot and started an investigation into the incident.

Blast heard far and wide

The vehicle was completely destroyed in the attack. Security was tightened in and around Sorange in the aftermath of the blast, which rocked the entire mountainous area of Quetta. The area houses rich coal reservoirs and thousands of coal miners have been working in coal



Ziarat Juniper Forest in Peril: Ancient Trees Face Deforestation Threat

Summan Ismail

Balochistan prone to natural disasters

Editorial:

Balochistan, the country's largest province in terms of the area is prone to almost all types of natural disasters. Quetta, the provincial capital and various parts of the sparsely populated province have suffered natural disasters including drought, floods and earthquakes during the last one and half decades. A recently mild earthquake measuring 5.4 on reactor scale in the province's Washuk district near the Iranian border is yet to send any alarm bells in the power corridors. The tremors felt a couple of days ago in the wee hours damaged around 300 mud-walled houses in Killa Saif area of Basima Tehsil of Washuk district. The provincial disaster management authority (PDMA) announced sending relief goods to the displaced people. Fortunately, no human loss was caused when earthquake tremors jolted one of the backward areas of the province since people were sleeping outside their rooms owing to scorching heat. The earthquake has almost gone unnoticed as no provincial minister or any high-level government official has visited the area to meet the earthquake survivors and people displaced. The media too gave cold-shoulder to the damages. Torrential rains also claimed 13 lives in Dera Bugti, Jhal Magi, Jaffarabad and other districts of Balochistan. 907 houses were damaged, 3 water dams burst, 2 bridges and 10 communication roads were also damaged as a result of heavy rainfall. Similarly, floods in Naseebabad, Jaffarabad made half a million people homeless and destroyed over 2,000 houses during 2012. A strong earthquake measuring 7.7 on the reactor scale killed 328 people in Balochistan's Awaran. Thousands were displaced when the powerful tremors jolted the area. In 1935, the deadliest earthquake razed the entire Quetta city to the ground. After the earthquake, the British colonial government fixed a 100-foot height for buildings in the city. For some time, people followed the code. But, gradually, people violated the code and constructed more than 300 tall buildings, plazas, shopping malls, markets in the heart of Quetta city. Based on past experiences and looming future threats of natural calamities, the Balochistan government needs to chalk out a comprehensive strategy to cope with any emergency situation. The scale of the natural calamities cannot be predicted at this point in time. However, what is humbly possible that should be done. We have to learn a lesson from Japan, Turkey and other countries when it comes to earthquakes and other natural calamities. Never providing relief goods, tents and blankets do offer any solution rather a comprehensive strategy needs to be made to tackle future situations. Building code in Quetta city, which is located in the earthquake sensitive zone should be implemented strictly. Populations living in the flood danger zones or water-saturated areas should be moved to safer places. Above all, the PDMA should go beyond distributing relief goods and the authority should engage geologists, environmentalists and researchers to analyze, assess and review future climate dangers to sensitize policymakers.

The Ziarat Juniper Forest, nestled in Pakistan's Balochistan territory, stands as a testament to nature's splendor and history's embrace. This ancient forest is renowned for its towering, thousand-year-old Juniper trees, which rank among the world's oldest and tallest.

A Global Ecological Gem
In recent years, the Ziarat Juniper Forest has garnered international recognition for its unique and vital ecosystem. It is an integral part of the region's biodiversity, hosting a diverse array of plant and animal species. Furthermore, the Juniper trees themselves offer a rich source of genetic information, fueling discoveries in ecology and herbal science.

A Glimpse into History
The story of the Ziarat Juniper Forest is a journey through time. Once inhabited by nomadic tribes, these Juniper trees served as versatile resources. They provided firewood, medicinal materials, and medicinal remedies, ingraining themselves in the local culture. Over generations, the forest became a cherished asset, safeguarded by tribal elders.

The Dark Side of Progress
While the past decade has brought comfort and progress to the region, it has come at a price. One industry that has thrived at the expense of the forest is the furniture sector, leading to extensive deforestation. These ancient woodlands, found mostly at altitudes above 2000 meters, are under severe threat. The Ziarat region, home to approximately 5000-year-old Juniperus species, faces rampant deforestation due to domestic fuel consumption, agricultural expansion, construction, medicinal use, and furniture production.

Alarming Trends: A Deforestation Study
A recent report titled "Observing Carbon Footprint and Land-Use Change in 5000-Year-Old Juniper Woods Stand of Ziarat, Balochistan, through a Synergistic Methodology" conducted a comprehensive analysis of the forest's decline in the same period. This academic publication also noted a decrease in the forest's carbon supply, primarily due to deforestation.

Protecting Wildlife and Promoting Sustainable Tourism
Conservation efforts are underway to protect the diverse wildlife within the Ziarat Juniper Forest. Endangered species such as the Asiatic Mountain Bear, Snow Leopard, and Markhor call this forest home, and preserving their habitat is paramount. Simultaneously, initiatives aim to promote sustainable tourism, allowing visitors from around the world to appreciate the forest's natural beauty and ecological significance.

The Call to Action
The allure of the valuable Juniper wood has led to its exploitation, with reports even implicating authorities in the illegal trade. To secure the future of this ancient forest, immediate action is essential. It is imperative that we collectively embrace sustainable practices, raise awareness, and curb deforestation. Only by doing so can we ensure the preservation of this unique species and its vital role in our natural world. Together, we must act responsibly to safeguard the Ziarat Juniper Forest for generations to come.

Is Pakistan unusual?

By Pervez Hoodbhoy:

Is Pakistan unlike the world's Muslim-majority countries? In some respects, certainly, but not in others. While religious violence there is on the higher side, it shares some striking similarities with other Muslim countries. Turkish author Ahmet Kuru helps situate Pakistan within a broader context of authoritarianism, underdevelopment, and ongoing conflicts in Muslim countries. Kuru is a professor of political science at San Diego State University and director of the Centre for Islamic and Arabic Studies. Much of what is below derives from his award-winning book, *Islamic Authoritarianism and Underdevelopment - A Global and Historical Comparison*. The rest comes from my public conversation with him this week over Zoom before an audience in Islamabad. Countries where Muslims are in the majority, says Kuru, have significantly higher levels of violence than others. Statistics tell a compelling story in thirds (eight out of 12) of the protagonists in recent wars, and two-fifths of the sides in relatively

minor conflicts (24 out of 60) were Muslim-majority countries or Muslim countries. These rates are disproportionate because Muslims constitute only one-quarter of the world's population and Muslim-majority countries are only one quarter of the world's countries. This thesis is buttressed by Pakistan's case. A steady, unchanging democracy, authoritarian leadership is more common, rates of corruption are higher, and the tax-to-GDP ratio is smaller. The last fact means that governments mostly from rent, meaning exploitation of some resource such as oil or geographic location. A smaller industrial base means smaller value-added production. Muslim country products of high-tech level technology.

What explains these negative features? Kuru rejects suggestions that Islam is the cause, deeming this essentialist and unsupported by evidence. Indeed, violence is a general human problem and for the last two centuries Western powers, not Muslim countries, have imposed their military domination upon the world. As for underdevelopment — note that could have alleged this during the Islamic Golden Age. From the ninth through the 13th centuries — a period of roughly 400 years — Muslim civilization from Baghdad to Spain, sparked with enlightenment and learning. The causes of Muslim decline have been long debated. Mongol invasions and the advent of 19th-century European colonialism remain popular explanations. While Kuru admits their importance, he contends they mostly from rent, meaning exploitation of some resource such as oil or geographic location. A smaller industrial base means smaller value-added production. Muslim country products of high-tech level technology.

Fresh polls are the only remedy

By Abbas Nasir:

PM-N LEADER Nawaz Sharif has announced he is home-bound early next week and is likely to arrive in Lahore as planned on Oct 21, triggering optimism that general elections could be held within the first few weeks of the New Year. Although the Election Commission of Pakistan stated that elections will be held towards the end of January, it failed to announce a date. This was bound to, and did indeed, create misgivings as commentators started expressing doubts, interpreting the missing date as a sign that the ECP was giving itself wriggle room to walk away from elections in January. For several months now, Nawaz Sharif's return has been seen as linked to the conduct of the elections in the country, as it was clear that without him at the helm of the PM-N's campaign, the party's sagging popularity would not be boosted and its chances would be significantly reduced. It is not clear what he can say or what, to every commentator's favouring word, 'narrative' he can

develop to bring back votes of PM-LN voters to the party who now seem disillusioned, even angry, because of the economic hardship, given the rampant food inflation and sharply rising energy bills.

His new friends and backers might be working day and night to put him in front of the race. However, given that these very backers ran a years-long smear campaign to demolish him and his party, making words such as 'chor', 'dick', synonymous with PM-LN leaders, it won't be easy to bring around voters to their new point of view.

Not just that, the PTI and its leader were forcefully projected, using 5GW weaponry, as the saviours with impeccable credentials who could do nothing wrong. Then, in the 2018 elections where this campaign didn't work, other means were deployed to make sure that the voters got into the corridors of power. Now in the popular perception that clean, competent leadership has not only been ousted from office wrongfully, it is also being persecuted by a 'turn of a TV' party leader on a TV 'newspaper' channel in an orchestrated interview seems pointless, even self-defeating. During the nearly four-hour interview, the subject shunned his own aggressive, militant behaviour which were on display for long years till the recent past and pointed the finger of blame towards the jailed great leader as being the instigator of all evil, upheaval, etc. etc. The problem is that even the worst critics of the PTI leader, who did not approve of his authoritarian tendencies, had trouble believing what was said and put it down to simplicity. This was simply so because this man's change of heart happened during his 'enforced disappearance' of several weeks. It would be foolhardy to think this fact would be lost on any fair-minded person. Then we hear of another outspoken PTI leader who was reportedly brought to a TV channel for an 'interview'. The interview is ever aired, its impact would be near-zero as who would believe a single word of a person who was featuring in it on his first moments back after having been disappeared for weeks.

No credible plan

By Maryam Khan:

WHILE impulsively buying clothes online, many of you must have noticed a pop-up informing you about the sustainability policy of the company from which you are making the purchase. That information is likely to be fabricated. According to Reuters, textile industries generate over 10 per cent of total global carbon emissions. And yet increasingly, every year, firms — from clothing to the apparel industry — want to broadcast their 'environmentally friendly' policies. So, how should you research your purchase? The answer is to not listen to what the companies themselves say about their sustainability policies.

There is a good chance it is an attempt at 'greenwashing', or misrepresenting the facts. 'Greenwashing' is a term that originated after sustainability and climate change became fashionable buzzwords in the Sustainable Development Goal. Ever since the Covid-19 pandemic, consumers are becoming more discerning of their behaviour patterns, and care about the environment at large. Wanting to cater to this,

companies now care about the climate too. Still, some of them do the more symbolic route that reinforces sustainability as the norm, but their words do not translate into concrete action.

These firms provide little or no information on how their operations are a relatively new concept, but it is inspired by the classic recipe of financial disclosures to curb tax evasion. The essence of environmental disclosure is that in modern times, emissions have become material — and firms already producing huge amounts are considered a threat. They are likely to witness duties, taxes, even lawsuits. In this context, many would be well acquainted with how a company's reputation suffered during the last decade. So, emission disclosure is an industry-transforming regulatory shift that will help investors assess how much climate risk a company poses. Some of these rules assert that companies need to disclose their emissions (both direct and indirect) chains. These emissions are on average 12 times higher than operational (direct) emissions, and ignoring them or conveniently not adding them to disclosure reports amounts to greenwashing. Europe is taking the lead in the attempt to counter greenwashing, as it makes some information mandatory and non-comparable. In finance circles, this category of disclosures is referred to as 'double materiality'. It revolves round the concept of third-party impact. In instances, a potential investor does not care if a company is dumping waste into the river, the town located downstream does. Double materiality asserts that corporations have responsibilities to entities that are stakeholders. It is a radical approach — the EU to ensure a more definitive way of countering greenwashing. Where does this leave the Global South, which is more a recipient of, and less a contributor to, global emissions? Africa's carbon market serves as a positive example, where high-income countries (who produce more emissions) are allowed to emit a certain amount of carbon.

Delimitation blues

By Tahir Mehdi:

THE Election Commission of Pakistan took up the task of delimitation at great risk to its reputation this time. It was accused of using the time-consuming task as an excuse to delay elections for some ulterior objective. But the ECP pressed ahead, preferring the constitutional requirement of delimiting constituencies over everything else. The extraordinary importance given to the task of delimitation, had hopes that the ECP was serious about levelling the playing field by first addressing the problem of disparity in the sizes of constituencies.

Constituencies in Pakistan have historically been unequal. In extreme cases, their populations have varied by as much as three times. This goes against the basic democratic principle of equal suffrage, besides violating citizens' equality that is guaranteed in our Constitution. Parliament attempted to fix this in Elections Act, 2017, by setting a single word limit on the population in the constituencies. The effort, however, was in vain as the 2018 delimitations again resulted in unequal constituencies. The main obstacle was the rule suggesting that a district shall have a whole number of constituencies; in other words, a constituency shall not comprise parts of two or more districts. Since the population of districts cannot be exact multiples of the average per seat population, their fractional shares have to be rounded off. For example, if a district's population is 16 times the average, it is awarded two seats. This population of each seat is 8 times the average. On the other hand, a district with a population of 15.5 times the average gets one seat. After the round, the 10 per cent limit and yet has been given to the whole seat. Neighbouring districts of Jehum and Gujrat are five seats (1.56 plus 3.55 equals 5.11) but have been given six (two and four respectively). This means that the average constituency size of 690,000 voters, while that of the six seats of Jehum and Gujrat is three-quarters of a million (around 400,000 voters).

Similarly, Hafizabad district's share stood at 1.46 so it has been given a whole seat and part of another in neighbouring Gujranwala district. However, Gujranwala district's own share already stood at 5.48; despite taking in the surplus population of Hafizabad, the number of seats for Gujranwala has been kept at five. In other words, with a combined share of 1.46 plus 5.48, the two districts have been given only six seats! In contrast, Hafizabad's share of 1.56, marginally higher than that of Jehum and Gujrat, but has been given two whole seats, instead of one whole seat, and one shared with Rawalpindi or Gujrat. The combined share of 1.56 plus 3.55 equals 5.11 but has been given six seats (two and four respectively). This means that the average constituency size of 690,000 voters, while that of the six seats of Jehum and Gujrat is three-quarters of a million (around 400,000 voters).

Fact Check: Did Taliban ask for passage from neighboring countries to reach Jerusalem?

ISLAMABAD (INP): A statement associated with the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has been circulating on social media platforms that the Taliban's interim government of Kabul has asked the neighboring countries for passage to reach Jerusalem reportedly to fight against the Israeli army. The statement has been circulating in Urdu and English language and even Israeli newspapers also reported the statement. Israel National News reported, "Sunday 3:50 AM: The Taliban terror organization, which controls Afghanistan, has reportedly asked its neighbors for passage so it could join Hamas in its attack on Israel." A private TV news channel carried out a fact check that unveiled that the statement associated with the Taliban government was not true and completely against the facts. Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan issued a statement and said "Afghanistan has been closely monitoring the recent events in the Gaza Strip and considers such events to be the result of the violation of the rights of the oppressed Palestinian by the Israeli Zionists and repeated insults and disrespect to Muslim holy places." The statement reads, "Any kind of defense and the resistance of the Palestinian people for the freedom of the land and holy places is their legitimate right." The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan declares its support for the legitimate, historical and legal right of the Palestinian people to have a permanent country in the historical Palestinian land and calls upon the Islamic countries, The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the international community and especially the influential countries in the region to stop the violence of the Israeli occupying forces."



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Defence Production Lt Gen Anwar Ali Hyder (Retd), Ambassador of Egypt in Pakistan and Egyptian Air Force Brigadier Mohamed Saad and others standing in respect of national anthem of Pakistan and Egypt on the occasion of the Egyptian Armed Forces Day at a local hotel.

PRs 28 pc nonfunctional locomotives disrupting entire operations: official

ISLAMABAD (INP): Out of total 461, around 28 percent of Diesel-Electric Locomotives (DEL) of Pakistan Railways are non-functional creating disruption in appropriate functioning of entire operations of the department. An official of Ministry of Pakistan Railway said on Sunday that Pakistan Railways has 332 locomotives in running condition out of a total of 461, while 129 (28 percent) diesel-electric locomotives were non-functional. Of 129 locomotives, around 41 were under normal overhauling schedules and maintenance. The locomotives will be rolled out after routine schedule maintenance turn by turn, the official said. He said that 11 locomotives met with an accident on various dates and locations and fabrication work and procurement of spare parts were under process for these locomotives. The official said that around 69 DPEL (diesel-electric) locomotives were held up for repair and need major modification while eight locomotives were temporarily deleted and under condemnation process due to over-age. To a question, he said that Pakistan Railways was planning to procure as many as 25 diesel-electric locomotives for various shunting points across the country which would help to replace outdated locomotives that were to be scrapped very soon. The project for the procurement and manufacturing of 25 shunting locomotives would be implemented in three years at an estimated cost of Rs. 14 billion, he added. Currently, he said that only 51 locomotives were being operated for this service against 98 shunting points at various railway stations across the country. Additionally, most of the old locomotives would be discarded due to high maintenance costs. He said the project was aimed at procuring and manufacturing 25 shunting diesel-electric locomotives of 2000-2200 horsepower HP to replace the overage and uneconomical locomotives.



QUETTA: Pashtunخوا Mill Awami Party (PKMAP) chairman, Mahmood Khan Achakzai, addressing on occasion of 7 Oct tragedy.

Govt needs to reduce POL prices amid rupee gain, low global rates: Anjum Nisar

KARACHI (INP): The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Business Panel (BMP) has called on the government to make a substantial reduction in petrol and diesel prices following a huge cut in the global oil market by almost \$9 per barrel and an immense recovery of the rupee to ease inflation to 27% in Oct, which has been hovering at around 31%. Former president FPCCI and Chairman Businessmen Panel, Mian Anjum Nisar observed that the Pakistani rupee appreciated 2.7% to Rs283 dollar compared with the previous fortnight's average of Rs292 a dollar. In the same way, the price of petrol plummeted by 15% to \$84.3 per barrel in the international market compared with last fortnight's average of \$99.3. The international price of high-speed diesel dipped by 10% to \$110.6 per barrel compared with last fortnight's average of \$122.3. Quoting a research report, he said that the price of Arab Light crude, which Pakistan imports from the Middle East, fell by 9.1%, or \$8.9 per barrel, to \$88.68 by October 5 compared to the average price of \$97.58 for the September 18-29 period. Incorporating the drop alongside rupee appreciation and assuming the international prices and currency remain at the same level for the next 10 days, the local petrol and diesel prices should go down by Rs40 per litre and Rs20 per litre, respectively, in the next fortnightly price revision effective from October 16, 2023. Mian Anjum estimated that exchange rate adjustments in the last fortnightly prices of petrol and diesel were Rs11.9 and negative Rs2.8 per litre, respectively. Even assuming the same currency adjustment for motor spirit/petrol and nil adjustment for HSD in the upcoming fortnightly prices, MS and HSD prices should be dropped by Rs29 and Rs20 per litre, respectively. Moreover, Russia has surprisingly lifted the ban on export of diesel, which will create a supply glut for the premium product. This may spark a price war in the international market and benefit oil importing countries like Pakistan. The caretaker government has already reduced petrol price by Rs8 to Rs23.38 per litre with effect from October 1, 2023. It cut diesel price by Rs11 to Rs31.18 per litre. The BMP Chairman said that Pakistan heavily relies on imported fuel to meet domestic demand. Estimates suggest that it meets around 70% of energy needs through imports while the remaining 30% is met through local field production. The share of energy, including gas, stood at around 26% (\$2.17 billion) in total imports of \$8.23 billion in the first two months of current fiscal year. Pakistan's demand for petroleum products hit a 44-month low at 1.06 million tons in September 2023 in the wake of a significant surge in prices over the past couple of months. Besides, the availability of oil and economic slowdown and a sharp drop in car sales also caused the decrease in demand. Anjum Nisar said that the illicit activities such as the black market and smuggling of dollars in key sectors are draining Pakistan's economy of a staggering \$23 billion per year. These clandestine operations, encompassing black market currency trade, oil smuggling, gold smuggling, and import controls, have detrimental effects on Pakistan's economic stability. The distortions, exchange rates, leading to currency devaluation, which, in turn, can fuel inflation as imported goods become costlier. Moreover, such activities undermine the efficacy of monetary policies and erode confidence in the financial system. In recent years, Pakistan has experienced significant fluctuations in its exchange rates, intensifying its economic challenges. A robust crackdown on these illicit activities has somewhat stabilized the inter-bank rate at Rs282.62 per dollar. He underscored that a steadfast commitment to eradicating smuggling in key sectors is essential for Pakistan's economic recovery. The most important part is governance, if governance is improved, it will lead to an overall improvement in financial and economic environment and bring stability to our financial markets and help economic and financial growth of the country. The BMP stressed the need for advanced surveillance techniques and technologies to secure Pakistan's physical borders and crossing points. We have a long border sharing with Iran and Afghanistan and the sea border with gulf countries. The smuggling of physical dollars and gold must be effectively controlled to prevent the outflow of foreign currencies. According to the report, Pakistan loses around \$150 million per month on account of dollar smuggling, culminating in an alarming annual figure of around \$2 billion per year.

Gold prices in Pakistan show signs of recovery after recent decline

ISLAMABAD (INP): Gold prices in Pakistan show signs of recovery after recent decline gold prices in Pakistan. As of Sunday, the 24-karat gold price in Pakistan has risen to Rs195,600 per tola, bringing hope to investors and enthusiasts. Those interested in 24-karat gold can now acquire it at Rs178,290 per tola. For individuals looking to purchase smaller quantities, the rates are equally attractive. 10 grams of 24-karat gold are currently priced at Rs167,700, while 10 grams of 22-karat gold can be obtained for Rs152,862. This upward trend in gold prices marks a welcome shift after a period of continuous decline in value. It's important to note that fluctuate multiple times throughout the day in response to global market trends. These rates are sourced from reliable outlets primarily based in Karachi and Multan. However, it's worth mentioning that the official gold rates provided by the All Pakistan Jewellers Association have not been updated since September 12, 2023. In a bid to enhance transparency and promote the growth of the gold sector, a 15-member advisory council has been established, with the federal Ministry of Industries issuing a notification to this effect. Notably, senior gold trader Haji Haroon Chandko has not been included in the council, raising eyebrows in the industry. For those closely monitoring the gold market, it is advised to stay vigilant as rates continue to respond to global developments in the world of gold. Rest assured, we remain committed to keeping our readers well-informed and will provide regular updates on the gold market in Pakistan. Stay tuned for the latest developments in gold prices.



QUETTA: Advocate Qamer un Nisa addressing a press conference.

First Pakistani meat company approved by GACC to export meat to China

BEIJING (INP): In a groundbreaking development for Pakistan's meat industry, a local meat company named Pakistan's Organic Meat has achieved a historic milestone by becoming the first Pakistani entity to be registered with the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC). This achievement not only opens up new avenues for Pakistan's meat exports but also solidifies the country's position in the global meat market, said Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor here at the Pakistan Embassy. Ghulam Qadir told China Economic Net that the company that has achieved this remarkable feat is "The Organic Meat Company Ltd," a leading player in Pakistan's meat processing and export industry. This achievement comes after years of rigorous quality control measures and compliance with international standards. He further said that to secure registration on the GACC, Organic Meat Company Ltd underwent rigorous inspections and quality audits. This demonstrates their commitment to maintaining high-quality standards in meat production, processing, and packaging. Registration on the GACC opens the doors to the vast Chinese meat market, which has a growing demand for high-quality meat products. This milestone positions Pakistan as a credible and reliable supplier of meat to China. This achievement has the potential to significantly boost Pakistan's meat exports, contributing to the country's economic growth. It also creates opportunities for job creation within the meat processing industry," he added. He further said that this achievement enhances the country's reputation on the global stage. It showcases Pakistan's ability to meet the stringent requirements of international markets. Javed Chaudhary, Iqbal Saleem, affiliated with the meat and related products business expressed his delight at this historic achievement. "It reflects the huge effort of Pakistan's meat processing industry to expand markets and Pakistan is committed to delivering the highest quality meat products to the Chinese market," he said. "This achievement sets a precedent for other Pakistani meat companies to follow suit and strive for excellence in quality and compliance with international standards. It also underscores the importance of maintaining high standards in the food industry to tap into lucrative international markets," he mentioned. He further said that it not only signifies a major breakthrough for the company but also paves the way for stronger trade relations with China and a brighter future for Pakistan's meat exports on the global stage. It is to be noted that The General Administration of Customs of China (GACC) is the regulatory body responsible for setting stringent standards for food imports, including meat products. Being registered on the GACC is a significant accomplishment.



HYDERABAD: Motorcyclists crossing railway track while train approaching on the same track at Makkid Shah railway crossing.

Pakistan and Iran Agree to Enhance Border Security, Cooperation

News Desk:

In a significant bilateral meeting held in Mir Jvra city of Iran, Pakistan and Iran came together to address key issues concerning border security and cooperation. The high-level meeting, aimed at

3: Humanitarian Assistance: Pakistan and Iran demonstrated their commitment to humanitarian values by pledging assistance to one another in the dignified handling of deceased individuals found at the border, reflecting their shared commitment to respect and dignity.



strengthening ties and fostering greater regional stability, saw both nations discussing and committing to a range of important initiatives. The Pakistan delegation was headed by Abdul Salam Achakzai, the Additional Home Secretary Balochistan and Hassan Ali Hussaini represented the Iranian side.

1: Countering Terrorism and Narcotics Smuggling: Pakistan and Iran vowed to intensify their joint efforts in countering terrorist groups and mercenaries operating along their shared border. The two nations are determined to tackle the menace of narcotics smuggling, which poses a threat to regional security.

2: Enhancing Border Security: Both countries agreed to take stringent measures to combat border violations, ensuring the safety and security of their respective territories.

4: Legal Border Crossings: Efforts to facilitate legal border crossings were discussed, emphasizing the importance of adhering to all legal formalities for the movement of people and goods between the two nations.

5: Electricity for Rajay/Taftan: Iran extended a helping hand by agreeing to provide electricity to four villages in the Rajay/Taftan region, contributing to the development and well-being of the local communities.

6: Border Fencing: Both countries resolved to expedite the complete fencing of the border, enhancing security measures and better managing border areas.

7: Exchange of Prisoners' Information: Pakistan and Iran pledged to share crucial information regarding prisoners, improving

transparency and communication between their respective prison systems.

8: Visa Issuance for Zareen: Iran committed to facilitating the issuance of visas for Zareen, acknowledging the religious and cultural significance of their travel between the two nations.

9: Crackdown on Oil Smuggling: The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both Pakistan and Iran reaffirming their dedication to strengthening bilateral ties and regional stability. These collaborative efforts are poised to bring about positive change in the shared border region, fostering greater security and prosperity for the people of both nations.



ISLAMABAD: Former member Balochistan Assembly and Provincial Minister Sardar Sarfraz Domki calls on the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

UN Agencies Appeal to Pakistan for Protection of Vulnerable Afghan Refugees

Press Release:

Bangkok, October 7, 2023 – In a joint appeal, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have called on Pakistan to maintain its protection of vulnerable Afghan refugees amidst growing concerns over plans to repatriate Afghans to their home country.

Humanitarian Crisis Unfolding:

Afghanistan continues to grapple with a severe humanitarian crisis marked by numerous human rights challenges, particularly affecting women and girls. Against this backdrop, the announced plans of Pakistan to repatriate Afghan nationals have raised alarm bells, given the potential serious protection risks upon their return.

Acknowledging Sovereign Prerogative:

IOM and UNHCR recognize Pakistan's sovereign prerogative over domestic policies and its responsibility to manage populations within its territory while ensuring public safety and security.

Offer of Support:

Building on their longstanding and robust collaboration with the Government of Pakistan, IOM and UNHCR stand



ready to provide support in creating a comprehensive and sustainable mechanism for the registration and management of Afghan nationals, including those in need of international protection.

Gratitude for Hospitality:

Both agencies express their deep appreciation for Pakistan's generous hospitality extended to Afghan nationals over four decades, even in the face of numerous challenges. They emphasize the critical importance of all returns being voluntary, safe, and dignified, without any undue pressure, to safeguard the rights and safety of those seeking refuge. Forced repatriation raises the specter of severe human rights violations, including the separation

Global Appeal:

IOM and UNHCR reiterate their call to all nations to suspend forcible returns of Afghan nationals and to ensure that any potential returns to Afghanistan occur in a manner that is safe, dignified, and voluntary. This appeal underscores the international community's commitment to preserving the rights and welfare of Afghan refugees during these tumultuous times.

As the crisis in Afghanistan unfolds, IOM and UNHCR remain steadfast in their mission to protect and support those in need, with the hope that nations worldwide will unite to provide safe havens and lasting solutions for vulnerable Afghan populations.

Pakistan faces unpredictable events caused by climatic condition: Chairman NDMA

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lieutenant General Imran Haider Malik HI(M) has said changing climatic condition and frequent recurrence of unpredictable and extreme events.

In his message on "National Resilience Day", he said that we commemorate the occasion with a mission and commitment to advance national preparedness by improving and increasing the nation's resilience to natural and human-induced threats.

LI Gen Imran Haider said that to meet disasters caused by climatic challenges, NDMA was proactively working at reducing the vulnerability to disasters, and also providing coping mechanisms and framework for effective disaster management. The disaster management system in Pakistan has traveled a long way in the recent time with formulation of National Disaster Risk Reduction Policies and National Disaster Management Plan but still we have to go very far by implementing these policies and plan in their true letter and spirit, he added.

He said, "We have also made considerable progress in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in development processes, which will no doubt lead to greater national resilience against potential disasters. Our expedition for resilience is consistent and we need to make our utmost efforts to realize the ideals."

The chairman NDMA said that the Disaster Management System in Pakistan was

currently undergoing a transformation, shifting from a reactive to a proactive approach. This represents a significant change in how we collectively address unexpected crises. In the past, the primary focus was on responding to emergencies after they had already occurred, often resulting in substantial loss of life and property. However, due to advancements in technology and a deeper understanding of natural disasters, Pakistan is now moving towards taking proactive measures, he maintained.

He said, "This transformation involves the establishment of a modern National Emergency Operation Center (NEOC) at the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The disaster NEOC is now capacitated to create common operating picture enabled by multiple satellite feeds, softwares, Artificial intelligence tools that is expected to strengthen digital risk assessment, early warning systems, and preparedness strategies." Imran Haider said that National Resilience Day prompts us to embrace best practices and implement policies and strategies aimed at fortifying our nation's resilience. He said that our policy initiatives should encompass various sectors, including the resilient and safe development of infrastructure, improved disaster preparedness, poverty alleviation, safer spatial land use planning, adherence to building codes, efficient water resource management, sound agricultural practices, and increased afforestation nation-

wide, including coastal areas. He said, "Given our vulnerabilities, I urge all federal and provincial stakeholders to collaborate closely to reduce disaster risks, enhance preparedness, and establish swift response mechanisms through usage of latest technological tools. It is of utmost importance that we prioritize the welfare of vulnerable segments of our society, including women, children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities in all our endeavors." He expressed gratitude for the invaluable support and assistance provided by the international community, civil society, and private philanthropy in bolstering our national response efforts during the recent mega flood disaster. He also called upon the international community to extend their utmost support to Pakistan in mitigating the adverse impacts of the climate change phenomenon that it disproportionately affects.

The chairman NDMA said, "We have, as a nation, witnessed the relentless force of nature through earthquakes, floods, cyclones, and other calamities. These events have tested our resolve, but they have also illuminated the remarkable spirit of unity, compassion, and resilience that defines us as a people. I firmly believe that, as we have done in the past, the people of Pakistan will continue to show their generosity by assisting their fellow citizens struck by disasters through their contributions and tireless efforts. May Allah guide and help us in building a strong and resilient Pakistan."



TORKHAM: Afghan refugees living in Pakistan are standing in a queue on pak-Afghan Torkham border with their families, a government decision to expel people illegally staying in the country. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans living illegally in Pakistan have been given until November 1 to leave voluntarily or face deportation.



ISLAMABAD: Admiral Muhammad Anjad Khan Niazi handed over the Command scroll of Pakistan Navy to Admiral Naveed Ashraf during Change of Command in an impressive ceremony at PNS ZAFAR Islamabad.

At least 500 killed as Israeli forces continue to clash with Hamas gunmen

JERUSALEM/GAZA/SDEROT

(INP): Israeli forces clashed with gunmen from the Palestinian group Hamas on Sunday, 24 hours after the militants launched a surprise attack on Israel in which about 500 people were killed in the deadliest day of violence in Israel for 50 years.

The biggest incursion into Israel in decades could undermine US-backed efforts to forge regional security alignments that could threaten Palestinian aspirations for statehood and the ambitions of the group's main backer, Iran. Hamas fighters began their attack at dawn on Saturday with a huge barrage of rockets into southern Israel, giving cover to an unprecedented, multi-pronged infiltration of fighters into Israel from Gaza, a narrow strip that is home to 2.3 million Palestinians. The Israeli military reported that mortar bombs were fired from Lebanon into northern Israel. Israeli forces responded with artillery strikes into Lebanon.

Hamas fighters killed at least 250 Israelis in clashes throughout Saturday and into Sunday, and escaped back into Gaza with dozens of hostages. More than 250 Gazans were killed when Israeli forces spread to the West Bank, devastating days of retaliatory

strikes.

"We will take mighty vengeance for this wicked day," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday.

An Israeli military spokesperson said operations were going on in eight areas around Gaza on Sunday while Al-Hadath TV cited the Palestinian Red Crescent as saying 18 people had been killed in Israeli targeting of two homes in Gaza's Beit Hanoun district. Palestinian health officials said 20 children were among 256 civilians killed. Nearly 1,800 people were wounded, they said.

The escalation comes against a backdrop of surging violence between Israel and Palestinian militants in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where a Palestinian authority exercises limited self-rule, opposed by Hamas that wants Israel destroyed. The West Bank has seen stepped-up Israeli raids, Palestinian street attacks and assaults by Jewish settlers on Palestinian villages. Conditions for Palestinians have worsened under Netanyahu's hard-right government. Peace-making has been stalled for years. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said the assault that began in Gaza was the most devastating in Jewish history. Israeli drones could be heard overhead

under an Israeli blockade for 16 years.

In a speech, Haniyeh highlighted threats to Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, the continuation of an Israeli blockade on Gaza and Israeli normalization with countries in the region. "How many times have we warned you that the Palestinian people have been living in refugee camps for 75 years, and you refuse to recognise the rights of our people?"

Bodies of Israeli civilians surrounded by broken glass were strewn across the streets of Sderot in southern Israel near Gaza. The bodies of a man and woman were sprawled across the front seats of a car. Terrified Israelis, barricaded into safe rooms, recounted their plight by phone on live television. Senior military officers were among those killed in fighting near Gaza, the Israeli military said. Netanyahu's office said his security cabinet had approved steps to destroy the military and governmental capabilities of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, another militant group, "for many years", including cutting electricity, fuel supplies and the entry of goods into Gaza. In Gaza, black smoke, orange flashes and sparks lit the sky from explosions. Israeli drones could be heard overhead.