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# Pak opens 3 new border crossings to deport Afghans in ongoing crackdown

QUETTA, Nov 13 (AP)

PAKISTAN on Monday opened three new border crossings to expedite the deportation of Afghans living in the country illegally, officials said.

Nearly 3,00,000 Afghans have left Pakistan in recent weeks since authorities started arresting and deporting foreign nationals without papers after the Oct. 31 deadline for migrants without legal status to leave the country voluntarily. The expulsions mostly affect Afghans, who make up the majority of foreigners in Pakistan. It has drawn criticism from the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan as well as

human rights organisations.

The number of border crossings used to deport thousands of Afghans rose to five after the new facilities were opened in southwestern Balochistan province, said Jan Achakzai, the caretaker provincial Information Minister. Currently, about 15,000 Afghans have been crossing the border everyday from Pakistan. Before the crackdown, around 300 people were crossing each day.

International aid agencies have documented chaotic and desperate scenes among Afghans who have returned from Pakistan. Achakzai said police in Balochistan in recent days had arrested more than

1,500 Afghans who had no valid documents. A prominent Pakistani human rights lawyer, Moniza Kakar, said in the southern port city of Karachi that police had launched midnight raids on homes and detained Afghan families, including women and children.

The head of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Hina Jilani, said Pakistan lacks a comprehensive mechanism to handle refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants without papers, despite hosting Afghans for 40 years. Violence against Pakistani security forces and civilians has surged since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan two years ago.

# Nepal Government bans **Tiktok**

■ **By Shirish B. Pradhan**  
KATHMANDU, Nov 13 (ITI)

THE Nepal Government on Monday decided to ban the Chinese-owned social network platform Tiktok, citing its negative effects on social harmony. According to Government spokesperson and Minister for Communication and Information Technology, Rekha Sharma, Monday's Cabinet meeting decided to prohibit TikTok's use.

The decision to ban Tiktok will be implemented through the Ministry of Communication and IT, she said. The Nepal Government

decided to ban Tiktok due to its negative effects on social harmony, The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported.

A Cabinet meeting on Thursday made it mandatory for social media sites such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok and YouTube, among others, to open their liaison offices in Nepal.

Although freedom of expression is a basic right, a large section of society has criticised TikTok for encouraging a tendency of hate speech, the government said.

In the past four years, 1,647 cases of cybercrime have been reported on the video-sharing

app, the report said. The Cyber Bureau of the Nepal Police, Ministry of Home Affairs, and representatives of TikTok discussed the issue earlier last week. Monday's decision is expected to be enforced following the completion of technical preparations, it said.

Sharma clarified the decision to shut down Tiktok will be implemented promptly by setting a specific deadline.

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# Retail inflation eases to 4-month low of 4.87 per cent in October

NEW DELHI, Nov 13 (PTI)

CONTINUING the downward trend, retail inflation slipped to a four-month low of 4.87 per cent in October, mainly due to easing food prices and inched towards the Reserve Bank's target of 4 per cent, according to Government data released on Monday.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based retail inflation fell to a three-month low of 5.02 per cent in September. The inflation was recorded at 4.87 per cent in June.

The Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), in its October meeting, projected CPI inflation at 5.4 per cent for 2023-24, a moderation from 6.7 per cent in 2022-23.

The Government has tasked the RBI to ensure the CPI inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side. The central bank mainly factors in the retail inflation while arriving at its bi-monthly monetary policy.

Retail inflation has been on the



decline after it touched a high of 7.44 per cent in July in the current fiscal. As per the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the inflation in the food basket was 6.61 per cent, marginally down from 6.62 per cent in September and 7 per cent in the year-ago month. The inflation in the 'oil and fat' segment declined by 13.73 per cent, while it remained subdued in the case of vegetables, meat and fish, and 'light and fuel'.

Among states, the inflation was above 6 per cent in Odisha, Rajasthan and Haryana.

Inflation in states like Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab ruled above the national average of 4.87

per cent. The lowest inflation was witnessed in Chhattisgarh and Delhi. On a national level, the retail inflation was 5.12 per cent in rural areas and 4.62 per cent in urban India.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at Icria, said that while the uptick in foodgrain prices following an uneven Monsoon has manifested in prices in October, higher prices of some vegetables like onions would be partly absorbed by the typical seasonal downtrend in many other vegetables, offering some respite.

"We expect the MPC to maintain a hawkish tone amidst a status quo on the rates and stance in its upcoming policy meeting. We see the earliest likelihood of a rate cut in August 2024, when a shallow rate cut cycle of 50-75 bps could commence," she said. Upasna Bhardwaj, Chief Economist, Kotak Mahindra Bank, said the moderation in inflation provides some relief, especially as the core inflation has remained comfortable.

# 2nd Chinese vessel carrying ship-to-shore crane for Vizhinjam port docks at facility

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Nov 13 (PTI)

A SECOND Chinese vessel carrying a ship-to-shore crane for the international deep-sea facility at Vizhinjam here docked at the port on Monday, sources at the port said.

The ship, Zhen Hua 29, had reached the Kerala coast on November 9 and was awaiting clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to berth at the dock, the sources said.

The MHA's nod to berth was received on Monday and the vessel docked at the port at

around 3 pm, they said.

In addition to the one ship-to-shore crane meant for Vizhinjam port, the ship was also carrying several yard cranes for Mundra port, the sources said. After offloading the ship-to-shore crane, the vessel will leave for Mundra port in Gujarat, they said.

The first ship to arrive at the port, which is being constructed at a cost of Rs 7,700 crore, was Zhen Hua 15 and it carried two-yard cranes and a ship-to-shore crane for the deep-water facility.

All three cranes have been

successfully offloaded and installed, the sources said.

The Vizhinjam port is being constructed under the public-private partnership model.

The Adani Group is the private partner in the development of what will become one of the largest ports in the world, once commissioned.

The project, scheduled to be commissioned in 2019, was delayed due to issues with land acquisition. Fishermen carried out violent protests opposing it, alleging that the port would adversely affect their livelihood.

# Landmark pact on anvil to curb plastic pollution

NAIROBI, Nov 13 (AP)

EFFORTS to create a landmark treaty to end global plastic pollution advance on Monday in Nairobi as most of the world's nations, plus petrochemical companies, environmentalists and others affected by the pollution gather to discuss draft language for the first time.

It's the third gathering in a compressed five-meeting schedule intended to complete negotiations by the end of next year. Power dynamics and positions became clear in the first

two rounds of talks in Paris and Punta del Este, Uruguay and echo some of the same positions as in international climate talks, and with good reason - many of the players are the same. Plastic is largely made from crude oil and natural gas, giving oil-producing countries and companies have a large stake in any treaty.

Global negotiators last met in Paris in June and agreed to produce initial treaty text before reconvening in Nairobi. The draft was published in early September. The UN

Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution is charged with developing the first international, legally binding treaty on plastic pollution on land and at sea.

Nairobi is a significant location to host this third session, as the East African country is a global leader in fighting plastic pollution. In a groundbreaking move in 2017, Kenya banned the manufacture, sale and use of single-use plastic bags, which were hugely popular for carrying things but were also strewn across the land-

scape. In what is one of the strictest bans on the products, lawbreakers face fines and up to four years in jail.

Two years later, Kenya banned single-use plastic like cutlery, straws and PET bottles from parks, forests, beaches and other protected areas. Kenya is also an important player in environmental matters as home to United Nations Environment Programme headquarters. Kenya generates more than 70% of its electricity from renewable sources.

Church leaders throughout

Africa issued an open letter this month through the charity Tearfund saying that Africa faces "mountains of plastic pollution, dumped or burnt," and called on their delegates to continue to speak out boldly "for a treaty which delivers change for our most vulnerable brothers and sisters." In Nairobi, Norway and Rwanda are leading a "high ambition coalition" of Governments that want to end plastic pollution by 2040 by cutting production and limiting some chemicals used in making plastics.

# China, Pakistan navies hold drills in Arabian Sea

KARACHI, Nov 13 (PTI)

THE Chinese and Pakistani navies are holding week-long drills in the Arabian Sea during which the two all-weather allies will also conduct joint maritime patrols for the first time, a media report said on Monday.

The Chinese and Pakistani navies at a naval base in Karachi on Saturday kicked off the 'Sea Guardians-3' exercise in the waters and airspace of the northern Arabian Sea in drills that include anti-submarine operations, 'Dawn News' reported on the exercises which will end on Friday.

During the exercise, China

and Pakistan will conduct joint maritime patrols for the first time, Senior Colonel Wu Qian, spokesperson for China's Ministry of National Defence, said.

With the theme of "joint response to maritime security threats," the exercise will include formation movement, VBSS (visit, board, search and seizure), helicopter cross-deck landing, search and rescue, anti-submarine operations, Wu was quoted as saying by China Military News website in a recent report.

He said some professional exchanges and mutual visits will also be included as part of the exercises.