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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairing a special session of the Apex Committee of SIFC held to foster strategic partnerships with friendly countries.

Bilawal leaves for Dubai

KARACHI (INP): Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari left for Dubai unexpectedly on Friday without bringing into notice of party leadership.

According to details, the PPP chairman has left for Dubai through a private airline flight.

It should be mentioned here that the development comes a day after former President Asif Ali Zardari said that his son and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari was "not fully trained" in politics and would "take time" getting up to speed.

SIFC reviews existing level of collaboration, approves initiatives to be broached with friendly countries

PM stresses realisation of SIFC's envisioned long-term economic dividends; COAS Munir reaffirms support to govt for durable economic recovery; Pakistan, Kuwait to ink seven MoUs for \$10b investment during PM's upcoming visit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday, appreciating the efforts of relevant ministries for identifying prospective areas of collaboration under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), directed all stakeholders for efforts to realise the envisioned long-term economic dividends.

He was chairing a special session of the Apex Committee of SIFC held here to foster strategic partnerships with friendly countries.

The meeting was attended by Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, ministers and high-level government officials, a PM Office press release said.

The apex committee reviewed the existing level of collaboration and unanimously approved various initiatives to be broached

with friendly countries and directed to fast-track implementation of various projects conceived under these initiatives.

The Chief of Army Staff assured the unwavering resolve of the Pakistan Army to support economic initiatives being undertaken by the Government of Pakistan.

Meanwhile Pakistan and Kuwait will sign seven Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) for investment worth \$10 billion in Pakistan through seven projects in multiple fields including environment, mining and food security.

In this regard, the federal cabinet, in its meeting held on Friday approved seven MoUs to be signed during the upcoming visit of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar to Kuwait.

Consequent to the efforts by the Special Invest-

ment Facilitation Council (SIFC), both countries would sign MoUs on multiple projects including the expansion of water reservoirs, mining facilities, conservation of mangrove forests in coastal areas, information technology and food security, a PM Office press release said.

Prime Minister Kakar and the cabinet members appreciated the efforts of the SIFC and the relevant ministries.

The prime minister, who chaired the meeting, instructed to ensure cooperation with the provinces for early and fair execution of the projects.

The body also endorsed the decisions of the Cabinet Committee for Disposal of Legislative Cases it had taken in its meeting on November 14, as well as those of the Economic Coordination Committee meeting on November 15, 2023.

Caretaker CM vows to achieve sustainable development goals in Balochistan

Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki hails allocation of one third resources for Province in UNDP Pakistan's national programme during current year

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QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has made a pledge to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the province.

He said that the achievement of SDGs would be ensured by bringing improvement in the governance.

The Chief Minister was speaking to a delegation of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), who called on him under leadership of its representative in Pakistan, Dr. Samuel here at the Chief Minister's secretariat on

Friday. During the course of meeting, the ongoing and proposed projects of UNDP in Balochistan were discussed.

Referring the UNDP assisted projects, the Chief Minister maintained that the ongoing programmes for improvement in the governance are very important.

He also said that the ongoing projects being executed in planning and development, policy and law, education and health sectors are guarantors of the sustainable development.

He said that the allocation of one third resources for Balochistan in national programme of UNDP Pakistan during current year is welcoming.

He said that we are resolute to achieve the sustainable development goals set in different sectors in the province.

Referring the climate change, the Chief Minister said that we are making planning to combat the impacts of climate change in the province, he on the occasion assured that the provincial government would extend wholehearted cooperation to implement the five-year plan of UNDP in the project.

PM lauds Saudi Arabia for always standing with Pakistan in turbulent times

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday said Saudi Arabia always stood with Pakistan in difficult times and extended support to it in diverse fields. Talking to Imam-e-Kaaba Dr Sheikh Saleh bin Abdullah bin Humaid, the prime minister said Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were tied in the strong historical relationship, based on commonalities of religion, values, and traditions.

PM Kakar expressed gratitude to Saudi Arabia for providing development assistance to Pakistan in the fields of education and health. He said that the Saudi government was extending exemplary support to the Pakistani manpower working in the Kingdom.

The prime minister highlighted that recently, the Custodian of the Two

Holy Mosques and the Crown Prince expressed unconditional support for the Palestinians by convening the emergency session of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

PM Kakar, during the meeting, strongly condemned the atrocities committed against Palestinians and the massacre of the children in Gaza.

He emphasized the opening of a corridor for uninterrupted supply of humanitarian assistance to the people in Gaza.

On Islamophobia, the prime minister stressed the need to educate the young generation through documentaries on Islamic teachings, history, and culture.

He said the translation of these documentaries into different languages and their broadcast across the world, could help project the true essence of Islam.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti chairing National Action Plan Coordination Committee Meeting.

Pakistan actively engaged in ending Gaza crisis, resolution of Palestine issue: FM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani informed the Senate on Friday that Pakistan had actively engaged in ending the Gaza crisis and resolution of the Palestine issue.

Responding to a notice raised by Senator Mushtaq Ahmed the siege of land, sea, and air routes of Gaza by the Israeli occupying forces and the killing of innocent Palestinians by dropping phosphorus bombs on residential units, hospitals, schools, refugee camps, and mosques which is worst form of terrorism and violation of International Law and Human Rights, the minister said, "Pakistan has been actively involved in the resolution of Palestine issue for several years, particularly in the last month and a half."

Highlighting Pakistan's contributions, he said, "Pakistan, along with Saudi Arabia, co-sponsored the OIC extraordinary session of foreign ministers held last month in Jeddah, and the extraordinary session of OIC was also held in Jeddah due to efforts of Pakistan".

He said Pakistan played a crucial role among the eight foreign ministers who collaborated on an unanimous document during the OIC summit.

The minister said, "Pakistan played a pivotal role in the passage of the resolution presented by Jordan at the United Nations, garnering support from numerous countries." I have received calls of appreciation from around 10 to 15 foreign ministers globally for our efforts in building consensus at the UN on the Jordan resolution in UN" he said. He said, "There is no doubt that Israel has committed aggression against Palestinians. In fact, it amounts to genocide against the innocent people of Palestine. The situation in Gaza is dire, with a severe lack of water, health facilities, and food, leading to a major humanitarian crisis."

Condemning Israel for war crimes in Gaza, he urged, "Israel must be held responsible for these actions, and we call upon the international community to focus on the Palestine issue and play a decisive role in ending the crisis."

Asad Qaiser sent to jail in May 9 case

MARDAN (INP): A district and sessions court in Mardan on Friday sent the PTI leader to jail on a four-day judicial remand in a case pertaining to violent protests in the country on May 9.

The PTI leader was presented before a district and session court in Mardan.

During the hearing, Charsadda police submitted a request seeking Qaiser's five-day physical remand.

The court rejected the police's request for the physical remand of former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser and sent the PTI leader to jail.

It also directed police to present Qaiser on Nov 29 (Wednesday) along with the case record.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Qaiser was re-arrested by Charsadda police on Thursday.

Police arrested former Speaker of the National Assembly Asad Qaiser in a vandalism case and took him to Charsadda under strict security measures.

Imam-e-Kaaba's visit matter of honour for people of Pakistan: COAS

RAWALPINDI (APP): Imam-e-Kaaba Sheikh Saleh bin Abdullah bin Muhammad Humaid called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir here at the General Headquarters on Friday.

The Army Chief on the occasion said, "Visit of H. E. Imam-e-Kaaba to Pakistan is a matter of honour for the people of Pakistan."

During the meeting, matters of mutual interest were discussed, am Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The Army Chief welcomed the dignitary and

highlighted that the Muslims from all across the world had boundless reverence for Harmain Shraifain and profound respect for their custodian.

Imam-e-Kaaba said, "Islam is a religion of peace & brotherhood and there is no space for misconstrued interpretations of Islam." The dignitaries condemned the ongoing atrocities in the Gaza conflict and the oppression of the Muslims in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), and expressed solidarity with the people of Palestine and Kashmir.



RAWALPINDI: His Excellency Sheikh Saleh bin Abdullah bin Muhammad Humaid, Imam-e-Kaaba called on General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at General Headquarters, in City.

Anti-polio vaccination campaign kicked off in three high risk districts of Balochistan

Independent Report

QUETTA: The seven-day anti-polio campaign was kicked off in three polio high risk districts of Balochistan on Friday.

The Secretary Health, Abdullah Khan formally inaugurated the polio immunization campaign in Quetta, Pishin and Killa Abdullah districts here at the civil secretariat.

Dr Amir Bilal appointed as special assistant to prime minister

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar on Friday has appointed Dr Amir Bilal as his special assistant.

Dr Bilal has been appointed as Special Assistant to PM on Medical Education and Patient Care.

With the latest appointment, the number of ministers in the caretaker cabinet has risen to 27.

The interim cabinet includes 18 federal ministers, 3 advisers and 6 special assistants.

Polio campaign again deferred in Chaman due to security fears

CHAMAN (INP): The authorities in Balochistan's border city of Chaman have once again deferred the launch of polio campaign for law and order reasons, reported on Friday.

Chaman Deputy Commissioner Raja Athar Abbas informed that the polio campaign was postponed in the city for seven days due to security fears.

Three weeks ago, District Administration had decided to postpone seven-day special anti-polio campaign in Chaman district due to the sit-in on the Pak-Afghan border highway. The Chaman DC had then said that the decision was made due to the sit-in, law and order situation.

Punjab govt. assures to resolve issues of students of Balochistan studying in Punjab universities

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QUETTA: The caretaker Government of Punjab has assured to resolve the issues of students of Balochistan studying in various public sector universities of Punjab.

The Punjab government assured to provide scholarships and other facilities to the students of Balochistan.

The assurance was made by the caretaker Provincial Minister Education Punjab, Mansoor Qadir to his counterpart of Balochistan, Dr. Qadir Bakhsh Baloch on Friday.

The caretaker Minister Education Balochistan talked about the issues being faced by students from

the province studying in different universities of Punjab.

The issues were related to the scholarships and other facilities for the students of Balochistan in Sargodha university, Agriculture university Faisalabad, Sahiwal university and Bahauddin Zikria university Multan.

According to details, the students from Balochistan couldn't get admission in the universities of Punjab in time just because of certain hurdles created by some officers in bureaucracy.

As a result, the students from Balochistan were facing different problems in the universities.



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Education Prof. Dr. Qadir Bakhsh Baloch in a group photo with Caretaker Punjab Minister for Education Mansoor Qadir and Secretary Higher Education Punjab Kamran.



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Information Minister Jan Achakzai and resident representative of UNDP in Pakistan, Dr. Samuel Rizk visiting Information Cell of Directorate of Public Relations. DGPR Muhammad Noor Khetran is also present.

Ministry of Information and UNDP agree on working with mutual cooperation

Caretaker Minister Jan Achakzai says Information Department to be put on modern lines keeping requirements of modern era in view; UNDP representative Dr Samuel assures cooperation for building capacity of concerned officers

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QUETTA: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pakistan and Provincial Ministry of Information have agreed upon working together with mutual cooperation in the Balochistan province.

The consensus was between the Rep-

resentative of UNDP in Pakistan, Dr Samuel Rizk and Caretaker Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai and Director General Public Relations, Muhammad Noor Khetran during a meeting here on Friday.

The UNDP country representative reached Directorate of

Public Relations where the Minister Information and DGPR welcomed him.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister Information said that an organized system would be developed to provide prompt awareness and information about the government's initiatives to the people.

He also said that the Information department would also be put on the modern lines in view of requirements of modern era.

The UNDP representative on the occasion said UNDP would take effective steps for building capacity of officers of the department.

Meanwhile, the UNDP visited the Information Cell in Directorate of Public Relations and appreciated its role.

The Minister Information briefed Dr. Samuel about overall functioning of the department besides the future course of action. The UNDP representative expressed willingness

on working together with the Ministry of Information.

The DGPR Noor Khetran thanked the UNDP representative on his visit to the Directorate. During the visit, the Minister Information and DGPR presented commemorative shield to Dr. Samuel Rizk.

Governor awarded honorary degree of PhD to the Ambassador of UAE

Appreciates role of UAE Ambassador in strengthening the cultural and trade relations between two countries

LAHORE (Online): Governor Punjab/Chancellor Muhammad Balighur Rehman today awarded an honorary degree of PhD to the Ambassador of UAE, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salim Al Zaabi at the special convocation of the Institute of Art and Culture at Governor House Lahore today. The ambassador of UAE was awarded an honorary degree in recognition of his valuable services in the promotion of bilateral relations, especially in the field of trade between Pakistan and UAE. Governor Punjab congratulated the ambassador of UAE on receiving the honorary degree of Ph.D. Vice Chancellor Institute of Art and Culture, Faisal Janjua, Pro Vice Chancellor Ijaz A. Qureshi, Member Senate Institute of Art and Culture, Imran Masood, Pakistan's first woman astronaut Namira Saleem, a large number of teachers and students were present in the ceremony. The Punjab Governor, Muhammad Balighur Rehman while addressing the ceremony said that he felt honoured to award the honorary degree of doctorate to the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al Zaabi. The Governor of Punjab appreciated the role of the UAE Ambassador in strengthening the cultural and trade relations between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates and people-to-people contacts between the two countries. He said that there should be exchange programmes involving degrees or short visits of students between educational institutions of Pakistan and UAE.



LAHORE: Namira Salim, First Pakistani Astronaut being presented a shield by the Institute of Art and Culture (IAC) in the presence of Mr. Baleegh ur Rahman Governor Punjab, H.E. Dr. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al Zaabi, Ambassador of the UAE to Pakistan and Mr. Muhammad Faisal Janjua, Chancellor of IAC.

Naqvi for maintaining hope to ensure future generation's prosperity

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has expressed unwavering optimism about the future of Pakistan, dismissing pessimism and affirming the nation's upward trajectory. Addressing the participants of the Air War College Institute course at Al Hamra Hall here on Friday, he emphasized the importance of maintaining hope for the prosperity of future generations. He urged collective efforts, stating that if individuals foster hope, it would resonate positively with their children, shaping a brighter future for Pakistan. Reflecting on the past 10 months of the caretaker setup in Punjab, Mohsin Naqvi highlighted a resolute decision to tackle the circular debt of wheat, which had surpassed 600 billion rupees. The success, he emphasized, was a result of effective teamwork and passion, turning even challenging tasks into achievable goals. The CM reported substantial achievements in agriculture, including an increased area under cotton cultivation, resulting in saving three billion dollars in foreign exchange. Rice cultivation witnessed a remarkable 100 percent growth, contributing a total of 2 billion dollars. Commending prudent decisions, he announced significant savings in Safe City projects in Gujranwala, Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi. Despite an initial budget of 100 billion rupees, these projects are being executed at a cost of 12.5 billion rupees.

CM directs civic agencies to resolve jurisdiction issues, improve city's image

KARACHI (APP): The meeting was attended by Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Secretary Finance Kazim Jatoi, Secretary Local Govt Manzoor Shaikh, Secretary Works Nawaz Sohoo, Commissioner Karachi Saleem Rajput, Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, DGs of KDA, LDA, MDA, COO water board, deputy commissioners, representatives of cantonment boards, KE, MD solid waste management, cable operators, and others. The CM said that no civic agency was working in the interest of the city and its people and under the garb of jurisdiction they keep passing on the buck when asked about their performance. "The roads are dilapidated, walkways are under encroachment, water is theft, transport is not properly regulated, people have no water to drink. Karachi is one of the largest cities of the world, but our civic agencies have left no stone unturned to deface it," he said and added that the agencies responsible for providing civic services in the city keep fighting on the jurisdiction issue and the condition of the city keep deteriorating day by day which is intolerable," he said.

Minister stresses awareness about family planning in rural areas

LAHORE (6AM Report): Punjab Minister for Population Welfare Dr. Jamal Nasir emphasized the necessity of raising awareness about family planning among the rural population and ensuring easy access to necessary facilities. He addressed the closing session of the 24th annual conference organized by the Population Association of Pakistan as the chief guest on Friday. Dr. Nasir stressed the importance of gaining support from religious scholars to dispel misconceptions about population planning, highlighting a consensus among them regarding the need for appropriate intervals between children to enhance the health of both mother and child. Expressing concern about Pakistan's rapidly growing population, the minister cited the alarming implications on poverty, unemployment, and social issues resulting from the imbalance of population and resources. He pointed out the challenges posed by climate change and population growth, noting the adverse effects on agriculture, forests, biodiversity, and food cultivation in the country. Dr. Nasir warned that failure to control population growth would lead to severe impacts on food production, water scarcity, and overall environmental sustainability. Highlighting the need for collective efforts from all societal stakeholders, the minister emphasized the importance of implementing effective population management policies and programs.

Caretaker Minister calls on Imam-e-Kaaba, discuss matters of mutual interest

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Technical Education and Newly Merged Districts Affairs, Dr. Aamer Abdullah, called on Imam-e-Kaaba Sheikh Dr. Saleh bin Abdullah bin Humaid in Islamabad, who is on a four-day visit to Pakistan and discussed matters of mutual interest with him said a press release issued here on Friday. On this occasion, the Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan, His Excellency, Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmed Al-Malkiy was also present. During the meeting, the caretaker minister welcomed Imam-e-Kaaba on his arrival to Pakistan on behalf of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa especially the tribal areas, and said that the people here have more respectful feelings for Imam Kaaba due to special association with Holy Harmain Shareefain.

He termed Imam Kaaba's visit to Pakistan as a blessing and thanked him for his arrival and requested him to offer a special prayer for the unity of Muslim Ummah and the removal of divisions among them. On this occasion, Imam-e-Kaaba expressed that the main cause of problems and difficulties being faced by the Muslim Ummah.



LAHORE: Activists of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) are holding protest demonstration against Israeli cruel and inhumane acts and express unity with the innocent people of Palestine, at Lahore press club

Reign of smog: Lahore ranks first in air pollution again

LAHORE (APP): On Friday, Lahore once again has been ranked first in terms of air pollution in the world. The Meteorological Department sources told APP that an average Air Quality Index (AQI) on Friday was recorded at 356 in the provincial capital. DHA Phase-VIII was recorded at 457, Lahore American School 356, Cantt Polo Ground 488, Aitchison College 389, Quaid-e-Azam Highway 545, and Johar Town was reported at 308. The city is getting colder as the temperature drops due to dense smog. The Met office said that minimum temperature of 14 and maximum temperature of 26 degrees Celsius was recorded on Friday.

CTD apprehends suspect with weapons

MIRPURKHAH (APP): The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Police apprehended a suspect with weapons in a proactive intelligence-based operation on Friday in Mirpurkhas district. According to a press release, the operation was conducted in response to threats from banned terrorist organizations indicating plans to target the police.

International News

Guns fall silent as cease-fire in Gaza comes into effect on Israel-Hamas war

GAZA STRIP, Palestinian Territories (AFP/APP): A four-day truce in the Israel-Hamas war took effect on Friday, with hostages set to be released in exchange for prisoners in the first major reprieve in seven weeks of war that have claimed thousands of lives. Starting from 7:00 am (0500 GMT), the pause was set to silence guns and stop bombings in a conflict that erupted after Hamas's murderous raids into Israel on October 7. Later on Friday, 13 hostages held in Gaza are expected to be freed, followed by an undefined number of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails, according to Qatari mediators. Over the four days, at least 50 hostages are expected to be released, leaving an estimated 190 in the hands of Palestinian militant groups. Meanwhile, 150 Palestinians prisoners are expected to be released. For Gaza's two million-plus residents, the deal spells a respite from weeks of sustained Israeli bombardment. The territory's Hamas government says the war has so far killed about 15,000 people and displaced countless more.

The exact number of casualties is impossible to independently confirm, but it is clear that for many Palestinian and Israeli families, the pause in violence has already come too late. The living here are the ones who are dead," Fida Zayed, a Gazan whose 20-year-old son Uday was killed in a recent air strike, told AFP. "The last thing he said to me was that he was waiting for the truce on Friday," she told AFP. "He asked me to prepare him a feast of rice and chicken." "I hope me and my children die here so we don't have to mourn each other." Qatari officials said the "first batch" of 13 hostages released would be women and children from the same families. Teams of Israeli trauma experts and medics await them—along with specially trained soldiers who, according to guidelines, will promise to keep them safe and will carry a child's favourite food item, be it pizza or chicken schnitzel. An Egyptian security source told AFP that Israeli security officials, International Red Cross-Red Crescent staff and an Egyptian team would deploy to Rafah, on the Egypt-Gaza border, to receive the hostages, who will then be flown to Israel.

Biden thanks Mexico for arrest of accused fentanyl trafficker

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): President Joe Biden thanked Mexican authorities on Thursday for the arrest of an accused trafficker of weapons and fentanyl, the synthetic drug behind a wave of US deaths. Nestor Isidro Perez Salas, alias "El Nini," was captured Wednesday afternoon in Mexico's northwest Sinaloa state. His arrest came less than a week after Biden and Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador met in San Francisco and pledged to coordinate more closely on fighting drug trafficking, especially that of fentanyl.

After Corona, new epidemic hits China's many citizens, facing breathing difficulty

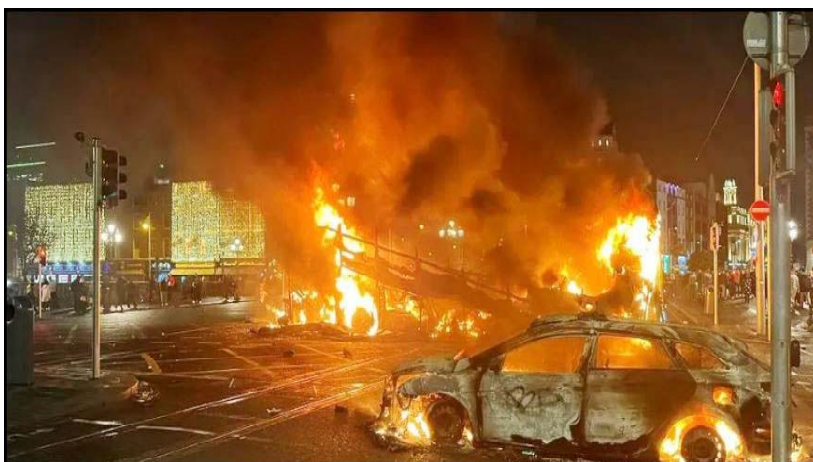
BEIJING (Online): In China, another deadly virus similar to Corona has caused a number of citizens to fall ill, suffering from breathing difficulties and symptoms similar to Corona. According to a foreign news agency, the disease with symptoms like corona and influenza is spreading rapidly in China, on which the government issued a red alert and asked for data from schools and hospitals.



Disease is spreading so fast that the World Health Organization has also requested records from the Chinese government, while the United Nations has also urged to provide information about the disease. On the other hand, World Health Organization (WHO) has expressed concern over the increase in undiagnosed pneumonia cases among Chinese children, while the United Nations said that no new disease has yet emerged but needs to be investigated. Meanwhile, China has responded to the WHO that these cases have been spreading since May this year due to the prevention of Covid, as well as known pathogens such as Mycoplasma pneumoniae, which is a common bacterial infection and mostly affects children. Chinese government also said it is aware of the spread of the disease and has asked the public to take precautions during long waits in crowded places and hospitals, but these are not the same restrictions as Covid.

Violence erupts in Dublin after school knife attack

DUBLIN (AFP/APP): Protesters on Thursday fought running battles with police, torched vehicles and looted shops in Dublin, after three young children were injured in a knife attack outside a school. Police in riot gear stood guard on the streets in the Irish capital as crowds taunted them with chants and set off fireworks. Near O'Connell Bridge, over the River Liffey, flames rose from a torched car and bus, while crowds broke into stores and looted goods on one of the city's main shopping streets. The unrest—the worst in Dublin in years—came after a five-year-old girl sustained serious injuries in a suspected stabbing in Parnell Square East, north central Dublin. Two other children and two adults—a woman and the suspected perpetrator of the attack—were taken to hospital after the incident shortly after 1:30 pm (1330 GMT). Police chief Drew Harris blamed the unrest on a "complete lunatic faction driven by far-right ideology", e warned against "misinformation" as rumours spread on social media about the suspected attacker's nationality. One protester told AFP that "Irish people are being attacked by these scum." Ireland has been facing a chronic housing crisis, with the government estimating that there is a deficit of hundreds of thousands of homes for the general population. But widespread dissatisfaction has fed into a backlash against asylum seekers and refugees, and far-right figures have promoted anti-immigration sentiment at rallies and on social media with claims that "Ireland is full".



Flames rise from the car and a bus, set alight at the junction of Bachelors Walk and the O'Connell Bridge, in Dublin

Afghanistan permanently shuts down its embassy in India

NEW DELHI The Afghanistan embassy has announced its permanent closure in Indian capital New Delhi and as of now there are no diplomats from the Afghan Republic in Delhi, reported Indian news agency ANI. Releasing an official statement on the closure of its diplomatic mission in New Delhi, the Afghan embassy said, "Effective from November 23, 2023, owing to persistent challenges from the Indian government. The decision follows the embassy's earlier cessation of operations on September 30, a move made in the hope that the Indian government stance will favourably change to let the mission operate normally." The embassy said it was "cognizant" that some may attempt to characterize this move as an internal conflict, allegedly involving diplomats who switched allegiance to the Taliban, adding "that this decision is a result of broader changes in policy and interests." "To the Afghan citizens in India, the embassy extends its sincere gratitude for their understanding and support throughout our mission's tenure," it added. Despite "limitations in resources and power", the Afghan embassy said it has worked "tirelessly for their betterment and in the absence of a legitimate government in Kabul". Over the past two years and three months, the Afghan community in India has witnessed a significant decline, with Afghan refugees, students, and traders leaving the country, the embassy noted in its statement, adding that the number has nearly halved since August 2021, with very limited new visas being issued during this period. "We assure the Afghan community that the mission operated with transparency, accountability, and a commitment to fair treatment based on the goodwill and interests of Afghanistan considering historic ties and bilateral relations with India," it added. "Unfortunately, efforts have been made to tarnish our image and hinder diplomatic efforts in order to justify the presence and work of Taliban-appointed and affiliated diplomats.

Tourism promotion campaign Visit Laos Year 2024 officially launched

VIENTIANE (Xinhua/APP): The Visit Laos Year 2024 tourism promotion campaign kicked off in Lao capital Vientiane on Thursday, expected to create a vibrant atmosphere for economic stimulation. Speaking at the opening ceremony, Lao Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone said the government views Visit Laos Year as a crucial and meaningful event, especially after the tourism industry was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's program takes the theme "A Paradise of Culture, Nature and History" with the mascot of an elephant holding a khaen, a Lao traditional musical instrument, as a symbol of good luck and prosperity. Sonexay urged concerted efforts nationwide "in hosting Visit Laos Year by assisting and providing services to visitors from around the world with warm smiles and open hearts." "This is an opportunity to showcase Laos' rich culture and traditions to the world, to create a memorable experience for visitors, and encourage them to revisit Laos in the future," he added. Also speaking at the ceremony, Lao Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism Suanesavanh Vignaket, who is also deputy head of the national committee responsible for Visit Laos Year 2024, said another goal of Visit Laos Year 2024 is to create a vibrant atmosphere for economic stimulation, both directly and indirectly, across all sectors. According to her, Visit Laos Year 2024 will feature 79 major events and activities, including 14 at the national level and 65 at the provincial level. "Visit Laos Year 2024 is one of the most important events in Laos. Apart from promoting tourism, it aims to conserve the country's arts, culture and traditions as well as inform visitors about Laos' long history and the sustainable use of its natural resources," Suanesavanh added.

