

### ECP receives Rs18b

ISLAMABAD (INP): The election commission of Pakistan (ECP) has received 18 billion rupees for general election. Sources said on Saturday that the amount of 18 billion rupees has been provided to the ECP for pre-election expenditures. The ECP has decided to spend the received amount for holding elections in KP. The ECP has sent new estimate of election expenditures as due to holding separate general elections in two assemblies.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX

No. 06

Regd. No. 241

JAMADI-US-SANNI 29 1444 -- SUNDAY, JANUARY 22 2023

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

Price. 20



PESHAWAR: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali administering oath from caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan.

## FIA gives clean chit to Suleman Shehbaz

LAHORE (Agencies): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Saturday gave a clean chit to Suleman Shehbaz, son of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in the Rs16 billion money laundering case. Suleman, who returned to Pakistan earlier in December after four years of self-exile in London, was named in the corruption case registered with the FIA. His father PM Shehbaz, and brother Hamza Shabbaz had already been acquitted in the case.

A special court in Lahore granted interim bail to Suleman in the money laundering case on December 23, 2022 against bail bonds worth Rs100,000 after he filed a bail plea stating that the court needed to fulfil legal procedures before declaring him an absconder. Prior to his return to Pakistan, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had restrained FIA from arresting him. During today's hearing at the special court (central), the investigation agency submitted a supplementary challan, stating Suleman and co-accused Tahir Naqvi were "not found guilty". The court was hearing Suleman's pre-arrest bail plea. However, during the hearing, advocate Amjad Parvez informed the court that Suleman and Naqvi wanted to withdraw their bail pleas submitted earlier.

## CTD arrests five terrorists

LAHORE (PPI): In a significant success against terrorism, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Punjab has nabbed five alleged terrorists belonging to TTP and SS during covert operations from three districts of Punjab on Saturday.

Arrests were made from Lahore, Bahawalpur and Sheikhupura. Mehmood Musa was arrested from Lahore while other alleged militants apprehended from other two districts were identified as Abdul Hannan, Rehmat Ali, Muawia and Muhammad Arabi. Officials said arrested terrorist from Lahore Muhammad Musa has links with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and enjoys an important role in the banned outfit. After registration of four cases against arrested terrorists, they have been shifted to undisclosed location for interrogation.

Officials further said that these terrorists had planned to carry out attacks in Punjab on a big scale. They said, under directions from IGP Punjab, 97 suspects were apprehended during 458 combing operations and 52 were booked in this regard. The arrested militants will be brought to their logical end, they said.

# Govt attaches significance to freedom of press: PM

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the government attached high importance to the freedom of the press and media for transparency and accountability.

The prime minister stressed upon enhancement of bilateral ties in the field of journalism between Pakistan and Germany. The prime minister expressed

these views during a call on by a three-member delegation of the German Press Federation led by its President Christian Zarm, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb, PM's Special Assistance Syed Fahad Hussain, secretary of the ministry of information and other officials. The

prime minister directed the ministry of information to initiate work in collaboration with the German Press Federation for the purpose of establishment of a training facility to exchange professional skills on a public-private partnership basis. The prime minister also welcomed a proposal of the delegation regarding the exchange of professional delegations between the two countries.

Since 2013, the CPEC has added a new dimension to the two countries' multifaceted economic relations, especially in energy, infrastructure, trade and investment, the foreign minister said. This cooperation has expanded to include the areas of agriculture, socio-economic development, science and technology and IT, he added.

In the future, CPEC will not only provide opportunities for China and Pakistan, but also for third parties from around the world. Bilawal Bhutto said he is also keen to expand cooperation with China on renewable energies and the fight against climate change. "In renewables, Pakistan and China have undertaken a number of major solar, wind, and hydroelectric projects. We also welcome Chinese enterprises to join Pakistan's Solar Power Initiative, which seeks to respond to human-induced climate change, notwithstanding Pakistan's own negligible contributions," he said. The Annual WEF Meeting 2023 was held in Davos, Switzerland, from Jan. 16-20, under the theme of "Cooperation in a Fragmented World."

# Pakistan's trade with China to reach new heights: FM

BEIJING (APP): Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that the bilateral trade relationship with China is expected to flourish further, thanks to the win-win cooperation between both countries in the fight against climate change and investments in renewable energy.

Over the last 71 years, successive generations of leaders have nurtured bilateral ties between Pakistan and China, he said in an exclusive interview with Xinhua at the World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland this week. "Our relationship is based on mutual respect, trust and understanding. Both countries support each other on issues of core interest. Pakistan and China believe in promoting regional peace and stability and share a common dream of national development and prosperity," he said.

Pakistan-China relations have also grown thanks to new initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) proposed by China in 2013, he said. The foreign minister emphasized that Pakistan and China today have a multi-faceted partnership.

"We have robust strategic and defense cooperation. Our economic and trade relations are rapidly

advancing, ... entering a new phase with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Our financial, investment and industrial sectors maintain close links," he said. "China has become the top destination for Pakistan's students and there are strong links between our people nurtured by artists, academia, the scientific community and the media," he said.

Launched in 2013, the CPEC is a corridor linking Pakistan's Gwadar Port with Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. It is aimed at boosting energy, transport and industrial cooperation. With investments in the country's modern transportation networks including roads and railways, energy projects, ports and special economic zones, the CPEC has provided the opportunity for Pakistan to promote development and economic growth.

Regarding the bilateral trade outlook between China and Pakistan, he said that economic relations are the centerpiece of the Pakistan-China all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. Trade relations with China have exceeded pre-pandemic levels, he added. "China is among our top export markets and the largest source of foreign direct investment. Both our

countries also have an extensive Free Trade Agreement (CPFTA) that is contributing to our wide-ranging economic relationship."

Since 2013, the CPEC has added a new dimension to the two countries' multifaceted economic relations, especially in energy, infrastructure, trade and investment, the foreign minister said. This cooperation has expanded to include the areas of agriculture, socio-economic development, science and technology and IT, he added.

In the future, CPEC will not only provide opportunities for China and Pakistan, but also for third parties from around the world. Bilawal Bhutto said he is also keen to expand cooperation with China on renewable energies and the fight against climate change. "In renewables, Pakistan and China have undertaken a number of major solar, wind, and hydroelectric projects. We also welcome Chinese enterprises to join Pakistan's Solar Power Initiative, which seeks to respond to human-induced climate change, notwithstanding Pakistan's own negligible contributions," he said. The Annual WEF Meeting 2023 was held in Davos, Switzerland, from Jan. 16-20, under the theme of "Cooperation in a Fragmented World."

# Alvi takes notice of online bank fraud incidents

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has taken serious notice of the rising trend of online banking frauds where fraudsters obtain the contact details of bank clients and impersonate bank officials to obtain account and banking information from them, and using such details swindle money out of their bank accounts.

While expressing concern over the news reports about an online bank fraud wherein renowned novelist and playwright, Mirza Athar Baig, was deprived of Rs 1.1 million from his bank account by an online fraudster, the President said that it was upsetting that

fraudulent activities and practices were on the rise in the banking sector despite the fact that hundreds of such fraud cases had been decided by the President through the Banking Mohtasib of Pakistan (BMP) and relief had been provided to the affected of online frauds.

The President directed the Banking Mohtasib of Pakistan to take serious and strong notice of this worrisome trend and take substantive, meaningful, and effective steps to put in place appropriate checks and balances and foolproof security systems by using technology capable of differentiating between genuine and fraudulent transaction attempts to curb this

menace on an urgent basis.

He also stressed the need to bring about structured and systematic improvements in online banking mechanisms to immediately identify fraudulent persons and take strong exemplary punitive actions against them. The President emphasized that all the banks should collectively launch an awareness campaign through all forms of media, conventional and digital, to educate bank customers about the secure use of online banking platforms, besides ensuring compliance with the State Bank of Pakistan's directions and prescribed SOPs regarding the use of online banking facilities with ease, comfort, and security.

## Imran failed to prove even single allegation: Marriyum

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Saturday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan remained in power for four years but could not prove a single allegation of corruption or wrongdoing against his political opponents.

Giving her reaction to Imran Khan's statement, the minister said that in the Imran era, the political opponents were put behind the bars by blackmailing the National Accountability Bureau Chairman, but the allegations proved false in the courts, as they could not present a single evidence.

The minister while referring to the ouster of Imran from power corridors, said that now the country had been purged from the mafia and robbers. Now just terming the opponents as thieves will not work, despite four years of all power Imran Khan had not been able to prove a single charge, she said adding all the courts of Pakistan threw his allegations in the dustbin.

The minister said that England's National Crime Agency (NCA) and the British court also rejected Imran's allegations. The PML-N leadership submitted 40 years of record and not even one charge was proved in the court, she maintained.

Taking a jibe at Imran, she said even if he established a court in Bani Gala and himself became a judge and a lawyer too, still, false accusations would not be proved. She held Imran guilty of inflation, debt, economic collapse and unemployment problems being faced by the nation today.

## 'Ruling troika directly responsible for inflation'

LAHORE (INP): Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Sirajul Haq has held the ruling troika directly responsible for inflation and collapse of the national economy. Addressing a protest rally against skyrocketing inflation at The Mall Lahore on Saturday, he reminded the PDM and the PPP about their anti-inflation rallies and long marches, questioning both about their performance since April.

Sirajul Haq said there was continuation in the policies of the incumbent government of the PDM and the former government of the PTI. He said the ruling elite was in consensus that they would keep the people deprived even from basic needs. Careless of the fact that common man was standing in queues to purchase a bag of flour, the rulers were badly engaged in their fight for the protection of self-interest. He linked the inflation, poverty and economic disaster to the corruption and unfair distribution of national resources. Had there been a strong system of accountability, majority of the so-called leaders of the main political parties would have been in prison, he said.

The JI chief said the governments had never used foreign loans for public welfare or set the direction of the national economy. Instead, he added, the money went to the pockets of the rulers. Instead of putting burden on the public, the ruling parties and their leaders should have paid the public debt from their own accounts. He said the rulers looted the resources and made the country a laughing stock in all over the world. Pakistan, he said, was gifted with enormous resources but the issue was their fair distribution.

Siraj said the ruling troika was badly exposed and failed to fix the problems. They had been given opportunity to serve the country repeatedly but they disappointed the masses on every occasion, he said.

# Azam Khan takes oath as caretaker KP CM

Ishaq Khan

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Azam Khan took oath as the caretaker Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), on Saturday. KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali administered oath to Azam Khan, who was nominated for the post unanimously by the government and opposition a day earlier, at a ceremony held in Governor House.

Earlier in the day, the governor signed an order to appoint Khan at the coveted post on the recommendation of outgoing Chief Minister Mahmood Khan and leader of opposition Akram Durrani.

On Friday, the name of Azam Khan was unanimously agreed upon in the meeting held to finalize the

appointment of the province's caretaker CM. "Azam Khan is our consensus candidate for the post of caretaker chief minister. We have chosen a person who is acceptable to all," said Akram Khan Durrani.

KP Chief Minister Mahmood Khan said the name of a caretaker chief minister was unanimously agreed upon for the first time in history. Mahmood Khan announced that both sides picked Azam Khan for being a person who is acceptable to all, and further mentioned PTI nominated him after consulting with party leadership.

The recent development comes days after the provincial legislature of KP stood dissolved after the governor signed the CM's

summary for the dissolution of the KP assembly.

Former bureaucrat Muhammad Azam Khan completed his education at the University of Peshawar, and then went to Lincoln's Inn, London to complete his Barrister-at-Law degree.

He served in the Government of Pakistan for years. During his service, he holds crucial portfolios in the Finance, Planning & Development Department and Federal Secretary Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Resources, and Federal Secretary Ministry of Religious Affairs. Azam Khan also served as the Chief Secretary and Secretary of different ministries in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

# Two policemen martyred in Charsadda terror attack

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Two police personnel have been martyred in a terrorist attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Charsadda district, police confirmed Saturday.

In the latest attack on law enforcers, the terrorists opened fire at a police checkpoint on Nowshera Road in Dheri Zardad, Charsadda District Police Officer Sohail Khalid told media. The attack left three policemen injured, who were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital. However, two policemen succumbed to their injuries while one was under treatment, the police said.

According to police, the terrorists escaped the site of the attack following a retaliatory fire during which one of them was also injured, search for whom is current-

ly underway. Following the attack, a heavy police contingent reached the site and began the search operation on a large scale, the police said.

Martyred policemen include constables Imran and Rameez, while the third law enforcer Yousuf Ali was shifted to Peshawar due to critical injuries. The Dheri Zardad attack comes as Pakistan fights rising terror attacks — especially by the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and from across the Afghan border. According to reports, the TTP regrouped in Afghanistan after the Taliban's takeover, with Pakistan repeatedly asking the interim government in the neighbouring country to ensure that its soil isn't used for terrorism. But the Taliban-led government has not been able to live up to

the expectations. Meanwhile, former President of Pakistan and President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Asif Ali Zardari has strongly condemned the terror attack at a police station in Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a statement, President Zardari expressed his concern over the increase in the terror attacks on the police force in KP. He said that the police officers and jawans will continue to defeat the terrorists' design. President Zardari paid rich tributes to the police officers and jawans. President Zardari said that the federal and KP governments should take strict measures to defeat terrorists. Asif Ali Zardari expressed sympathy and condolences to the families of the martyred policemen.

# Mayor election: PML-N throws weight behind PPP

KARACHI (Agencies): As the tug of war for the Karachi mayor slot intensified amid rigging allegations, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Saturday announced to lend its fullest support to Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) — its allied party in the centre. PML-N Sindh President Shah Muhammad Shah made the announcement during a press conference in Karachi alongside Sindh Minister for Labour and Human Resources Saeed Ghani.

During the meeting, both sides decided to work together as allied parties in Sindh, just like in the centre, and cooperate with each other not just for the upcoming mayoral election but also for all upcoming by-elections and the next general polls in the province. Talking to journalists after the meeting, Ghani said that every successful political party had the desire to clinch the Karachi mayoral position. "But as per the moral principle, the single largest party has the first claim on this post," he added.

He reiterated the stance of

his party that the PPP had emerged as the single largest political party after local government polls in Karachi. He said the PPP had the desire to take along Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) as the people of Karachi had also reposed confidence in the JI. "We need to work together to serve the residents of Karachi in the best possible manner," he said. He expressed gratitude to the PML-N for offering support to the PPP for the upcoming election for mayor of the city. Ghani hoped that the PPP would get support from other political parties as well for the mayoral poll.

To a question, Ghani said that PPP, with 96 seats, had emerged as the single-largest party in Karachi, while JI is runner-up with 83 seats. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has won 43 seats while PML-N secured eight seats in the latest polls. He said that the next mayor of Karachi would function according to the powers prescribed for the mayoral position in the provincial local government law. "We don't have the powers for the mayor in our pockets," said Ghani while

responding to JI's criticism about mayoral powers.

To another question, Ghani said that it was their foremost desire to jointly work with the JI in the local government set-up of Karachi. For his part, the PML-N Sindh president said that both parties had agreed to work together for the development and progress of Karachi. He said that both parties had agreed to nominate the candidate for Karachi's mayor on a meritorious basis. He hoped that rest all the stakeholders would also provide support in this regard.

He mentioned that PML-N and PPP had jointly contested the latest local government elections in a number of union committees in the city as this alliance would continue in the upcoming by-elections and general polls in the province. JI, which is trailing behind the PPP, has alleged that the polls were rigged. JI Karachi Emir Hafiz Naem Ur Rehman has demanded repolling in the city but has maintained that his party could work with the PPP, despite their difference.

# Former PML-N lawmaker Pir Aminul Hasnat joins PTI

F.P. Report

SARGODHA: Former PML-N lawmaker Pir Aminul Hasnat Shah — a renowned political figure in Central Punjab — announced on Saturday that he has joined the PTI. The development was made public in a press conference by PTI leaders Asad Umar, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Fawad Chaudhry and Hasnat in Sargodha's Bhera city.

While announcing his decision to switch allegiances, Hasnat said that over the years "a number of

reasons kept coming up [to leave PML-N] and then a few things came to light." He went on to say that Qureshi was a highly respected person in his family. "We always look up to him as the head of the family." "I pray that my upcoming journey of life and politics will be spent in a good manner so that no one has any complaints when [I'm] going," he added.

Meanwhile, introducing the new party member, Qureshi said that he shared "spiritual and cordial" relations with Hasnat's family

for a long period of time. "He has both the political and religious experience that adds to the list of his services for the country," he added. Umar, on the other hand, expressed hope that Hasnat's addition will help the party strengthen its political hold in the region around Sargodha and other areas of Central Punjab. Chaudhry welcomed Hasnat and said in a tweet, "Pir sahab and his family has influence across Pakistan, including Sargodha and Rawalpindi divisions, and overseas as well."

### Naan, Roti prices set to rise

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Muttahida Naan Roti Association in the garrison city has announced to further increase prices of Naan and Roti from January 22 (Sunday) on Saturday. Naan will be sold at Rs 30 and Roti at Rs16. The association's general secretary Waheed Abbasi lamented that the district administration had failed to provide cheap flour (both brown and fine).





# ‘Women’s education, empowerment vital to country’s development’

## F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman said on Saturday that education and empowerment of women was vital for development of the country.

Speaking as the chief guest at Pakistan Tech HR Fest. 2023 at a local hotel, he said that in previous tenures of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), several measures including distribution of laptops among students on merit were taken for students in the universities to promote IT education among the

youth.

The governor said that under the Digital Pakistan Policy, establishment of software technology parks, marketing of local products at international level, internship and trainings were conducted, which increased the exports of IT products.

He said, “Our women are working side by side with men in every field of life and even in higher educational institutions, our daughters are performing better than boys.” He said that quota was allocated for women in government jobs and also they were empow-

ered financially so that they could contribute to development of the country.

Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman said that as the Punjab governor, he had formed consortia on IT education as well as women empowerment. Through these forums, he added, suggestions would be sought on strengthening links between universities and industries, women’s education and their empowerment. He said that viable suggestions presented in these consortia would be forwarded to the federal

and provincial governments for inclusion in the policies.

The governor said that in the past, projects like ‘Women on wheels’ were started for working women and effective legislation had been made for protection of women.

He said that steps had also been taken to encourage woman entrepreneurs, while 30 per cent quota had been allocated for woman entrepreneurs in national incubation centres established at the federal and provincial levels.

## Salman appointed as CEO

LAHORE (APP): The service of Pakistan Railways Chief Executive Officer Salman Sadiq Sheikh has been regularized by the prime minister office.

Pakistan Railways spokesperson said on Saturday that Salman Sadiq, a BS-21 officer of Mechanical Engineering Department of Railways, presently working as General Manager (BS-21) and looking after the post of CEO/Sr GM (BS-22), has been appointed as the CEO (Grade 22) on current charge basis for three months.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggur. Case No.263/1. Institution 8/3/2022. Date of hearing. 23/1/2023. Abdul Mateen VS Zarjamel etc. Notice to no.6.Shah Feeoz. 11.Aman Khan sons of Muzafar resident of Bar Kalay thesl Gagra district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 23/1/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my

## Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Halem Civil Judge V /Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggur. Suit No 285 /1, Institution 1/9/2022 Date of hearing. 4/2/2023. Bakht Bibi VS Mera Khan. Declaration Suit Notice to no .1. Mera Khan son of Nasren. 7. Bakht Zaren son of Sar Zamen resident of Hesar thesl Daggur district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 4/2/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

## Name Change

I have changed my name from Maish Sagheer to Armaghan Shaheen. In the future I should be written and called by a new name. Armaghan Shaheen D/o Muhammad Sagheer R/o Mohalla Main Badshah District Kohat.

# Ruling troika directly responsible for inflation, collapse of economy

LAHORE (INP): Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Sirajul Haq has held the ruling troika directly responsible for inflation and collapse of the national economy.

Addressing a protest rally against skyrocketing inflation at The Mall Lahore on Saturday, he reminded the PDM and the PPP about their anti-inflation rallies and long marches, questioning both about their performance since April.

Sirajul Haq said there was continuation in the policies of the incumbent government of the PDM and the former government of the PTI.

He said the ruling elite was in consensus that they would keep the people deprived even from basic needs.

Careless of the fact that common man was standing in queues to purchase a bag of flour, the rulers were badly engaged in their fight for the protection of self-interest.

He linked the inflation, poverty and economic disaster to the corruption and unfair distribution of national resources. Had there been a strong system of accountability, majority of the so-called leaders of the main political parties would have been in prison, he said.

The JI chief said the

governments had never used foreign loans for public welfare or set the direction of the national economy.

Instead, he added, the money went to the pockets of the rulers. Instead of putting burden on the public, the ruling parties and their leaders should have paid the public debt from their own accounts.

He said the rulers looted

the resources and made the country a laughing stock in all over the world.

Pakistan, he said, was gifted with enormous resources but the issue was their fair distribution.

Siraj said the ruling troika was badly exposed and failed to fix the problems.

They had been given opportunity to serve the country repeatedly but

they disappointed the masses on every occasion, he said.

The JI chief added the country needed honest and capable leadership and only the JI had the ability to put Pakistan on track.

He appealed to the people to vote for the JI in coming election instead of father testing the already tested troika.

## Government of Pakistan Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) Geological Survey of Pakistan Tel: 0919217075, Fax: 0919217023

## INVITATION FOR BIDS

- Geological survey of Pakistan an attached department of Ministry of Energy, (Petroleum Division), invites sealed bids on, single stage two envelopes, under Work Deposit project titled "Geological Mapping and Placer Gold Exploration of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa", from original Authorized Company/Contractors/Individual Consultant etc., registered with income tax and sales tax departments, for the following services.
- THE COMPANIES/CONTRACTORS/INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT REQUIRED FOR GEOLOGICAL DRONE SURVEY SERVICES ALONG INDUS RIVER IN SELECTED AREAS OF SWABI, NOWSHERA AND KOHAT DISTRICTS OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA.**
- The Tender documents containing detailed terms and conditions, technical specifications etc. are available for the interested bidders at the office of the **Project Director, Geological Survey of Pakistan, Plot No.10-11, Sector B-1, Phase V, Hayatabad, Peshawar**, during working hours, except Saturday and Sunday. The price of tender documents is PK. Rs.2000/- non-refundable in term of Pay order/Bank Draft in favor of **Project Director, Geological Survey of Pakistan, Peshawar**. The last date for bid submission is **07-02-2023** at **12:00** hours and it will be opened on the next day at **11:00** hours.
- The proposals prepared must be in accordance with the tender documents, and the competent authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids in accordance with the provision of the prevailing PPRA rules/regulations. This advertisement is also available on PPRA and GSP website [www.ppra.org.pk](http://www.ppra.org.pk) and [www.gsp.gov.pk](http://www.gsp.gov.pk) respectively.

## Project Director

Geological Survey of Pakistan, Peshawar

PID(P)# 020/2023

## GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

Phone No: 0946-613262, Email: [swatminizoo@gmail.com](mailto:swatminizoo@gmail.com)

## NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Project Director/Conservator Wildlife Mini Zoo Swat invites Bids from eligible firms/bidders in accordance with KPPRA Procurement Rules-2014 on Single Stage Two Envelopes Procedure for the following works:

S#	Name of Work	Required Category of PEC	Bid Security	Period of completion	Last date of submission of Bid & Time	Date of opening of Technical Bid
<b>Summer House Malam Jabba</b>						
1	<b>Package No. 01 (Balance Work)</b> 1- External Water Supply and Sewerage 2- Construction of Boundary wall 3- Construction of Leopard House	C-4 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
2	<b>Package No. 02 (Balance Work)</b> 1- External Electrification 2- Construction of Monkey House 3- Construction of Office Building	C-4 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
3	<b>Package No. 03 (Balance Work)</b> 1- Construction of Pheasantry 2- Construction of Store, Staff Barack, Public Toilets, Tuck Shop & watch Towers	C-4 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
4	<b>Package No. 04 (Balance Work)</b> 1- Developmental Works 2- Construction of Herbivores Cages 3- Construction of Main Gate & Ticketing Booths	C-4 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
<b>Swat Mini Zoo Kanju Township Campus</b>						
1	<b>Package-2</b> Construction of Veterinary Compound (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
2	<b>Package-4</b> Construction of Boundary wall & Road Phase 2 Side (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
3	<b>Package-5</b> Construction of Boundary wall & Phase 1 Side (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
4	<b>Package-7</b> Construction of Stores, Staff Barak's, Public Toilets & Tuck Shop (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
5	<b>Package-9</b> Construction of Bear House (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
6	<b>Package-13</b> Construction of African Loin House (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
7	<b>Package-15</b> Construction of Cafeteria (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
8	<b>Package-20</b> Construction of Parrot Houses (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
9	<b>Package-21</b> Construction of seven No. Severity huts or watch towers (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
10	<b>Package-22</b> Construction of walk-Through Bird Aviary (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
11	<b>Package-25</b> External Electrification (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
12	<b>Package-28</b> Construction of Water Fowls House (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
13	<b>Package-29</b> Construction of Kids Park (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
14	<b>Package-30</b> Developmental Works (Balance Work)	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
15	<b>Package-N-1</b> Development and Improvement of Access Path from Main Gate to Ticketing Booths (New Work) "Kanju"	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
16	<b>Package-N-2</b> Construction and Development of Podium (New Work) "Kanju"	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
17	<b>Package-N-3</b> Construction of PCC Drian back side of Boundary Wall Phase-I Side (New Work) "Kanju"	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
18	<b>Package-N-4</b> Development of Drip Irrigation System and installation of Sprinkles to avoid heat stroke and ensure efficiency of water use (New Work) "Kanju"	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs
19	<b>Package-N-5</b> Construction of PCC Access Road of Summer House (New Work) "Malam Jabba"	C-5 & Above	2% of Engineer Estimate	As per work order	21-02-23 At 12:00 Hrs	On Same Day At 14:00 Hrs

01. Interested firms/contractors must provide the following information with their application/Bidding documents:  
i) Photocopy of National Identity card. ii) Valid and Active Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council in the relevant category. iii) Ownership Deeds/Documents. iv) Active registration status with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority and Federal Board of Revenue. v) Technical and Management Staff Bio Data. vi) Detail of completed works during last five years. vii) Detail of completed works of similar nature like Zoos, Pheasantries and Wildlife Parks during last five years. viii) Detail of related T&P and Machinery. ix) Financial Status with Bank Statement and auditor's report for last three years. x) Affidavit of Non-involvement in any court case with the department. xi) Any other documents, which the firms may consider necessary to be considered in the Technical Evaluation. xii) Incomplete/Conditional/Telegraphic applications shall not be entertained. xiii) Application must be signed by authorized person of the firm with official stamp. 02. Instructions to bidders can be seen in detail in the tender documents 03. Matters pertaining to Security:- i). The Contractors quoting their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer estimate shall submit bid security @ 2% only of Engineer Estimate. ii). The Contractor quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 20% below on Engineers Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineers Estimated Cost in addition to 2% bid security; if the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security, then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. iii). Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineers Estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineers Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and/or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. iv). In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof. 04). The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh. 05). In case the bid becomes a tie, the contract shall be decided through a free toss which shall be binding and final. 06). All federal and provincial duties/stamp duty and taxes including sales tax will be recoverable as per directives of the government issued from time to time. 07). Venue of Bids opening is Office of the **Project Director/Conservator Wildlife Mini Zoo Swat Opposite to Passport Office Sector-D Kanju Township Swat**. 08). Tender Documents will be issued to the bidders till 20-02-2023 during office hours 9:00am-5:00 pm (Monday to Friday) against cash payment of Rs.2,000/- (Non-refundable) from IGES International, Engineering Consultants, (Contact Cell and WhatsApp No.0349.6692645). 09). Sealed Bids complete in all respects (Duly signed and stamped on each page) along with bid security as mentioned above in shape of Call Deposit from Schedule Bank in favor of the **Project Director/Conservator Wildlife Mini Zoo Swat** must be submitted as per the procedure laid in the bid documents. 10). Technical and financial Bids should be sealed in separate envelopes clearly marked "Technical Bid and Financial Bid". Complete Bid (both original and duplicate) shall be sealed in one envelope. 11). The Bids must be submitted through Registered courier at the office of the Project Director/Conservator Wildlife Mini Zoo Swat on or before 21/02/2023 at 12:00 hours sharply, to ensure transparency and to safeguard government interest. Bids delivered by hand and after due time will not be accepted. 12). Technical Bids will be opened at the committee Room, in the presence of committee members and representatives of the bidders present at the time. Financial Bids of the technically qualified Bidders will be opened later on. Proper intimation will be made to the qualified Bidders. 13). Any bidder who provides incorrect information/fake documents shall be disqualified, and their disqualification will be communicated to PEC. 14). The Technical Evaluation Report of the bids as made by the Consultant/Department may be explained and clarified to the bidders but it will be acceptable to all bidders and will not be challengeable in any court of law. 15). Wildlife Department may reject all bids at any time prior to its approval.  
For further detail please contact:

## Project Director / Conservator Wildlife Mini Zoo Swat

Address: Opposite to Passport Office Sector-D, Kanju Township Swat

INF(P)# 317/23, The Frontier Post Peshawar, Date: 22-01-23

## PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

## OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME A PART OF PCAA'S PROFESSIONAL TEAM SITUATION VACANT NOTICE NO. 01/2023

Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority requires services of qualified individuals to fill the following vacant posts on **contract basis** for **three (03) years (extendable)** where selection will be made purely on suitability and merit :-

Post	No. of Seats	Prescribed Qualification	Quota & Pay Scale	Age Limit
Director Flight Standards (EG-09)	One (01)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum Intermediate or equivalent from recognized Education Board.</li> <li>Must hold a valid ATPL</li> <li>Not less than 6000 Hrs. as Pilot in-Command of Civil or Military Air Transport Aircraft (above 40,000 Kgs).</li> <li>Flying experience on wide body aircraft is desired and preferred.</li> <li>Should have held previous appointment in Commercial Airline as Examiner (SFE / TRE).</li> <li>At least 20 years of professional experience in the Aviation. Appointments in operational management as an airline pilot/ military transport pilot shall be given preference.</li> <li>Experience of working relationship with industry stakeholders and international aviation organizations shall be given preference.</li> <li>Experience of carrying out statistical analysis of aviation activities and monitoring of airlines reliability program shall be given preference.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merit</li> <li>Lump Sum Package of Rs. 1,400,000/- per month with 05% annual increment</li> </ul>	Maximum 62 years (including all age relaxations)
Flight Inspector Pilot (EG-07)	Five (05)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum Intermediate or equivalent from recognized Education Board.</li> <li>Holding a valid ATPL with a current type rating on one of the Commercial / Military Transport Aircraft Types registered in Pakistan.</li> <li>Not less than 5000 Hrs. as Pilot in-Command of Civil or Military Air Transport Aircraft (above 40,000 kgs).</li> <li>10 years or more experience in Commercial Airline or Military Air Transport A/c plane as a Pilot</li> <li>Previous appointments in Commercial Airline as Designated Examiner/ Instructor (SF/ TRI/ SFE/ TRE) shall be given preference.</li> <li>Experience in operational management would be preferred.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merit</li> <li>Lump Sum Package of Rs. 1,200,000/- per month with 05% annual increment</li> </ul>	Maximum 62 years (including all age relaxations)

## Application Procedure:

- Interested candidates are required to fill & submit Online Job Application Form available at [www.caapakistan.com.pk](http://www.caapakistan.com.pk) within **fifteen** days from the date of this advertisement.
- Candidates will be required to upload scanned copies of certificate / degree of the required qualification only of the concerned post as mentioned above and CNIC while applying for the job.
- In case a candidate does not upload the above documents with the online application form, his/her application will be rejected.
- All the interested candidates must read the Terms of Reference (TOR) mentioned in the detailed notice available at [www.caapakistan.com.pk](http://www.caapakistan.com.pk) before applying for the post.

**ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR HR (TM)**  
**HEADQUARTERS PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY,**  
**TERMINAL-I, JINNAH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, KARACHI**  
**TEL: 021-99072068 - 67**

PID(K)#2106/22

[www.caapakistan.com.pk](http://www.caapakistan.com.pk)



# KP govt upgrades status of tehsil Allai to new district

PESHAWAR (APP): The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Saturday upgraded the legal status of sub-division Allai to a new district in Hazara Division. In a notification issued by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Revenue and Estate Department stated that new district of Allai has a total of 521 square feet area and total population was 180,414 as per census 2017. The newly upgraded District Allai has eight union councils including Banna, Bateela, Batkul, Biari, Jambra, Pashto, Rashang, and Sakargah. It was mentioned here that Allai was a tehsil of district Battagram in Hazara Division. Former Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mehmood Khan handed over the formal notification of district Allai to ex-Special Assistant for Revenue and Estate, Taj Muhammad Khan Tarand.

# Modern abattoir, training centre to be set up in City

PESHAWAR (APP): UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) in collaboration with Livestock Farm Welfare Association would set up a modern slaughterhouse and training center for butchers in the provincial capital. Modern technology and up-to-date machinery would be imported from Austria to improve the meat value chain in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said a press release issued. President Livestock Farm Welfare Association (LFWA) Muhammad Asif Awan while expressing thanks to UNIDO said that the association would continue to cooperate with UNIDO in all aspects of the meat value chain. He said that a two-day training in collaboration with UNIDO would be organised for butchers at University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Lahore where modern ways of slaughtering sacrificial animals and use of modern machinery would be shown to them. The Livestock Farmhouse Welfare Association would also participate in the training with the objective of increasing meat production and slaughtering using modern technology. Provincial President Livestock Farm Welfare Association Asif Awan thanked UNIDO National Coordinator Rehan Ali and the entire team, especially Vice Chancellor at University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Lahore Dr. Naseem Shah. About 15 to 17 people would participate in this training. Majority of the training would be about meat farmers and butchers so that the project of UNIDO could get perfect form and acceptance by the association and achieve the objectives of the project. Asif Awan said that UNIDO and LFWA have the best relationship and would continue all kinds of cooperation in the future.

# Meeting held to discuss revenue related matters

PESHAWAR (APP): Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kurram, Mozam Khan Bangash Saturday chaired a meeting to discuss revenue-related matters with concerned staff. The meeting was also attended by officials of district administration, tehsildars and field staff of the revenue department. Chairing the meeting Additional DC decided to utilize resources for improving the performance of the revenue department and to develop a liaison with another relative department to settle the land case. He also directed assistant commissioners to start field visits for assessing the performance of revenue staff and to provide them with needed guidance and orientation.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali with president trader union Malik Mehr Elahi and members of newly elected cabinet of Old Steel & Wood Market union traders. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr. Shahzad Bangash meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan.

## Cache of arms recovered

PESHAWAR (INP): The police recovered cache of arms, ammunition and arrested two culprits during a raid in the metropolis here. On a tip-off regarding arms, ammunition smuggling to Punjab, SHO Rehman Baba police station Manzoor Khan along with police team raided a godown in Qamar Din Garhi area of Peshawar. During raid, two rifles, 56 pistols of different bores, 120 magazines and 1500 rounds of different bores were recovered besides arrest of two culprits identified as Ubaidullah s/o Ghulam Sarwar and Imran s/o Muhammad Iqbal. The detainees in the preliminary investigation revealed that they were preparing to smuggle arms and ammunition to Punjab but in time action of police foiled the bid. The police seized the recovered arms, ammunition and after registering a case against the nabbed culprits started an investigation.

## Latif Afridi Murder: Accused sent to jail on judicial remand

PESHAWAR (INP): A local court on Saturday sent the accused Adnan Afridi to jail on judicial remand in the murder of former Supreme Court Bar Association president Latif Afridi. As per details, the accused of Latif Afridi's murder was presented before the magistrate court. Former president Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Abdul Latif Afridi was assassinated last Monday in Peshawar. According to the police, the former president SCBA was shot inside Peshawar high court bar room. Afridi was rushed to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The killing was declared personal enmity by police. Accused, Adnan, who was arrested by the police on the spot was presented before a magistrate for physical remand. The court handed over Adnan on two-day physical remand and later adjourned hearing of the case. The CCTV footage of firing inside the Peshawar High Court (PHC) bar room showed people running after the shots were heard. Meanwhile, a policeman was seen taking the suspect into custody.

## Four held with arms, drugs in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (INP): The police arrested four outlaws, recovered arms and drugs during a raid in the metropolis on Saturday. The police launched crackdown against criminals in jurisdiction of Pishtakhara police station in Peshawar. During operation four outlaws including Yar Gul, Riaz, Azeem and an Afghan national Mir Ali were apprehended with a pistol, over one kilogram hashish and methamphetamine worth hundreds of thousands rupees. Separate cases were registered against the detainees at Pishtakhara police station and they were being interrogated.

## Waqas Afridi gets 2nd position in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Waqas Afridi of Bara tehsil, Khyber district got second position in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and first position in the enter merged district during Maarif Inter-School Maths Olympiad (MISMO) organized by Pak-Turk School System. A ceremony was held here on Saturday at Pak-Turk School Hayatabad that was attended by Vice Chancellor Sarhad University Saleemur Rehman as a chief guest while the staff of the Turk embassy was also present on the occasion. The administration of the event awarded the 'Al-Khwarzmi' medal and Rs 10,000 cash prize to Waqas Afridi. Waqas Afridi linked his success with the prayers of his parents and the hard work of his teachers.

## Power shutdown notified for areas of Matani, Azakhel, Gadoon, Haripur

PESHAWAR (APP): Havelian grid feeders will face inconvenience. Power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Abbottabad Nathia Galli Transmission Line on January 23 from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, resultantly consumers of 132 KV Nathia Gali grid connected 11 KV feeders will face inconvenience. Similarly, power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Wah-Nishat Turbela Transmission Line on January 23 from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, resultantly consumers of 132 KV Hattar 1,2, Haripur, Kholian Bala (Havelian) and 66 KV Haripur and

AM to 5:00 PM, resultantly consumers of 132 KV NishatTurbela, Right Bank, Gadoon grid connected 11 KV feeders will face inconvenience. Power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Matani Grid Station on January 23, 24, 25 and 26 from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, resultantly consumers of 11 KV Matani City, New Matani, Old Matani, Darwazagai, Old Azakhel, Maryamzai, Tila Band feeders will face inconvenience.

## Commissioner directs expediting uplift work

PESHAWAR (APP): Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Mehsud chairing a meeting other day directed to accelerate work on city uplift projects. The meeting was also attended by Project Director Peshawar Uplift, Adeel Ahmad, consultants and concerned officials. On the occasion was briefed about ongoing uplift projects including Hayatabad Jogging Track. Commissioner expressed annoyance over slow pace of work on jogging and cycle track in Hayatabad. He also sought report about reason behind slow progress on projects. He also directed expediting work on projects to revive old beauty and grandeur of city and stressed that a plan should be devised to minimize inconvenience to people and ensure smooth flow of traffic during work.

report about reason behind slow progress on projects. He also directed expediting work on projects to revive old beauty and grandeur of city and stressed that a plan should be devised to minimize inconvenience to people and ensure smooth flow of traffic during work.

# Dentists warn of permanent damage from clear braces ordered online

PESHAWAR (BBC): Dentists have told BBC that demand for Instagram smiles has left people with damage from wearing clear braces or "aligners" ordered online. One man said aligners weakened his front teeth, leaving him unable to bite into an apple. Smile Direct Club, the largest company selling clear aligners remotely, says they straighten teeth faster and cheaper than traditional braces. Its aligners have been successful for the majority of users, it says. But some dentists and orthodontists believe customers of so-called remote dentistry are unaware of harm that can be caused by aligners if not fitted by a dentist in person. Jamie, a father from Glasgow, turned to Smile Direct Club (SDC) after being quoted £4,000-£6,000 for straightening his teeth. The US-based remote orthodontics company was offering clear aligners for about £1,800 without the need to see a dentist in person. According to SDC, its platform has improved access to oral care and "has enabled successful treatment for more than 1.8 million people". The "overwhelming majority" of users have had an "excellent experience". Wobbly teeth But Jamie now says he would never do it again. "I can't bite into an apple because I can't trust that my front teeth are strong enough any more," he says. Before starting treatment he was sent a DIY impression kit to take his own teeth moulds. The other option, a 3D scan of his mouth done in an Smile Direct Club shop, was unavailable because of lockdown. Within weeks he'd received a six-month course of aligners, with the name of the dentist overseeing him labelled on the box. But after six months, he posted on Reddit: "One of my front teeth has become wobbly, my enamel feels all funny, like the aligners have rubbed some of it off, the aligners have made my gum recede making it agony." In traditional dentistry, train-track braces and clear aligners are fitted by dentists and orthodontists themselves, or a trained orthodontic therapist, after an in-person consultation. The health of the hard and soft tissues of the mouth, the teeth and gums, and whether the roots of the teeth can sustain movement, are some of the factors dentists consider. X-rays are instrumental in this process. Once someone starts wearing braces, regular appointments allow dentists to monitor how teeth are moving and to spot and address complications. SDC's website says users will "have regular virtual check-ins" with a UK-registered dentist "remotely from beginning to end" - but Jamie says he was not once connected to the dentist overseeing him or told to see a dentist about his issues. Customer service eventually put him in touch with a "dental expert" via web chat, who said the issues were normal and would subside. It's unclear what qualifications are required for this role. Dental disruptor Jamie was encouraged to continue wearing the aligners. SDC styles itself as a disruptor to the "bricks-and-mortar" dental industry. It argues many dentists and orthodontists offer Invisalign - a popular brand of clear braces - as a product, and therefore compete with SDC. Some positive testimonials by SDC users on YouTube say they were put off by Invisalign's cost and the longer length of treatment offered. One customer who used SDC to correct minor teeth crowding said that the treatment "worked really well" and improved her appearance and confidence. But, Jamie isn't alone. Hundreds

of SDC users around the world have shared negative experiences on social media and dozens of users and dentists we spoke to detailed issues ranging from aligners fitting poorly to permanent nerve damage and tooth loss. Dentist Dr Victoria Sampson says users may underestimate the force aligners put on teeth. If decay or gum disease is missed in a physical check-up, people risk losing some of their teeth. She says she has treated someone who lost their front tooth after using the aligners because they moved her teeth too quickly, skewing her bite. The roots of the patient's teeth were too short to withstand the pressure from aligners, which would have been picked up in an X-ray. According to UK dental associations, 3D scans and DIY teeth moulds used in remote orthodontics are not sufficient for approving aligners. "You want to create a beautiful smile, but you also want to create a healthy smile," says Dr Anjali Patel at the British Orthodontic Society. The results could be "disastrous" if the teeth aren't monitored properly. The British Dental Association's Dr Eddie Crouch is concerned SDC customers are being left to decide whether to go ahead with treatment without the right information. The BBC showed Dr Crouch three SDC plans - a 3D interactive image of teeth that maps how they could move during treatment - presented to potential customers. He said two showed visible signs of gum disease, meaning the aligners could "loosen the teeth sufficiently to cause tooth loss". The third plan, if accepted, he said, could leave that person with an unstable bite. SDC says it is the user's "responsibility to see a dentist" and receive a clean bill of health for their teeth and gums within six months of starting treatment. Potential risks for patients,

including nerve damage, gum disease and tooth loss are also listed. However, patients don't have to provide proof they have seen a dentist, and under contracts they sign are fully responsible for damage. SDC says its affiliated dentists and orthodontists are entirely responsible and accountable for the treatment they provide. There is no clinical evidence an office visit is necessary for the same level of care, it adds. However, customers expecting the same level of care as those getting traditional braces "aren't fully informed of what they're buying into," says Dr Anjali Patel. Few orthodontists would provide an assessment for remote treatment they don't oversee: "You have no control over what's going to happen next".

Non-disclosure contracts Some of the users we spoke to who experienced damage have been asked to sign non-disclosure agreements to receive full or partial refunds. Patients are requested to sign a confidentiality clause when they seek refunds outside of their refund policy, which is in line with standard industry practices, SDC says. The General Dental Council (GDC), responsible for regulating UK dentists, says there is no effective substitute for an in person clinical examination, which should take place before treatment is prescribed. It urges consumers to consult its guidelines.

However, Dr Crouch of the BDA believes such guidelines are insufficient compared with "rules and regulation to protect patients". Otherwise, dentists will be left picking up the pieces when "patients have undergone wholly inappropriate treatment". The UK's health watchdog, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) announced last summer any company providing remote orthodontic services will have to register with it. Nearly two years on from his first treatment plan Jamie has stopped wearing his Smile Direct Club aligners. He was persuaded to try a fresh 3D scan for better-fitting new aligners, but that didn't work for him, he says.



PESHAWAR: A vendor displaying shoes to attract customers at his road side setup.





## In brief

### Police ensuring peace in region

MULTAN (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO), Moin Masood said on Saturday that Multan region police was ensuring peace across the region by controlling crime for which a separate mechanism was being adopted. He expressed these views while addressing the under-training ASPs at the Conference Room of Police Line. City Police Officer Shakir Hussain Dawar and course commander Umar Riaz were also present on the occasion. The under-training police officers were briefed about the overall crime situation and about the policy made to fight crime across the region. The RPO said that a regular policy had been devised for crime fighting in the region and police was being equipped with modern technology requirements. The Multan region police had successfully made it possible to conduct cricket events and would ensure peaceful conduct of PSL 2023 matches to be held at Multan cricket stadium. He urged the under-training ASPs to work with devotion and dedication and earn good name for the department. The participants of the delegation asked questions from RPO about the police department which were answered upto their satisfaction. Later, RPO Moin Masood presented a commemorative shield to course commander Umar Riaz on behalf of Multan region police.

### 3 held over illegal gas decanting

FAISALABAD (APP): The civil defence teams sealed 10 shops and arrested three shopkeepers on the charge of illegal gas decanting and sale of loose petrol in different parts of Faisalabad during the past 12 hours. A spokesman for the Civil Defence Department said here on Saturday that the teams checked various shops and found illegal decanting of gas at four shops and illegal sale of loose petrol at 6 points. The teams sealed the shops and confiscated their equipment while cases were got registered against the accused. Meanwhile, Civil Defense Department also issued notices to two industrial units over poor safety arrangements in their factories while further action was under progress, he added. Meanwhile, Price control magistrates imposed a total fine of Rs 250,000 on 42 shopkeepers for profiteering and arrested five others on violation of price control act in different parts of the district during the last 24 hours. A spokesman for the local administration said here on Saturday that magistrates after receiving 34 complaints against overcharging on 'QeematApp' checked various shops in different markets and bazaars of Faisalabad and found 42 shopkeepers involved in profiteering. The magistrates imposed a total fine of Rs 250,000 on them. The magistrates also arrested 5 shopkeepers and sealed 7 shops for violation of price control act while further action against them was underway.

### Career counselling

GILGIT (APP): Career Counselling is of utmost importance when it comes to providing young minds proper guidance regarding their future aspirations, said Gilgit Baltistan Chief Secretary Muihudeen Wani while talking to media here in Gilgit on Saturday. He said that a child without guidance is like a man lost in a desert trying to find the path but in vain. He said that to address this concern, "we are thrilled to have institutionalised career counselling across schools of GB and in addition, we have also launched an app regarding career counselling tailor-made for the schools and colleges of GB."

# Rally in Chitral demand starting of work on roads

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: A joint meeting of civil society members and leaders of various political and religious parties was organized by Chitral Development Moment (CDM). The meeting was presided over by Maulvi Israruddin Al-Hilal. For the first time Shahzada Siraj-ul-Mulk participated in this meeting and expressed his views. An unanimous resolution was also passed in the meeting.

Through the resolution, the government was demanded for construction of Shandur and Dara Pass roads from Lowari Tunnel. The work on all the roads should be resumed immediately. Funds should be sanctioned for the Garam Chashma road. Through the resolution they demanded that the work on Ayunn and Kailash valley roads should not be stopped and that the owners of the lands coming in this road Immediate be compensated. The speakers said that there are mountains and deposits of precious minerals in Chitral, but its lease has been given to non-local influential people, which the local people cannot benefit from these minerals. Through the resolution, the provincial government was stressed to Local people should be benefited from mineral deposits.

Through the resolution, construction form Drosht to Madaglsht road was also demanded. Arundu, which was also a major commercial center in the past, they demanded that work on this road immediately be started and also pay compensation to the land owners. The resolution demanded that the beautification of Chitral for which 280 million rupees have been approved this work should be completed as soon as possible by doing standard quality work from this fund.

The resolution demanded that as in the past, the local people were given wheat food from the government grain warehouses of Chitral. Wheat should be provided at a discounted rate. It was demanded that the wheat which is given to the flour mill owners from the government grain warehouses, they are increasing the price of flour day by day, this chain should be closed and the people should also be given wheat from these warehouses so that they can use it in the water mill at their own will. More than four hundred water mills have been closed in Chitral, which affecting four hundred families.

The resolution demanded that these water mills must be restored and this cruel decision should be withdrawn. In which only the mill owners have been tried to be happy. A 107 megawatt hydropower plant has been constructed in Golain, but the people of the area are deprived of this

electricity and there is still eight to ten hours of load shedding in Chitral, continues while there is no factory and no one steals electricity. Through the resolution, the WAPDA authorities were demanded to stop this cruel and illegal load shedding and provide electricity to the people at cheap rates so that they can use it for cooking and heating purposes.

It was also demanded that the Federal government fulfills its promise by giving 30 megawatts of electricity to Chitral from Golain power plant and giving the remaining electricity to the lower districts. The resolution demanded for establishment of a Government Medical College in Chitral and the District Headquarters Hospital, which was given category B status fifteen years ago, but has not yet been implemented in this hospital.

All facilities should be provided as per category B to DHQ Hospital of Chitral. The construction work of Chitral University should be started soon and work should also be started on Trich Mir University in Qaqalish of Upper Chitral. The resolution also demanded that the establishment of Intermediate and Secondary Board for both the districts of Chitral should be announced here as soon as possible.

In order to save the forests of Chitral from being destroyed and the environment from affecting the installation work of approved LPG gas plant for upper and lower Chitral district should be started soon in Chitral and the land purchased for this purpose should not be auctioned. Alhaji Eid Al Hussain, Sharif Hussain, Waqas Ahmed Advocate, Liaquat Ali, Inayatullah Asir, Prince Siraj Mulk, Noor Ahmed Khan Charwelo, Sultan Nigham, Shabbir Ahmed, Rehmat Ali Jafar Dost, Chaudhry Amanullah and others expressed their views. It was deeply regretted in the meeting that the road widening by the National Highway Authority contractor from Chitral, which was built by a Chinese construction company forty years ago, but the coal tar was still very strong, and the NHA contractor removed coal tar from the entire road which has been turned into a cross-shaped ruin, and the road was not been blacktopped.

As a result passengers face a lot of difficulties while traveling on the road. The speakers warned the government that we are peaceful people and demand our genuine and legitimate rights in a very civilized manner but we not be compelled for taking stern action. Later, the participants of the meeting took out a rally in which all civil society members and representatives of political parties also participated. The meeting ended with prayerful words.

## Reforms to be made in KP Health Department

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: The newly appointed DG Health, Dr. Shaukat Ali, has said that positive reforms are being brought in the health department, including the use of all available resources to provide the best medical facilities to the people, the promotion, appointment and transfer of employees in a merit and transparent manner.

He expressed these thoughts while addressing the welcoming ceremony given by the hospital administration at the Timergara Teaching Hospital. DHO lower dir Dr. Irshad Ali Roghani, MS. Dr. Ali Asghar, MS. Dr. Upper Dir. Salim and President of Nursing Association Hidayatullah also addressed while DHO Dir Bala Dr. Khalid Khan besides doctors, paramedics, nurses, ministerial staff and class four employees were also present on this occasion, earlier MS Dr. Ali Asghar. And Muhammad Islam elaborated on the problems faced by the hospital employees while on this occasion, the hospital administration welcomed the newly appointed DG Dr. Shaukat Ali Timargara Teaching Hospital with a shower of flowers on his arrival, DG Health Services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr. Shaukat Ali said that the provincial government.

Expressing the trust in him, he has been entrusted with the heavy responsibility of the province, God willing, he will try to use

his skills and experience, he said that all available resources will be used to provide the best medical facilities to the people. And the rights of patients will be taken care of in hospitals while a complaint cell is being established to eliminate the complaints of citizens, DG Dr. Shaukat Ali has formulated a service delivery policy in hospitals across the province, including the pending cases of hospital equipment and employees. will be dealt with soon, he announced the installation of MRI machine in the Timergara Teaching Hospital and the provision of 2 ambulances while directing the preparation of the up-gradation committee of the hospital. The first priority will be that In Tamergarh Medical College this year the release of classes should be ensured and the appointment of dean will be implemented soon.

**Free medical camp held:** Al-Khidmat Free Medical Camp was organized in collaboration with Al-Khidmat Foundation Women Wing and Islamic Homeopathic Dir Lower in Balambat Tehsil Shati Dara. Apart from senior doctors, physiotherapists also participated in the free medical camp.

More patients were examined, while the supervision of the medical camp was done by Saima Mohsin, Chairperson of Al-Khidmat Foundation Women's Wing. Physiotherapists Dr. Rehan and Dr. Junaid Qasim examined the patients and provided

them with free medicines on behalf of Al-Khidmat Foundation. Meanwhile, Director of Al-Khidmat Hospital Majeedullah visited the medical camp and said that in this free medical camp, Gani, I, General All the surgery patients will be given free facility in Al-Khidmat Hospital Zawab Baba.

**Grand welcome:** Malik Shafiqullah Khan, the former Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Jails, arrived at his native area and was given a grand welcome and was escorted to his residence in the form of a procession of vehicles. He thanked the workers for the wonderful reception and presented himself for accountability.

The political situation of the country is alarming and the PDM has sunk the country's raft, so elections should be announced immediately in the country before that. For the first time after the end of the assembly, he was given a grand welcome at the Talash in district, Lower Dir, and was taken to his home in a large procession of vehicles. On this occasion, while talking to the workers and the media, he said that he is a soldier of Imran Khan and He promoted the vision of Imran Khan. He said that there is uncertainty in the country and the country is close to bankruptcy. He said that he abolished the commission in development projects. He has asked to investigate the taking of commission Said that no one is allowed to take commission.

and overseas Malaysian in particular has demanded of the statesmen of taking serious note and to improve the situation in larger national interests otherwise the overseas would not transfer money through banks and to wait for Imran Khan to reelect as premier of Pakistan and restore overseas Pakistanis right to vote as a citizen of the sweet mother land of Pakistan.



GWADAR: Officials inspecting the centres for general elections.

## 4 abducted workers of Oil Company rescued

MIRANSHAH (INP): Four kidnapped workers of an oil company were rescued, two abductors killed and three people injured after exchange of fire here Saturday.

The security forces on an intelligence tip-off launched search operation for recovery of kidnapped oil company workers in Hamzoi area of North Waziristan. In exchange of fire between security forces and the kidnappers, four abducted workers were rescued, two kidnappers killed, a security official and two workers of oil company were injured. The security forces took the bodies of killed kidnappers in custody and the injured were shifted to FTC Hospital Miranshah for treatment.

## Police probe into torture case underway

BAHAWALPUR (APP): The Bahawalpur Police is continuing an investigation into a torture case that emerged after a video got viral on social media showing two men torturing a person over alleged theft in the Islami Colony area of the city.

A spokesman for Bahawalpur police said that a video got viral on social media in which two men were seen beating a man and throwing black ink on her face while hurling allegations at him that he had taken away some money from their shop in the 100-Foota locality of Islami Colony.

He said that one, Muhammad Shabbir son of Ahmad Bakhsh, the resident of Mahallah Imam Shah, Bahawalpur lodged his complaint with Baghdadul Jadid Police Station that, he along with his son, Muhammad Sheeraz, was passing through the 100-Foota area when two men identified as Muhammad Hanif and Shaukat Ali, son of Mitho Khan, the residents of Islami Colony approached them alleging that his son had stolen money from their shop.

"The accused forcibly took away my son to their paan shop, where they beat him and threw black ink on his face," he told police in his application. On the complaint of the plaintiff, Baghdadul Jadid Police registered FIR No. 79/23 under Sections 342, 355, and 292. The police have taken the suspects into custody and launched an investigation into the incident, the spokesman said.

## 27 criminals arrested

SARGODHA (APP): Police on Saturday arrested 27 criminals from various parts of the district.

The teams of Sadr, Bhulwal, Sillanwali, Shah Pur and city conducted raids in the areas under their jurisdiction and nabbed 27 criminals, besides recovering 860 liters liquor, 2.3 kg hashish, 22 pistols, 13 guns and 612 bullets from their possession. Meanwhile, the police also unearthed three distilleries.

## Shortage of lifesaving drugs grip Attock

ATTOCK (INP): Like other cities of the four provinces of the country, shortage of lifesaving drugs has gripped district Attock also and people are seen moving from one to another medical store in search of required medicines.

Talking to media persons here on Saturday, Member Executive Body Pharmacist Union Attock Dastagir Bhatti said that supply of more than 50 essential lifesaving medicines for cardiac, hepatitis, liver, lungs, brain, hypertension, hemophilia, paralysis, hemiplegic and other diseases has been interrupted by the pharmaceutical companies due to fluctuation in the prices of raw material being imported from different countries through foreign exchange in US Dollars reached at the alarming proportion leaving uncontrolled devaluation of Pakistani currency on daily basis as well.

He said that shortage of most necessary medicines include are Inj Rhogam, Inj. Rhofylac, Tab Co Olesta, Duac Gel, Syp Trimetabol, Tab Thyronorm, Syp Duphalac, Tab Prothiadin, Tab

Prothiadin, Tab Iberet Folic, Tab Epival, Tab Tegrol, Tab Cardura, Tab Fasigyn, Duofilm lotion, Tab Artifin, Syp Tixylix, Tab Eziday Duo, Tab Telfast D, Tab Spiromide, Syp Maltofer, Humulin insulin, Inj Heprin, Inj Cardarone, Inj Epival, Inj Streptokinase (heart attack), Inj Gravinate, Inj Augmentin, Tab Diovan, Syp Inventive, and even the pharma companies have also stopped the production of so many other medicines which are required to save the human life during their surgery or hospitalization nearing to death. He said that people can live without bread for some time but patient can't wait for their medicines to save their lives.

Dastagir Bhatti further said that all medical store owners are repeating the list of short medicines to their relevant whole sale dealers but they disappointed when they seemed reluctant to fulfill their requirements since long. He said that a number of pharmaceutical companies are planning to close and shift their business from Pakistan as the Government

is not in a position to get opened LCs for import of raw materials from other countries. He demanded of the United Nations World Health Organization and Government of Pakistan to ensure production of live saving drugs failing which death toll of the patients of serious diseases will be increased beyond their normal ratio, he added.

**Accused declaring wife dead to write off bank loan held:** The police arrested a fraudster who declared his wife dead to write off bank loan here on Saturday. According to details, Fahmeed Dilshad hailing from Sarhadi Colony area of Attock acquired 35,000 rupees loan from a private bank in the name but didn't return the money.

The culprit to write off the bank loan prepared fake death certificate of his wife and presented it to bank. However, the bank authorities during investigation of the death certificate from UC office found it to be fake after which he was arrested. A case against the detainee in the non-bailable offence was registered and he was being investigated.

## DC monitor polio eradication campaign

LARKANA (APP): The Deputy Commissioner Larkana Ms. Rabiya Siyal along-with Assistant Commissioner Larkana and District Health Officer Larkana on Saturday visited the various villages of Larkana Bakrani Taluka and Dokri Taluka of Larkana district in order to monitor the seven-day National Polio Eradication Campaign, which started from Monday in Larkana District.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner was briefed that the officials of the Health Department with the assistance of WHO, and UNICEF, setup 880 teams, who were visiting door to door to administer Oral Polio Drops along-with Vitamin-A to 0-5 years old children in the Larkana dis-

trict. The DC Larkana urged upon the parents, Teachers, representative of NGOs and the members of the community that they should come forward to play their role in success of the 7-Day Anti Polio National Eradication Campaign which is being started from January 16 upto January 25, 2023, in the district, so that no child 0-5 years may be deprived from Oral Polio Drops.

The Deputy Commissioner also said that in order to monitor the Anti Polio Campaign in Larkana district at District and Taluka level the control rooms have already been set up. She also directed the health teams to realize their responsibilities and visit door to door

in the remote/rural areas and rain/flood affected areas throughout Larkana district and administered the Oral Polio Drops along-with Vitamin-A to 0-5 year's children in the district and to save the new generation from this crippling disease.

She DC directed the field workers to utilize all available resources to achieve the target, adding that those children who were left today should be given priority the next day for vaccination. The Deputy Commissioner also visited the various Bus Stops and saw whether the Children in Buses are being given Oral Polio Drops or not where he found that the Anti Polio Drops are being given to the children accordingly.

## Production unit of spices sealed in Lakki

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: The district administration sealed a production unit of a spices dealer and discarded 500 litre adulterated milk in Bannu on Saturday. "The substandard milk was seized from the outlets of milkmen during surprise inspection visits by assistant commissioner Syed Abrar Ali Shah", said an official visit.

He said that Mr Abrar visited the shops of milkmen and warehouses of spice dealers on the directives of deputy commissioner Aun Haidar Gondal who had received complaints about selling of low quality milk and production of adulterated spices in the city's bazaars. He said that the assistant commissioner along with experts of livestock and Food Safety and Halal Food Authority checked the quality of milk through a mobile laboratory. He said that the officials

collected milk samples from the outlets of 44 milkmen and examined those in the laboratory. The official said that six milkmen out of 44 were found involved in selling adulterated milk and they were fined on the spot. The assistant commissioner also caught red handed workers using non-food colours and items in producing spices at a production unit in Bannu city.

The production unit was sealed and the dealer was arrested on the spot. A case was registered against him under relevant sections of law. The deputy commissioner told journalists that surprise inspection visits to bazaars and markets by his administration's officials had ensured provision of quality foodstuffs to citizens. He warned that the traders involved in selling substandard food items would face imprisonment and heavy fines.

## Sewerage channels' clearing continues

FAISALABAD (APP): Managing Director (MD) Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Jabbar Anwar Chaudhry said on Saturday that clearing of sewerage channels in the city was in progress currently.

Visiting various sites here on Saturday, he reviewed desilting campaign in Saeed Abad Channel-I and directed the WASA staff to use heavy machinery for removing silt from sewerage channels and lines. He also supervised desilting process of main channel-III from Jawad Club Chowk to Chakera and appreciated the performance of staff.





## Marcos says sea feud involving China keeps him up at night

MANILA (AP): Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said the long-raging disputes in the South China Sea that involve China, the Philippines and other coastal states have kept him “up at night” and warned that any major confrontation in Asia, similar to the war in Ukraine, would be disastrous to the world.

Marcos spoke at a World Economic Forum dialogue in the Swiss Alpine town of Davos, where he was asked about his seven-month-old presidency, his economic strategy and key security worries, including the increasingly tense South China Sea territorial conflicts. The dispute “keeps you up at night, keeps you up in the day, keeps you up most of the time ... It’s very dynamic, it’s constantly in flux so you have to pay attention to it,” Marcos said in response to a question from forum President Borge Brende.

Marcos said there have been calls for the Philippine government to do more to defend its territorial waters but added that a military solution to the conflicts was not an option. “We have no conflicting claims with China. What we have is China making claims on our territory,” he said.

“Nobody wants to go to war. We don’t. China doesn’t. The United States doesn’t,” Marcos said, adding that “just having the tensions increase in the

region already has an effect on trade, on all of the exchanges that we have.” Asked if he raised the territorial conflicts with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, in a visit to Beijing earlier this month, Marcos said discussions on the touchy issue were inevitable but acknowledged he did not expect any major resolution.

“When I spoke to President Xi, I prefaced our discussion by saying we are not going to decide here today the issues that are between the Philippines and China in terms of territoriality,” Marcos said. The Philippine leader added without elaborating that he discussed recent incidents between coast guard and fishing vessels of China and the Philippines in the contested waterway. The Philippines has filed hundreds of diplomatic protests over China’s increasingly assertive actions in the disputed waters, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety. Last year alone, Manila sent nearly 200 protest notes to Beijing, including 65 since Marcos Jr. took office in June, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila.

Aside from China and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei have been locked in the disputes in the busy waterway. Tensions intensified after Beijing turned seven disputed reefs into what are now missile-pro-

tested island bases to reinforce its claims, alarming the United States and its Asian and Western allies. “It has become terribly complex and very, very dynamic and requires a good deal of attention,” Marcos said of the long-seething disputes. The heightened tensions between China and Taiwan, which lie across a sea border from the northern Philippines, have also been a key concern, he said.

“We are at the very front line,” he said. “If something goes wrong here, we are going to suffer.” Marcos warned that any major conflict in Asia, like what the war in Ukraine has shown, would spark headwinds across the world. “All of us were quite surprised, especially us in the Philippines, to think that the war in Eastern Europe would affect agriculture in the Philippines,” Marcos said. “If a similar situation would arise in the region, then it would be actually, I would say, it would be disastrous for the rest of the world.” It’s crucial to avoid getting entrapped in major power rivalries like between Washington and Beijing in Asia, he said. “I don’t work for Beijing, I don’t work for Washington, D.C. I work for the Philippines,” he said. “That really translates into a very simple statement of foreign policy, which is, I promote the national interest.”

## Person killed at Atlanta police training center site

ATLANTA (AP): Investigators released the identity of the person who was shot and killed by law enforcement officers who were trying to clear protesters camping at the site of a planned Atlanta-area public safety training center that opponents have dubbed “Cop City.” Manuel Esteban Paez Teran, 26, was shot and killed, according to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Teran was inside a tent in the woods and did not comply with verbal commands from law enforcement officers trying to clear the area, the GBI has said.

When Teran shot and injured a state trooper, other law enforcement officers returned fire and killed Teran, the GBI has said. Activists have questioned the police version of events and called for the release of law enforcement body camera footage. Opponents of the training center have been protesting for over a year by building platforms in surrounding trees and camping out at the site. They say that the \$90 mil-

lion project, which would be built by the Atlanta Police Foundation, involves cutting down so many trees that it would be environmentally damaging. They also oppose investing so much money in what they call “Cop City,” which they say will be used to practice “urban warfare.”

Col. Chris Wright, commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Safety, told reporters that the injured trooper underwent surgery and was in intensive care. He told state lawmakers during a budget hearing that the trooper remained in intensive care and was scheduled to undergo another surgery. The agency said in a news release that it would not release the name of the trooper involved in the shooting “because disclosure would compromise security against criminal or terroristic acts due to retaliation.”

The GBI said about 25 campsites were located and removed and that mortar-style fireworks, edged weapons, pellet rifles, gas

masks and a blow torch were recovered. Seven people were arrested and charged with domestic terrorism and criminal trespass with other charges pending, the GBI said. They range in age from 20 to 34 years, and none of them are Georgia residents. GBI Director Mike Register said that people are “illegally occupying” the area and are committing acts that endanger the community, including arson and using explosives. The “clearing operation” was conducted in the same area where a handful of people were arrested last month and also charged with domestic terrorism. Authorities said at the time that firefighters and police officers were attacked with rocks and weapons as they removed barricades blocking entrances to the site. The 85-acre (35-hectare) property is owned by the city of Atlanta but is located just outside the city limits in unincorporated DeKalb County, and includes a former state prison farm.

## Train station’s opening in Bangkok ushers in new travel era

BANGKOK (AP): Thailand ushered in a new age of train travel as Southeast Asia’s biggest railway station officially began operations. The government says the huge, modern development on the edge of central Bangkok will bolster the country’s position as a regional hub and boost its economy.

It’s officially called Krung Thep Aphiwat Central Terminal, a name bestowed by the king. But to most people it’s more likely to be known simply as Bang Sue Grand Station, after the part of Bangkok where it’s located. The cost of the new terminal, including the station, elevated train tracks and a connecting station for Bangkok’s mass transit system, is around \$1 billion, according to Takun Indarachome, director of traffic operations for the State Railway of Thailand.

Almost all of Thailand’s long-distance domestic and international rail services will pass through the new terminal, on which work began 10 years ago. The first train out of the new station was bound for Sungai Kolok, on Thailand’s southern border with Malaysia. Many Thais, however, are lamenting the shunting aside of the previous terminal, Hua Lamphong Station on the edge of Bangkok’s Chinatown in the middle of the capital. The classic sta-

tion, with its high-ceilinged waiting room, has hosted generations of travelers, ranging from rural workers looking for jobs in the city to backpacking tourists headed south to chill at seaside resorts.

All is not lost for the nostalgic, however. Several lines — running locally and to the east — will still wind their way to the older, more central station. For the time being at least, 62 trains will use it daily. The construction of the new terminal coincided with major projects expanding rail networks in Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia, largely spurred by China’s Belt and Road infrastructure initiative and its high-speed rail technology. Passengers will encounter a four-story station covering almost 30 hectares (3.2 million square feet). Many Bangkokians are already familiar with the premises because its cavernous halls were used last year as the main venue for the government’s free COVID-19 vaccination program.

Trains will come and go on 24 tracks at 12 platforms, with the station able to manage up to 40 trains at the same time, according to the government. At peak times it can handle up to 600,000 passengers per day, more than 10 times the capacity of Hua Lamphong station, it

says. In Bang Sue’s ultra-modern control room, banks of panels and screens oversee operations and make sure that everything is running smoothly. Video from more than 120 security cameras is monitored using artificial intelligence. In public areas, smart robots are on hand to assist puzzled passengers, and smart wheelchairs can carry handicapped people without human help.

“Today is the first day after they moved the service from Hua Lamphong and lots of people did not know that yet, so the place looks empty,” said Theerawat Peangda, who was waiting to catch a train south for a holiday break. “But I think this station is OK, very nice and convenient.” Hua Lamphong, in contrast, looks more to the past than the future. To walk through the neo-Renaissance portal of the station, designed by Italian architects and opened in 1916, is to step back in time to a simpler era. For a while, it even appeared that it would be relegated to become a museum.

“I don’t want them to move the grand station. I’d rather it stayed here,” Prathuang Ruengsamut, 68, said earlier this week as he waited for a train at Hua Lamphong. “They just need to renovate this place a little bit and it’ll be fine.”

## WHO on China reports big jump in Covid

GENEVA (Reuters): China reported a large jump in COVID-19 hospitalisations in the week through to January 15 to the highest since the pandemic began, according to a weekly report published by the World Health Organization.

However, the WHO said it awaited “detailed provincial data disaggregated by week of reporting” on nearly 60,000 additional COVID-related hospital deaths reported by China last week and did not include them in the tally. The number of people hospitalised with the disease in China rose by 70 % to 63,307 versus the previous week, according to the WHO report based on data submitted by Beijing. This is the highest weekly figure China has reported since COVID-19 first emerged more than three years ago.

In early December, Beijing abruptly dismantled its strict three-year anti-virus regime of frequent testing, travel curbs and mass lockdowns after widespread protests in late November, and cases have surged since then across the nation of 1.4 billion. The WHO and others have said China has been under-reporting the scale of the outbreak and has repeatedly called for more detailed data, including on deaths, excess mortality and genetic sequences.

## Japan to consider downgrading Covid

TOKYO (Reuters): Japan will consider revising COVID-19 measures as early as this spring, downgrading the disease to a less serious category and relaxing guidance that people wear masks in public indoor places, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said.

Speaking to media after meeting with relevant ministers, Kishida said he had instructed them to consider the specific requirements for a reclassification that would put COVID-19 in the same category as seasonal flu. “As we try to restore the lifestyles of a normal Japan, we would like to shift various measures step by step,” Kishida told reporters. A classification downgrade to disease category five from the current category two would end an isolation requirement for infected people and their close contacts.

In a separate measure foreshadowed by Kishida, the government would also advise only patients with symptoms to wear masks in indoor public places, whereas currently it urges everyone to do so. The government last revised coronavirus measures in May. It said then that people no longer had to wear masks when outside as long as appropriate social distance was maintained. Even so, the vast majority of people in Japan are still wearing masks in public, both outdoors and indoors.

## Knife-wielding roosters kill two men

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Two men have reportedly been killed by knife-wielding roosters in separate cockfights in India. To mark the three-day celebration of the Hindu Makar Sankranti festival, people gathered to hold cockfights in the Kakinada and East Godavari districts, according to reports.

During the incident in Kakinada, Gande Suryapraksha Rao, the 43-year-old owner of one of the fighting roosters, bled to death after being slashed by his prized cock. Rao reportedly tied blades to his rooster before it became intimidated by the crowd. The bird then flew up and landed on Rao, causing the blades to severely slash his leg. Although the man was rushed to a local hospital, he was later pronounced dead.

In a separate incident in the East Godavari district, a spectator identified as K. Padmaraju also bled to death after he was slashed in the hand. Padmaraju, who was a resident of Ananthapalli, was reportedly standing too close to a cockfight when one of the bladed roosters sliced a key nerve in his hand.

## China plays down Covid outbreak with holiday rush at full tilt

BEIJING (Reuters): People across China crowded into trains and buses for one of its busiest days of travel in years, feeding fears of new surges in a raging COVID-19 outbreak that officials say has hit its peak. In comments reported by state media, Vice Premier Sun Chunlan said the virus was at a “relatively low” level, while health officials said the number of COVID patients in hospital and with critical conditions was on the decline.

But there are widespread doubts about China’s official account of an outbreak that has overwhelmed hospitals and funeral homes since Beijing abandoned strict COVID controls and mass testing last month. That policy U-turn, which followed historic protests against the government’s tough anti-virus curbs, unleashed COVID on a population of 1.4 billion that had been largely shielded from the disease since it emerged in the city of Wuhan in late 2019.

Some health experts expect that more than one million people will die from the disease in China this year, with British-based health data firm Airfinity forecasting COVID fatalities could hit 36,000 a day next week. “Recently, the overall pandemic in the country is at a relatively low level,” Sun said in comments reported by the state-run Xinhua news agency. “The number of critical patients at hospitals is decreasing steadily, though the rescue mission is still heavy.”

She spoke on the eve of one of the most frenetic travel days in China since the start of the pandemic, as millions of city-dwellers travel to their hometowns for the Lunar New Year holiday that officially begins on Saturday. More than 2 billion trips are expected to take place across China between Jan. 7 and Feb. 15, the government estimates. Excited passengers laden with luggage and boxes of gifts boarded trains, heading for long-awaited family reunions.

“Everyone is eager to go home. After all, we haven’t seen our families for so long,” a 30-year-old unnamed Li told Reuters at Beijing’s West railway station. But for others, the holiday is a reminder of lost loved ones. Gu Bei, a writer from Shanghai, said on the Weibo social media platform that she had been waiting nearly two weeks to have her mother cremated and that the funeral home could not tell her when the service would be



scheduled. China’s internet regulator said this week it would censor any “fake information” about the spread of the virus that could cause “gloomy” sentiment during Lunar New Year festivities. “I heard no dark and gloomy words are allowed during the new year. Then let me mourn my mother now,” Gu said in her post, which did not specify her mother’s cause of death.

Spending by funeral homes on items from body bags to cremation ovens has risen in many provinces, documents show, one of several indications of COVID’s deadly toll. China has said nearly 60,000 people with COVID died in hospital between Dec. 8 and Jan. 12. However, that toll excludes those who died at home, and some doctors have said they are discouraged from putting COVID on death certificates.

President Xi Jinping said this week that he was concerned about an influx of travellers to rural areas with weak medical systems, and that protecting the elderly - many of whom are not fully vaccinated - was a top priority. The World Health Organization’s immunisation director, Kate O’Brien, praised China for making quick progress on vaccinating older people with COVID shots and boosters since lifting anti-virus controls last month.

However, she added that some elderly people found it “difficult” to understand changes in its vaccination policy since they had previously been advised not to seek protection. A WHO report said China reported a large jump in COVID hospitalisa-

tions in the week through Jan. 15, to the highest since the pandemic began. Hospitalisations rose by 70% on the previous week to 63,307, according to the WHO, citing data submitted by Beijing.

But in a news conference, health officials said the number of COVID patients reporting to hospital had peaked with more than 40% fewer people being treated with critical conditions on Jan. 17 compared with a peak on Jan. 5. While China’s reopening has been chaotic, investors are hopeful that it will help revive its \$17 trillion economy, placing bets that have lifted Chinese stocks and its yuan currency to multi-month highs. “Markets widely anticipate a surge of pent-up demand will be unleashed from the reopening of China’s economy,” Nomura analysts said in a note.

They cautioned that a fall in household wealth and a surge in youth unemployment, a hangover from years of lockdowns and travel curbs, may temper the rebound. While international flights are in short supply, Chinese tourists, a much-missed mainstay of the world’s retail and travel industry, are starting to travel again.

Malls from Macau to Bangkok are aiming to lure them in with red lantern displays and special dances to mark the Year of the Rabbit - and steep discounts. Chinese spending on travel had grown to \$255 billion in 2019, accounting for 33% of spending in the global luxury personal goods market, according to estimates from the Bain consultancy.

## Turkey cancels visit by Swedish minister

ISTANBUL/STOCKHOLM (Reuters): Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said on Saturday that a planned visit next week by his Swedish counterpart to Ankara has been cancelled after Swedish authorities granted permission for protests in Stockholm. The demonstrations planned in Stockholm for later on Saturday were aimed at Turkey and Sweden’s efforts to join NATO, stoking tensions with Ankara whose approval is needed for the Nordic country to join the military alliance.

Organisers said around 500-600 people were expected to gather to protest against Sweden’s NATO bid and show support for Kurds in a demonstration that has received a permit from the Stockholm Police. Separately, an anti-immigration politician from the far-right fringe, Rasmus Paludan, planned to burn a copy of the Muslim holy book the Koran near the Turkish Embassy. A group of pro-Turkish demonstrators had also received a permit to gather outside the embassy.

“At this point, the visit of Swedish Defence Minister Pal Jonson to Turkey on January 27 has become meaningless. So we cancelled the visit,” Akar said. Jonson had planned to travel to Ankara at the invitation of his Turkish counterpart as Stockholm hopes to nudge Turkey to ratify its bid to join NATO. Jonson said separately he and Akar had met during a meeting of Western allies in Germany and had decided to postpone the planned meeting.

“Our relations with Türkiye are very important to Sweden, and we look forward to continuing the dialogue on common security and defence issues at a later date,” he said on Twitter. Sweden and Finland applied last year to join NATO following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine but all 30 member states must approve their bids. Turkey has said Sweden in particular must first take a clearer stance against what it sees as terrorists, mainly Kurdish militants and a group it blames for a 2016 coup attempt. Akar said he had discussed with

President Tayyip Erdogan the lack of measures to restrict protests in Sweden against Turkey and had conveyed Ankara’s reaction to Jonson on the sidelines of a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group.

“It is unacceptable not to make a move or react to these (protests). The necessary things needed to be done, measures should have been taken,” Akar said, according to a statement by Turkish defence ministry. Turkey’s Foreign Ministry had already summoned Sweden’s ambassador over the planned protests. The ministry said the envoy was told that the protest by a group sympathetic to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) was considered to be a violation of agreements between the countries. Finland and Sweden signed a three-way agreement with Turkey in 2022 aimed at overcoming Ankara’s objections to their membership of NATO. Sweden says it has fulfilled its part of the memorandum but Turkey is demanding more, including extradition of 130 people it deems to be terrorists.

## Eritrean troops withdrawing from towns in Tigray

NAIROBI (AP): Witnesses in some towns across Ethiopia’s Tigray region say troops from neighboring Eritrea have started withdrawing in large convoys, a potentially significant development after a devastating conflict in the region ended late last year.

The presence of the Eritreans despite a peace deal signed in November between Ethiopia’s federal government and Tigray forces has been seen as a major challenge to the agreement’s implementation. Eritrea, allied with Ethiopian forces, wasn’t a party to the deal that ended two years of fighting, which was estimated by researchers to have killed 500,000 people.

“The Eritrean forces have started withdrawing from Shire in large convoys today,” a humanitarian worker in Shire town told The Associated Press, describing several dozen vehicles carrying soldiers in Eritrean military uniforms. The witness, speaking like others on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation, said that some vehicles were heading in the direction of Sheraro, near the Eritrean border. A civil servant in the town of Axum said that residents had been told to avoid the main street as “Eritrean forces started to exit from the area.” A resident in the town of Adwa confirmed the withdrawal of Eritrean forces there.

Ethiopian government spokesman Legesse Tulu and a spokesman for the Tigray side didn’t immediately respond to questions. Eritrean forces entered Ethiopia’s devastating conflict in its earliest days. The Ethiopian and Eritrean governments denied the participation of Eritrea, one of the world’s most reclusive nations, until Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed acknowledged it in March 2021.

Rights groups, ethnic Tigrayans and some Western countries expressed alarm over the presence of Eritrean forces, which were blamed for some of the worst abuses in the conflict including widespread rapes. Even after the peace deal was signed, witnesses alleged that some Eritrean forces continued to loot and kill. In an apparent acknowledgement of participation in the conflict, the Eritrean Embassy in Ethiopia posted excerpts from state-owned newspaper Hadas Eritrea saying that “the favor the Eritrean government and people did to Ethiopia will be written in golden colors in history and in the region ... and (it) has got rid of an international danger,” referring to Tigray forces that Eritrea’s government has long regarded as a threat.

The Ethiopian military “didn’t lose support in the last two years from the greatly disciplined, fighting capable and unrivaled Eritrean army,” the newspaper excerpt said.

## 50 injured in Peru

LIMA (Reuters): Dozens of Peruvians were injured after tensions flared again as police clashed with protesters in anti-government demonstrations that are spreading across the country. In the capital Lima, police officers used tear gas to repel demonstrators throwing glass bottles and stones, as fires burned in the streets, local TV footage showed.

In the country’s southern Puno region, some 1,500 protesters attacked a police station in the town of Ilave, Interior Minister Vicente Romero said in a statement to news media. A police station in Zepita, Puno, was also on fire, Romero said. Health authorities in Ilave reported eight patients hospitalized with injuries, including broken arms and legs, eye contusions and punctured abdomens. By late afternoon, 58 people had been injured nationwide in demonstrations, according to a report from Peru’s ombudsman.

The unrest followed a day of turmoil, when one of Lima’s most historic buildings burned to the ground, as President Dina Boluarte vowed to get tougher on “vandals.” The destruction of the building, a near-century-old mansion in central Lima, was described by officials as the loss of a “monumental asset.” Authorities are investigating the causes. Romero claimed the blaze was “duly planned and arranged.”

Thousands of protesters descended on Lima this week calling for change and angered by the protests’ mounting death toll, which officially stood at 45. Protests have rocked Peru since President Pedro Castillo was ousted in December after he attempted to dissolve the legislature to prevent an impeachment vote. The unrest has until this week been concentrated in Peru’s south.

In the Cusco region, Glencore’s major Antapaccay copper mine suspended operations after protesters attacked the premises - one of the largest in the country - for the third time this month. Airports in Arequipa, Cusco and the southern city of Juliaca were also attacked by demonstrators, delivering a fresh blow to Peru’s tourism industry. “It’s nationwide chaos, you can’t live like this.



The Frontier Post

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Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at  
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,  
Peshawar.  
Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001  
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## French reforms, toll for Western monopoly

**F**URIOUS French came to the streets and mass public strikes crippled much of France's public transport on Thursday as protesters came out in force against a deeply unpopular pensions overhaul, with schools and media also heavily affected. France's trade unions called for mass mobilization, and over a million demonstrators are likely to gather in multiple cities across France.

France is currently passing through a mass public uprising against the recently introduced pension forms plan put forth by the ruling Emmanuel Macron government about a week ago. Macron's government has proposed an increase in the retirement age from 62 to 64. That will not only automatically increase the maturity term but also made it compulsory for elderly people to work two more years to get retirement benefits. Presently, more than 12 workers' unions are staging demonstrations against the pension reforms bill while almost all salaried persons including school teachers, doctors, Metro staff, factory workers, and daily wagers are on the strike to fail government plans to further squeeze their present-day life as well as their dotage living.

Realistically, the world has witnessed unprecedented series of circumstances ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the global energy crisis, skyrocketed inflation, and intensified global rivalry between major power blocs over the past years which not only changed the dynamics of the global economy but also prompted unimaginable economic problems and financial constraints for the nations around the globe. Ultimately, the repercussions of global events not only disrupted businesses, and politics across the universe but also undermined the civic, social, and daily life of the masses in all parts of the world. Most pro-public governments put curbs on their unessential spending, defense budgets, Ministers' tours, and tourism while the dictatorial regimes and selfish rulers imposed new taxes, announced cuts on old-age benefits, and extended the retirement age of the masses to replenish their depleted coffers. After all, the bulk of levies, price hikes, and public spending have to be borne by the common man in most of the nations in the world.

France is a centuries-old democracy and French leaders had been vocal advocates of civil liberties, and human and public rights at home and abroad. However, earlier the French government jacked up the retirement age from 60 to 62 and now mulling to raise it for another two years, along with a significant reduction in the benefits for retirees. Interestingly, Mr. Emmanuel Macron termed his pension reforms fair and responsible legislation while hoping the protests would not turn into violence and derail public life. Meanwhile, the French Police had prepared themselves to tackle all possible situations, called back its reserve force, and took up rubber bullets, water cannons, tear-gas shells, and Police officers had been armed with protective shields and wooden sticks to efficiently use those gear in their defense and assault the protesters.

The ongoing tussle between Russia and the Western bloc is on the rise that entirely bulldozed the global economy. Western nations are actively supporting Ukraine with billions of dollars, and modern weaponry to defeat their common enemy. Western leaders do not walk away from their political agenda and shamelessly busted the people's livelihood and old age benefit to implement their monopoly in the world. After all, what else poor masses can do except decry and commotion?

## Citiznry rights and NADRA's culpability

**T**HE Minister of State for Interior has informed the Senate that National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) had terminated 43 staffers involved in the illegal processing of Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) over the past year. According to the details, NADRA initiated 279 inquiries against employees involved in the illegal processing of the ID document during the period. As said, 181 CNICs were issued to non-nationals over the past three years that had been canceled by NADRA, while, 8,152 cases are still under the process of verification so far.

The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) was created by the government of Pakistan about 3 decades ago for the sole purpose of computerizing all citizenry data, to streamline record, facilitate national planning commission, and weed out anomalies from the registration process. It was a magnificent project that not only earned great admiration at home but also gained significant appreciation at the national level. However, like all other national institutions, NADRA could not maintained professional standards, and transnansy.

Gradually, NADRA became a hub of corruption, and nepotism because of irregular, adhoc, and no transparent recruitment of its employees, which led to institutionalized corruption, and misuse of authority at all levels including senior executives, and lower staff. According to reports, thousands of Afghan refugees, Indian nationals, Beharies, and Bengalis illegally procured Pakistan Computerized National Identity documents over the past years.

Historically, Pakistani bureaucracy never appraised the political leadership about the true deficiencies and poor performance of the national institutions and always comes up with unreal statistics, and the bulk of fake achievements to hide its failure and nonproductivity. In fact, NADRA's mismanagement has compromised national security because a large numbers of foreign nationals not only obtained citizenry documents but also got employment in sensitive institutions. However, NADRA and State institutions are unable to gauge the gravity of the problem and waiting for making up for the disaster. An institution could not achieve excellence until and unless its top brass implements merit and the law upon themselves and their colleagues, as evil stems from the top and travels downstream.

### Quote of the day

*In an ugly and unhappy world, the richest man can purchase nothing but ugliness and unhappiness.*  
— George Bernard Shaw, Irish writer, Nobel 1925.

# French president leaves country amid protests

Renat Abdullin

**T**HE French, outraged by the pension reform, declared a nationwide strike. People are determined. But the government is not going to give up either. About how events are developing - in the material of RIA Novosti.

Reform on the fly

At least a million people even joined the "trial" actions, which was also confirmed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Laurent Berger expects the mass character to increase by February. His CGT colleague Philippe Martinez is hoping for "millions" of demonstrators. At least 200 "collection points" have been opened in the country - this also compares favorably with the current organized actions from the spontaneous events of 2018 and 2019. The government has already submitted the second version of the pension reform bill to the State Council.

The pension system in France is very confusing with over forty options for different professions.

Emmanuel Macron explained: the reform is necessary precisely to simplify the system. Unification minimizes red tape, reduces the swollen bureaucratic apparatus.

However, the retirement age and seniority are rising.

Therefore, Macron's "optimization" plans were not popular from the very beginning. The president, counting on a second term, tried to smooth things over and did not force the process.

The victory in last year's elections, obviously, untied the hands of the authorities.

And on December 31, the head of state announced the launch of the reform. Ten days later, the government of Prime Minister Elizabeth Bourne announced its key provisions. And this caused public outrage.

Work longer, earn less

First, the retirement age is increased by two years to 64 years.

Secondly, for a full, without deductions, pension, 43 years of service are required (so far 42). That is, it is necessary to work out - officially and without interruptions - 21 years.

Macron and Born tried to reassure the population: all this is not right now. The length of service will be increased by 2027, the retirement age by 2030.

In addition, they will raise the minimum pension to 1200 euros per month (now - 1100).

But the French did not calm down. The eight largest trade unions have agreed to a nationwide strike and large-scale protests.

### Three round resistance

A trial, daily strike took place on 19 January. In the morning, transport communication was virtually paralyzed, many teachers in schools and higher educational institutions did not come to work. So did the

oilmen. Doctors have been on strike since the end of December.

The French Democratic Labor Confederation CFDT - the national trade union center - said the protests were a success. And this is just the beginning.

A 48-hour strike was planned for January 26-27, and a three-day strike for February 6-8, when the reform bill goes to parliament. Some trade unions want to organize actions on January 31 as well.

"The mandate received by Laurent Berger (head of the CFDT. — Ed.) at the last confederate congress allows him to oppose the government initiative without any negotiations. rela-

tions and trade unions.

### No more "yellow vests"

Unlike in 2018, when the French took to the streets in disparate factions, now the CFDT is clearly claiming to be a unifying force.

The authorities severely suppressed the movement

of "yellow vests" with the use of special equipment. Outcasts who aggressively clashed with the police discredited the protests. Therefore, the trade unions are trying to prevent any association with the vests.

This, however, does not guarantee that the authorities will not escalate again. The government, of course, understands that the demonstrators are on the side of the polls, according to which 68% of the French are unambiguously against the reform.

"There is a right to strike, there is a right to demonstrate," Born admits. At the same time, Macron has a reliable force resource. After all, if for ordinary Frenchmen the

experience rises to 43 years, then for the police there will still be less than 30. Therefore, they are in no hurry to join the protesters. And on January 19, some already used tear gas. About 40 people were detained.

### Millions protest and cautious concessions

At least a million people even joined the "trial" actions, which was also confirmed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Laurent Berger expects the mass character to increase by February. His CGT colleague Philippe Martinez is hoping for "millions" of demonstrators. At least 200 "collection points" have been opened in the country - this also compares favorably with the current organized

It is difficult to say how many people are ready to go on strike, writes Le Monde. If the government behaves with restraint, the protesters will grow bolder. But tough measures will also play against Macron.

According to the president, the changes should be accompanied by a "dialogue" and be, above all, "fair and responsible."

actions from the spontaneous events of 2018 and 2019.

The government has already submitted the second version of the pension reform bill to the State Council.

The text, which local journalists got acquainted with, is twice as long as the

first one (20 pages). The appendices, in particular, contain detailed information on the financial balances of the various welfare departments. But more importantly, the document notes for the first time that the cost of innovation at the moment will be greater than the potential savings.

And although Macron, going to the height of the protests with a visit to Barcelona, assured that the government would continue the pension reform, new notes were heard in his rhetoric.

According to the president, the changes should be accompanied by a "dialogue" and be, above all, "fair and responsible."

# West is losing in the fight for Africa

Petr Akopov

**I**N the war with Russia, the West has no forgotten fronts - everywhere you need to be on the alert. Work is under way on all continents - and Africa occupies a special place among them.

Not because there are 54 countries and their votes are important for obtaining a majority in the UN voting on resolutions condemning "aggressive Russia." These are all trifles, although the fact that last March the majority of African countries refused to vote together with the West, for some reason, was surprising for the "golden billion." But the point is not in symbolic resolutions, but in an absolutely concrete struggle for the future world order. In which today's Africa (in terms of population rapidly catching up with China and India ) will no longer be just an object of foreign manipulations, but will also try to seriously defend its own interests. Therefore, it is so important who will become a strategic partner for Africa in the coming decades - the West or the East: the USA and European China and Russia. There is, of course, a third force in the struggle for Africa - the Islamic world (which includes a large part of the Black Continent), but he himself is increasingly leaning from the West to the East.

It is not surprising that the upcoming joint Russian-Chinese-South African naval exercises off the coast of South Africa in a month are causing great displeasure in the West. After all, if, as South African Defense Minister Tandy Modise recently stated, the Americans "threaten Africa because of everything that smells of Russia," then what can we say about Russian warships at the southern tip of the continent. Joint exercises were already held in 2019, and all three countries are members of the BRICS, but the West seems to be discovering a new reality for itself for the first time: the non-Western world is increasingly not only establishing multilateral ties in various fields, but is also building a parallel architecture of a new world order. In trade, transport corridors, the financial system, arms trade and defense, raw materials, information security - and the initiators of the process are Russia and China. Moreover, despite the interconnectedness of their economies with the Western one, Moscow and Beijing have long since embarked on a course to reduce the dependence of their relations with the third world on global, that is, Anglo-Saxon, rules and mechanisms. And after the West tried to cut Russia out

of the world economy, and threatened China with grave consequences if it followed Russia's path, the process of separating the East from the West accelerated.

Africa, which at the same time needs huge help and is the last region with unlimited potential for growth (demographic and economic), and therefore appears as a welcome ally for everyone, sees in the showdown between West and East a chance to strengthen its own weight and gain true independence. But at the same time, it would be wrong to reduce the whole African position simply to the desire to benefit from "courtship", that is, to accept investments from both sides.

After all, most African countries (if you do not take North Africa with its separate history) already have more than sixty years of independence experience - and it showed how and with whom one can deal. Despite the insolvency of a significant part of African states, the processes of formation of national elites are still going on there - and there is also an understanding of the need for integration. Both regional and continental (within the African Union) integration has, of course, its side effects - this process can

turn into the creation of a new form of neo-colonial control by the West (for example, through the EU-African Union). Financial, personnel, ideological and other forms of Western control have been preserved almost everywhere in Africa, and all attempts to build independent African integration have always been very severely suppressed (as was the case, for example, with Muammar Gaddafi, who was almost overthrown by the discontent of the West his pan-African integration efforts).

However, most African countries understand that alone they will remain puppets of external forces, and by joining forces they will get a chance for both internal development and global play.

Russia offers Africa not only economic projects, but just help in gaining real independence from Western control. That is why in France they are so dissatisfied with the penetration of the Russian PMC "Wagner" into Francophone Africa - first into the Central African Republic, then into Mali and Burkina Faso. If the local elites see that with the help of Russians (primarily instructors) it is possible not only to restore order in

the country (by pinning down all sorts of separatist and rebel groups), but also to get rid of dependence on Paris, this will seriously undermine French influence in West and Central Africa.

But Russia can help not only in preparing the army and supplying weapons, but also in training personnel, building infrastructure projects, exploration and development of natural resources - many African countries remember all this from the 60s, from the time of the first Soviet campaign in Africa. In addition, there is China (the main trading partner and creditor, with huge investments and large infrastructure projects on the continent), and the Persian Gulf monarchies (with gigantic financial capabilities). That is, with the right combination of relations with non-Western players, Africa can really "leave the West" and move forward along the path of gaining subjectivity.

This is well understood in the West as well, and they are trying to use the Ukrainian situation to put pressure on Africa. They accuse Russia of threatening the world order, of rising prices for raw materials and food - calling on the countries of the Black Continent to join Western sanctions in order to "stop the aggressor." Last week,

two European - German and French - foreign ministers flew to Addis Ababa, where the headquarters of the African Union is located: Annalena Burbock and Catherine Colonna. The ladies convinced the hosts that "the African Union and Europe must stick together" because it is necessary to "stand shoulder to shoulder" against Putin, because the AU and the EU have common values, and "Europe and Africa are neighbors not only geographically.

With arguments about common values with Europe, Africans can agree only in the sense that British, French and German museums are really full of African values taken away during the colonial robbery. And, of course, African countries are not going to join the sanctions - moreover, Western pressure only strengthens their understanding of the importance of relations with Russia. Just during the trip of Burbock and Colonna to Ethiopia, it was announced that the second Russia-Africa summit would be held at the end of July in St. Petersburg. The first, held in Sochi in the fall of 2019, was a major step towards Russia's return to Africa, and the second will demonstrate the desire of the Black Continent for a new, post-Western world order.

# What did NATO decide on?

Andrey Kots

**T**HE next meeting of NATO defense ministers at the German Ramstein air base promised to be a milestone. The allies discussed increasing military support for Kyiv. However, it was not possible to agree on everything. About what Ukraine will receive - in the material of RIA Novosti.

### Berlin doubts

The main intrigue of the summit was the question: will the Americans and their closest allies convince Germany to give Kyiv Leopard 2 tanks and allow other countries to re-export.

It looks like they weren't convinced. Defense Minister Boris Pistorius stated that nothing had been decided on this score. And he stressed that all the pros and cons need to be carefully weighed again.

Germany's go-ahead for the supply of heavy armored vehicles is expected in Poland, Finland, Denmark, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Earlier, the Germans said they would not approve of this until the United States decided to take a similar step. The Americans once again explained the failure in the Abrams by the complexity of operation.

"What attracts attention is that they want to drag Germany into a conflict with Russia with all their

might. Probably, the German chancellor feels the worst of all today," says political scientist Nikolai Starikov. "He traditionally tries to do something "between trickles" - means the final deterioration of relations with the Kremlin.

But the allies are not appeased. Dutch Defense Minister Kaisa Ollongren even promised to pay for the delivery of Berlin changed its position. By the way, he showed special generosity at the summit. Among other things, he promised to think about F-16 fighters. If Kyiv asks.

### For new cases

So far, Ukrainians will receive 12 British Challenger 2s from heavy armored vehicles. However, even without tanks, the promised will be enough for a lot.

There has never been such a large-scale assistance. Speaking at the opening of the summit, Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin bluntly stated that support for NATO would last as long as needed. The conflict is at a turning point, he said.

The West is doing everything possible to provide the APU with an advantage. The United States will transfer 60 M2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, 90 Stryker armored personnel carriers, eight Avenger air defense systems, about 400 armored SUVs, hun-

dreds of thousands of shells of various calibers, and small arms ammunition. Great Britain, in addition to tanks, - 600 Brimstone missiles, 30 155-mm AS-90 self-propelled guns, as well as 200 infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers.

France - 40 AMX-10RC wheeled tanks, Bastion armored vehicles and Caesar self-propelled guns. In addition, Leclerc main battle tanks are going to be provided to Kyiv in Paris.

Sweden, which has not yet joined the alliance, promised 50 CV-90 infantry fighting vehicles and 12 155mm Archer wheeled self-propelled guns. The Czech Republic will also help with artillery - 30 Dana-M2 self-propelled guns.

This is enough for three NATO-style motorized infantry brigades. Most likely, they will become part of the new army corps, which are now being formed in western Ukraine. The lion's share of the personnel was trained in the West. With the support of NATO intelligence, these corps are a formidable force.

### What hasn't been reported before

So far, however, it is not clear how the rear services of the Armed Forces of

Ukraine intend to serve all this motley "zoo" of equipment from different countries. Moreover, the range of weapons is expanding every month.

For example, the next American assistance package includes Stryker armored fighting vehicles, which, depending on the modification, perform the functions of an infantry fighting vehicle, an armored personnel carrier, a self-propelled mortar, a light tank, or an ATGM complex. These are the mechanized brigades of the US Army, which occupy an intermediate position between heavy armored formations with Abrams tanks and M2 infantry fighting vehicles and light ones on Humvee armored vehicles and MRAP class vehicles.

Avenger air defense systems are mentioned for the first time. These are simple short-range air defense systems - eight FIM-92 Stinger MANPADS launchers based on the Humvee SUV. In the United States, they were removed from service about ten years ago. However, after studying the hostilities in Ukraine, the decommissioned equipment was returned from long-term storage bases and modernized.

The Swedish CV-90

infantry fighting vehicles will now appear in the war zone. These are quite serious vehicles with strong armor, good driving characteristics, a troop compartment for eight troopers and a 40mm Bofors L/70 rapid-fire autocannon. The gun - in fact, an improved anti-aircraft gun from the Second World War - turned out to be extremely successful and is used in various modifications in many armies. The caliber of the gun, as well as the power of its armor-piercing and sub-caliber shells, is quite enough to effectively deal with Russian armored vehicles up to tanks.

The Swedes will send artillery to the Kyiv regime - 30 Archer self-propelled guns. These are fully automated guns of 155 mm caliber, capable of opening fire on the move, as early as 30 seconds after receiving the target coordinates. The position changes just as quickly. The machine is designed to move through difficult terrain and has a speed of up to 70 kilometers per hour.

Also, the Armed Forces of Ukraine will receive the British AS-90 tracked self-propelled guns, which were previously used only in Iraq. In terms of tactical and technical characteristics, they are close to the American M109. All standard 155 mm NATO

ammunition is suitable for them, including those with a correct trajectory.

### Further more

Western tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, armored personnel carriers and artillery are designed to fill the critical shortage of "iron" in the formations and units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, political scientist Andrey Suzdaltsev believes.

"From the end of February to June last year, we completely defeated the old Ukrainian army with Soviet equipment," the expert says. "Then the armed forces were "reassembled" - we encountered this version in August. September, October. The equipment is broken, requires repair or is completely destroyed, stocks of shells are depleted."

NATO equipment will continue to be steadily "chewed" at the front. The aggregate assistance of the NATO countries is not yet able to block Russia's advantage in heavy "armor" and the capabilities of the military-industrial complex.

However, this flywheel will spin up more and more. Almost three and a half thousand Abrams tanks are idle at American storage bases. Perhaps the taboo on their supply will soon be lifted.



# The ‘Association of Gardeners and Gardeners’

THOSE who gathered yesterday at the US base in German Ramstein - regardless of the name of this meeting of representatives of fifty countries that are part of the anti-Russian army coalition - discussed a plan to start full-scale military operations against our country. As soon as possible.

The participants in the discussion could call themselves at least the "Consultative Group", at least the "Association of Gardeners and Gardeners" - the essence of the decisions made does not change. This is a declaration of war. And without any reservations and practically without any restrictions that could relate to

destroyed the USSR, they were closer than ever to the destruction of our country, breaking it up into republics and unleashing civil strife, setting fire here and there. But they miscalculated.

New Russia managed to get out of the noose (and she was already hanging on the gallows, uttering death rattles) to wriggle out. And not just get out, but practically rebuild the country (for the umpteenth time). Bringing, albeit not as fast as those who tried to annihilate us, prosperity, stability and confidence in the future.

Ramstein's pro-sessions, who are well aware that there will be no fourth time, act as if there were no previous attempts.

Elena Karaeva

able to continue to take part in hostilities. An effective intervention by the Russian Air Force must be prevented from the very beginning of the operation by powerful attacks against them."

This (with the appropriate corrections of the moment) is a quote from the blitzkrieg plan developed in 1940, which became the main part of Operation Barbarossa. It reads almost like today's correspondence following consultations at the Ramstein base.

In the same directive part of the operation, a special role was assigned to tank subunits. It was on them that the leadership of those gathered in Ramstein

ning. "Swift war" - not because they are stronger than us and outnumber us. Not at all. The West is in a hurry because the chief conductor of the current military campaign against Russia is running out of time. A few more weeks - and the United States will plunge (at first partially, and then in full) into a new election cycle, and those who make political decisions will definitely not be up to Ukraine. This is the first.

Second. A defeat in a proxy (let's keep the hypocrisy so honored on the banks of the Potomac) war with the main geopolitical adversary - Russia - will destroy all chances of the current owner of the White House for re-election.

fight with Russian tankers.

Fourth. United Europe today will not be able to afford to walk around the military canteen without denying itself anything, since the canteen is no longer the same, and there is no money for it. Macron's statements about increasing defense spending by 2030 to 400 billion euros have about the same weight as a fairy tale about a promise to teach a donkey to speak. Words are good, but deeds will not follow them.

But, taking into account all these facts and factors, you need to understand that the fight will be the most severe, that the armored fist with which they are preparing to strike at us will have to be destroyed.

**According to the same military doctrine more than 80 years ago, with which NATO dusted off, first light tanks are used to reconnoiter the terrain and repel possible attacks (the same AMX-10RC that Macron intends to supply to Kyiv), and then they use heavy - with powerful armor and weapons, but slow in battle. Sounds worrying? Undoubtedly. Look scary? Exclusively for those involved in blitzkrieg planning. "Swift war" - not because they are stronger than us and outnumber us. Not at all. The West is in a hurry because the chief conductor of the current military campaign against Russia is running out of time. A few more weeks - and the United States will plunge (at first partially, and then in full) into a new election cycle, and those who make political decisions will definitely not be up to Ukraine. This is the first. Second. A defeat in a proxy (let's keep the hypocrisy so honored on the banks of the Potomac) war with the main geopolitical adversary - Russia - will destroy all chances of the current owner of the White House for re-election. The Congress, which is already under the control of the Republicans, will begin what is usually done in America with political rivals - investigations of various levels, and there you can collect materials for impeachment. Third. Time is running out for the aggressors as well. That is, Europeans. That is, those who, we recall, were released at least twice by Russia. Driving Napoleon all the way to the Elbe, not forgetting to visit Paris at the same time, and exterminating the brown Nazi plague, destroying Hitlerism in his lair. In both cases, at the cost of the lives of millions. To our great sorrow.**

the use of certain types of weapons.

Calling the actions of the coalition troops (and it doesn't matter the presence or absence of the regular military of the North Atlantic Alliance directly in the clash zone in the area of the special operation carried out by Russia) the beginning of the war is both legitimate and reasonable, if you look at the list of future supplies to Ukraine. There is simply no non-heavy and non-offensive weapons.

The American military-industrial complex and its helmsmen - the Pentagon and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (analogous to the General Staff) - no longer have any containment centers, alternatives, and, most importantly, no choice.

The goal is to accomplish what the Reich coalition failed to do in the 40s, what NATO failed to do after the war, unleashing an arms race to weaken the Soviet economy, to which they added a powerful propaganda cold war. And, it seemed, having

The Americans, and they, of course, conduct this cotillion of petty and vindictive characters, alas, are poorly aware of both our history and the history of those battles in which the USSR won.

In Ramstein they are betting on a blitzkrieg, thinking that armored power is capable of crushing Russia. It can be almost unmistakable that this blitzkrieg will look something like this: "The main forces of the Russian ground forces must be destroyed by bold actions penetrating far into the territory of tank wedges, preventing the withdrawal of combat-ready enemy troops deep into the country. Through the rapid advance of the troops, you need to reach the line, from - behind which the Russian Air Force will not be able to carry out raids on objects in the territory. The ultimate goal of the operation is to create a shield.<...> During this operation, the Russian <...> fleet will be quickly deprived of its bases and, accordingly, will not be

- oh, excuse me, the command of the Wehrmacht - assigned the main role in breaking through the line of defense of Russian troops on the line of clashes to ensure, as they say among the military, "operational space" for the offensive.

"Pull-push" with German persuasion to supply its "Leopards" as military aid to Ukraine is not a performance for the public (until, however, a decision has been made), it's just that without this type of weaponry, the offensive may bog down.

According to the same military doctrine more than 80 years ago, with which NATO dusted off, first light tanks are used to reconnoiter the terrain and repel possible attacks (the same AMX-10RC that Macron intends to supply to Kyiv), and then they use heavy - with powerful armor and weapons, but slow in battle.

Sounds worrying? Undoubtedly. Look scary? Exclusively for those involved in blitzkrieg plan-

tion. The Congress, which is already under the control of the Republicans, will begin what is usually done in America with political rivals - investigations of various levels, and there you can collect materials for impeachment.

Third. Time is running out for the aggressors as well. That is, Europeans. That is, those who, we recall, were released at least twice by Russia. Driving Napoleon all the way to the Elbe, not forgetting to visit Paris at the same time, and exterminating the brown Nazi plague, destroying Hitlerism in his lair.

In both cases, at the cost of the lives of millions. To our great sorrow.

But as a result, France lost the army and ambitions of the conquering country (wheeled tanks and self-propelled guns "Caesar" - the military maximum that Paris is able to provide today), and Germany, despite the warlike words, is unlikely to agree, knowing how such games end, send your "Leopards" to

albeit calmly, patiently, knowing that the fate of the country is being decided. No more, but no less. That the result would be a world in which our interests and our security concerns had to be paid, as always, with our own blood.

It is not known what those gathered in Ramstein thought about this, but it is safe to say that their current blitzkrieg - with the "Leopards" and "Caesars" - will be broken. And not only by the power of Russian weapons and the famous Russian military spirit, but also because we studied the science of winning not at meetings and building the Maginot Line, but on the battlefield.

This practice is not bought from the budget, especially since it is impossible to pay for it with other people's money. Those who wish to familiarize themselves with such accounting can again study the history of the defeats of our enemies. And to get acquainted with the history of our triumphs on the battlefield.

## ‘This is a decisive decade for the world’

ON Friday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley gave a briefing at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, where they pledged the United States to the military defeat of Russia.

Milley announced the commitment of the United States and NATO to "go on the offensive to liberate Russian-occupied Ukraine." He repeated that Ukraine would use NATO armored vehicles and tanks to go on the "tactical and operational offensive to liberate the occupied areas."

With this declaration, the entire prestige of the NATO alliance is being staked on the reconquest of all Ukrainian territory, which according to the United States includes both the entire Donbas and the Crimean Peninsula.

As the immense challenges posed by the new American strategy emerge in the coming months and as the death toll among Ukrainian troops rises, the demand will inevitably be made for the direct deployment of NATO troops in the war. This would mean that American and Russian soldiers would be shooting at each other in the first general engagement between nuclear-armed states in history.

Milley is an active-duty military officer, and Austin is a retired four-star general who was granted a special dispensation from Congress to serve in the civilian office of defense secretary. These two four-star generals were effectively setting the foreign policy of the United States, in a sweeping display of the power of the military in American socie-

ty.

The explicit assertion by Milley and Austin that the weapons being provided by the US and NATO are of an offensive, not defensive character, is a 180-degree reversal of public statements by the Biden administration, which justified the escalation of US involvement in the war with the declaration that it would not provide "offensive" equipment.

"The equipment that we've provided is defensive, as you know, not offensive. And we see that as being a difference," White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said at a briefing in May.

"The idea that we're going to send in offensive equipment," Biden said that same month, "and have planes and tanks and trains going in with American pilots and American crews, just understand—and don't kid yourself, no matter what you all say—that's called 'World War III.'"

Late last month, Biden declared, "The idea we would give Ukraine material that is fundamentally different than is already going there, would have the prospect of breaking up NATO, and breaking up the European Union." He added, "They're not looking to go to war with Russia, they're not looking for a third world war."

If one accepts both the public statements of Milley and the repeated assertions of Biden, it would mean that the United States is in reality at "war with Russia." This undeclared war is being waged without congressional authorization or any effort to seek the approval of the American people.

The announcement by NATO that it is sending

offensive weapons to Ukraine has exposed the Biden administration's entire narrative of US involvement in Ukraine as a fraud. It has repeatedly claimed that the US and NATO are not involved in the war. But NATO is not only a party to the conflict, it is its driving force.

Like with all wars, as the fighting progresses, the debate over who "fired the first shot" fades away, and the real, complex social forces driving the war come into view.

Throughout 2022, the Biden administration claimed that it was intervening in the conflict in order to save Ukrainian lives. In the year-long conflict, it has become clear that America's only use for the Ukrainian population is as cannon fodder for a war to dominate the Eurasian landmass.

Opening the meeting, Austin declared, "As President Biden said, this is a decisive decade for the world." This was a quotation from Biden's introduction to the United States' National Security Strategy, which declares that the United States "will seize this decisive decade to advance America's vital interests, position the United States to outmaneuver our geopolitical competitors."

Throughout the event, there was no mention of the word "ceasefire" or "peace." Instead, Milley declared, "This war, like many wars in the past, will end at some sort of negotiating table."

But what Milley was describing as a "negotiating table" is like the one played aboard the USS Missouri, in which Japanese Foreign

Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu signed the unconditional surrender of Japan, with the alternative being, in the words of the Potsdam Declaration, "prompt and utter destruction."

Following the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japanese cities and a series of fire-bombings that killed hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians, that war, too, ended at the negotiating table.

Even as they admitted that the United States' intentions in the war were fundamentally offensive, the generals engaged in the obligatory lies and hypocrisy with which the gears of war are oiled.

"International aggression, where large countries use military force to attack small countries and change recognized borders, cannot be allowed to stand," declared Austin. This comes from a country that has, in the past quarter century alone, illegally attacked or occupied Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria.

Austin continued, "It's about the world that we want our children and grandchildren to inherit." In fact, the catastrophe unleashed by US imperialism in its "decisive decade" will, if not stopped, leave the next generation with a charred wasteland, if there is a generation left to witness it.

Responding to NATO's assertion that its goal is the defeat of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, penned a brief statement on Telegram: "The loss of a nuclear power in a conventional war can provoke the outbreak of a nuclear war.

Nuclear powers do not lose major conflicts on which their fate depends."

The position of American imperialism, however, is that the use of nuclear weapons—either by Russia or the US itself—cannot be a deterrent in the escalation of the conflict. In an editorial published Wednesday, the Wall Street Journal demanded strikes inside of Russian territory, declaring, "Why should a dictator who rolled over a foreign border be free to claim his territory as sacrosanct?" It concluded, "The rejoinder is that Mr. Putin might unleash a nuclear weapon, but the past months have shown that he will make that decision based on his own calculations in any case."

This editorial reflects the utterly reckless mood that has gripped the capitalist oligarchy, which sees war as a way out of the myriad social, economic, and political crises gripping the capitalist social order.

The social forces driving the war were shown at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where billionaires and the heads of major banks hobnobbed with Ukrainian oligarchs and warmongers, such as the disgraced former British Prime Minister Boris "Let the bodies pile high in their thousands" Johnson, who declared, "Give them the tanks! There's absolutely nothing to be lost."

But the same crisis that underlies imperialist war is propelling the growth of the class struggle throughout the world. It is the international working class, mobilized on the basis of a socialist program, that will put an end to the conspiracies of the ruling elites and the capitalist profit system.



## Ukraine crisis: If anyone benefits from prolonged fighting, it’s Russia

IT lies in our interest — and that of the Ukrainians — to avoid a prolonged war in Ukraine. There is an important line between the West helping Ukraine defend itself, escalating the war to a dangerous level, and merely advancing a war of attrition — the latter of which may end up playing into Russian hands.

Suzanne Loftus

and Vladimir Putin himself has repeatedly cautioned that any attack on Russia could provoke a nuclear response.

Just recently, Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council Dmitri Medvedev also warned of a nuclear war should the West try to defeat Russia in Ukraine. While many believe the threat of escalation and nuclear war to be overblown, or claim these threats have been discredited, gambling on this is immensely unwise regardless of the risk factor, as the costs would be enormous and irreversible. This does not mean that we would be "yielding to nuclear blackmail," but rather applying caution to our strategy. The Biden administration appears to agree with this logic and has been reluctant to provide Ukraine with longer-range missiles, as Biden reiterated in a press conference during Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to the White House.

Cold War, issues that will not resolve themselves without taking concrete steps to address them. One such issue is NATO enlargement (which also raises concerns on the placement of foreign bases and strategic weapons) and the different interpretations of the "indivisibility of security." Moreover, the rising nationalism that will ensue in Russia as a result of its continued isolation will only tap into the Kremlin's anti-Western narrative.

Europe, meanwhile, is in the grips of an economic crisis. Britain, France, Germany, and Spain are all seeing labor unrest and waves of protests as wages fail to keep up with the precipitous rise in the cost of living. The skyrocketing cost of energy has forced industries across the continent to shut down or suspend production, particularly as Washington rolls out its Inflation Reduction Act. This has alarmed EU officials, who fear that businesses will shift production to the United States, leading to the deindustrialization of Europe's major economies. The continent could see a consequent rise in inequality, populism, and political unrest — as seen in the UK and the United States. These developments could create rifts in the transatlantic relationship, particularly as the United States simultaneously pressures the EU to follow its lead in distancing itself from China economically — which the EU cannot afford.

Americans are also struggling with inflation, which, although not as sharp as Europe's, is causing people to increasingly question their government's level of support for Ukraine if that means paying more for food and gas. According to a poll conducted in December by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 47 percent of Americans believe Washington should urge Kyiv to settle for peace as soon as possible, even if Ukraine would lose territory.

Time may very well be on Putin's side, particularly as Russia has three times the manpower as Ukraine and a population accustomed to riding out tough economic times, unlike much of the Western world.

Based on the negative consequences of a protracted conflict illustrated above, it is within our interest to bring this war to an end. Rather than doing so by dramatically escalating the war, we need to pair our military assistance with real moves towards a peace settlement in Ukraine. The United States so far has not exhausted all its possibilities to initiate talks and should be investing far more into a diplomatic approach. As the main provider of Ukrainian financial and military support, the United States is in the position to take on this role. People's lives and livelihood depend on it, as does the future of European security.

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# ECC's decision to import second-hand tractors rejected by PAAPAM

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts & Accessories Manufacturers (PAAPAM) has rejected the decision of Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) to import second-hand tractors, terming the move as totally ill-advised and dangerous, as it would be another nail in the coffin of the local auto parts and engineering industry of Pakistan.

In a joint statement, issued here on Saturday, Chairman PAAPAM Munir K. Bana, Senior Vice Chairman Usman Aslam Malik and Vice Chairman Taufiq Sherwani, observed that this move has become the last measure to sink the ship of the local industry. They said that the members of PAAPAM were looking forward to innovations and initiatives to revive the tractor industry, but this decision has shocked them beyond measure.

The office bearers of

PAAPAM said, "Auto industry is under attack from all the fronts. On the one hand, the government was not allowing import of raw materials on account of depleting foreign currency reserves and on the other hand it is planning to drain these reserves recklessly, by importing junk second hand tractors. Needless to mention, the current tractor manufacturing is already on partial shutdown but, with opening of imports, over a million more jobs will be lost in the engineering industries of the country."

The auto parts engineering industry spokesman stated that the decision of the government to allow second hand tractors would be of no benefit to the farmers, as imported second hand tractors are expected to be more expensive than locally produced new tractors, considering the fact that Pakistan pro-

duces the cheapest tractors in the world. Furthermore, the tractor market is currently not facing any supply issues as the industry is running far below its capacity due to the economic downturn.

Both tractor manufacturers had recently suspended their operations due to reduced demand, impacting hundreds of parts makers who were supplying kits to them. Most important, neither mechanics nor spare parts for imported tractors would be available locally to service imported tractors. Second-hand imported tractors would also enhance the fuel bills of the farmers as old imported machines cannot be expected to be fuel efficient.

PAAPAM said the ailing vendor industry was already on life support and could not afford such imprudent decisions by the ECC. PAAPAM demanded that the government call off

the decision immediately, as it would be the worst disaster for the country's tractor industry. Around 300 tractor parts manufacturing SMEs currently stand closed due to a near total crash in demand for tractors and a severe cash crunch due to stoppage of verified GST refunds by FBR to tractor assemblers.

Munir Bana further said that, currently 100,000 tractor parts industry workers, mainly in Punjab & Sind regions, are out of jobs, and Government must act now to save this local industry, that feeds Pakistan's agricultural economy, already devastated by recent floods.

PAAPAM recommended that the government must review its decision to import used tractors in the light of current threat of food insecurity, which was hovering over our heads, with disastrous consequences and we must act fast to avert it.



KARACHI: Renowned artist Aisha Umar visiting stall of City Property Expo 2023 at Expo Centre.

## Wolfspeed plans multi-billion dollar chip factory

FRANKFURT (Reuters): US power chip maker Wolfspeed Inc (WOLFEN) is planning to build a factory in Germany for more than 2 billion euros (\$2.17 billion), Handelsblatt reported on Saturday.

The German auto supplier ZF will hold a minority stake, the business newspaper said, citing unidentified sources familiar with the project.

Production should begin in four years at the site in the small southwest German state of Saarland, the report added.

A spokesperson for the economics ministry of Saarland declined to comment. Wolfspeed didn't immediately respond to requests for comment outside of normal business hours. ZF declined to comment.

Intel (INTC.O) last year named Magdeburg, Germany, as the site for its \$88 billion investment drive across Europe.

## Global stocks conclude volatile week

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Stock markets rebounded on Friday after a rocky week dominated by uncertainty over whether the global economy will suffer recession this year as central bankers continue to address inflation.

Major indices in New York, which have been under pressure most of this week, enjoyed a buoyant session, led by tech shares following strong Netflix subscription figures.

The streaming giant reported lower quarterly profits, but Netflix shares surged 8.5 percent after subscriber figures topped analyst estimates, as hits such as "Wednesday" and "Harry & Meghan" drew in new viewers.

Analysts also cited comments from Federal Reserve Governor Christopher Waller endorsing a 25-basis point interest increase at the Fed's next meeting, smaller than other recent hikes.

"After four or five days of down markets, investors probably feel that most of the bad news is already out and perhaps the selling was overdone," said Jack Ablin of Cresset Capital.

All three major US indices rose, with the Nasdaq leading with a 2.7 percent jump.

The gains in New York followed earlier up sessions in Asia and Europe.

# Dar chairs RRMC's first introductory meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar here on Saturday chaired the first introductory meeting of Reforms and Resource Mobilization Commission (RRMC).

Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Chairman FBR Asim Ahmad, Chairman RRMC Ashfaq Yousuf Tola, Dr. Mohammad Iqbal, Abdul Hameed Memon, Dr. Veqar Ahmed, Ghazanfar Bilour, Ardsheer Saleem Tariq and Tauqeer Ahmed attended the meeting in person while President Pakistan Tax Bar Association Rana Munir Hussain, President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Irfan

Iqbal Sheikh, Asif Haroon, Haider Ali Patel, Abdul Qadir Memon and Ziad Bashir virtually attended the meeting through zoom.

The Finance Minister welcomed the members of the Commission and highlighted the economic and financial outlook of the country.

He shared that despite of inheriting a weak economic legacy, the government was determined to set the economy in right direction and introduce reforms in various sectors to achieve economic stability and growth.

Dar further highlighted the importance of the RRMC in identifying issues and difficulties in the exiting taxation system and suggesting reforms in existing revenue policies for

resource mobilization and ease of doing business to achieve sustainable economic growth.

The Finance Minister extended his best wishes and support to the Commission and emphasized the members to put their best efforts for fast-track activity of the Commission in introducing tax reforms for the financial and economic stability and enhancement of revenue generation.

Chairman RRMC Ashfaq Yousuf Tola also briefed the meeting on the formation and responsibilities of the Commission and assured the meeting of its full cooperation to achieve the mandate of the Commission at the earliest for the betterment and progress of the country.

## UAE gold prices:

# Investors will soon have more 'DigiGold' options

DUBAI (Agencies): A new generation of investors in the UAE are getting into gold – but they are not buying up jewellery in the process. In fact, chances are they will not even be seeing the gold they are buying.

That's what 'DigiGold' is all about – where investors buy in grams starting from as low as Dh100. And they do not take possession of the gold they bought, with the 'storage' done under their name elsewhere. When they feel the time is right, they can sell their gold 'holdings' at a time they choose – these days there are more investors thinking of DigiGold as the option.

"These are investors who would never have thought of any gold exposure five or six years ago," said according to a commodities analyst. "They are typically in 25-30/35 age group, don't much care for jewellery, and only came into gold because how the asset has been performing since January 2020. These are the 'post-Covid' investors in gold."

On Friday (January 21), the UAE gold rate has touched its highest point of the year, at Dh216 a gram for 22K. The international bullion price is at \$1,926 an ounce after having reached \$1,936 in the last 24 hours. Since November, gold is up 20 per cent.

Just in the last 30 days, gold is up by \$138 in ounce terms.

"Since Covid, gold has

been the one asset that's been performing consistently," said Shamal Ahmed, Managing Director – International Operations at Malabar Gold & Diamonds, which plans to offer DigiGold investment options to investors in India by mid-2-2023 and then extend the same to UAE and Gulf operations.

"Currently, there are only two players offering DigiGold investments in the UAE and we plan to join them soon. New investors need new ways of getting into gold – and we find that DigiGold can generate a sizeable level of interest.

"This does not mean that shoppers focus on jewellery and physical possession of gold will come down. But we want to offer all options – and investing in gold with storage being done elsewhere is catching on." (The global consultancy Accenture is advising Malabar Gold & Diamonds on this plan.)

Two other leading retailers confirm they are also likely to venture into DigiGold. "We could offer either Dh100 minimum investment or buying Dh1 gram," said a source. "More awareness will build among UAE consumers up on DigiGold as a fail-safe investment option this year.

"We see that many consumers because of the high gold prices currently struggle with saving enough and then buy jewellery. With DigiGold, they can

make investments in smaller lots and then add to their grams regularly."

In recent weeks, more options are opening up in the UAE on how best to capture the value gains gold has been recording since January 2020. Since then, gold has twice touched record highs of \$2,000 plus (the peak UAE gold rate has been Dh235 a gram for 22K).

Some financial institutions are offering 'gold loans' to business owners and individuals in lieu of their gold assets. Because of the collateral involved, these gold loans come at lower interest rates than the typical bank loans – and that counts in a high interest rate situation such as the present.

"Businesses and individuals are becoming more innovative in tapping gold's power," said an analyst. "Too long, it was seen as being a safe haven and not offering anything between the actual buying and the selling. It's not the case anymore."

If the gold loan and DigiGold schemes catch fire with businesses and individual investors, that message will have filtered through.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, on Saturday visited Atlantis The Royal, a new iconic landmark on Dubai's Palm Jumeirah Island.

# Incompetence key reason behind economic crises: Azfar Ahsan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former state minister and chairman Board of Investment (BoI) Muhammad Azfar Ahsan has said that incompetence is the major reason behind the prevailing economic crises and the investors need handholding and assurances.

He was speaking as keynote speaking at a roundtable titled "Pakistan's Investment Climate: The Way Forward", hosted by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). The session was chaired by Chairman IPS Khalid Rehman while Vice Chairman Syed Abrar Hussain welcomed the guests.

The objective of the session was to explore the current challenges faced by local and foreign investors and the desired economic strategies to overcome the prevailing crises.

Azfar Ahsan was of the view that the three key issues faced by country's economy were lack of vision, lack of political will and the need for collaboration. He said that under the current circumstances, doing business in Pakistan is not less than jihad.

He said that the investors need handholding and assurances, as their profits go back into developing the

infrastructure in Pakistan; and one success story creates opportunities for others to follow. Similarly, he said Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) must be privatized as they have become a major drain on national resources and the Privatization Commission's performance is dismal for the lack of expediency and identification of issues.

Extrapolating on Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), Azfar Ahsan said that the FDI portfolio is less than USD 3 billion, which is not sustainable for a country of over 230 million people. "Our investment climate is challenging for the lack of consistency and facilitation," he emphasized. Commenting on the turnover and lack of continuity, he stated that he was the fourth BoI Chairman and saw the appointment of the sixth FBR Chairman and fifth Finance Secretary during his tenure.

Talking of FDI, Azfar Ahsan said, "Investors need handholding and assurances, as their profits go back into developing the infrastructure in Pakistan and one success story creates opportunities for others to follow."

He insisted that Pakistan must focus on six to eight countries as best case studies, to attract investment. He further highlighted that Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan's investment strategies are excellent model for Pakistan to follow. These economies have shown remarkable develop-

ment in a short time. "We need to create a similar ecosystem in Pakistan with a simultaneous focus on G2G, G2B, and B2B."

While contemplating China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, Azfar Ahsan highlighted CPEC as a great example of FDI and solemnly noted that not much is being done to productively utilize the opportunity. He said that the Chinese government has already established Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in 22 countries; BoI had recommended that this should be the top agenda in our meeting with China's President Xi.

The Saudi government has funding available for eight priority sectors. Their biggest desire is to engage Pakistan as a Food Security partner; they want to establish an Agri Zone in Pakistan, in addition to an oil refinery in Balochistan. Unfortunately, the delay has been at our end, as we have failed to deliver ready projects; meanwhile, KSA is investing aggressively in other countries. Azfar Ahsan further added that during his meeting with KSA's Investment Minister, they designed an investment strategy for both countries, based on an opportunity of a few billion dollars per annum. No progress has been made since then, and the State is only focusing on getting bailouts.

Azfar Ahsan believes it is wrong to blame any political government,

bureaucracy, or army for the reasons of lack of investment. This is shared responsibility and shared failure. "Right now, there is a compulsion to sign an agreement with the IMF, but USD 1.1 billion is insignificant if we compare it to the potential of investment that we have to generate on our own. We can bring in FDI of USD 6 to 8 billion in three to five years and around USD 15 billion in eight to ten years, given a stable framework of policies that is above any political change."

Another big concern for investors is the FBR's function and policies, he said. They feel burdened beyond their feasibility. It has reached a level of exploitation and needs immediate solutions.

However, addressing issues this complex, at the national level with an international context we need strong leadership and that is the office of the Prime Minister only. The state's Prime Minister is responsible for resolving bureaucratic hurdles; in the past, none of the premiers were able to do so.

The attendees praised the roundtable format for enabling them an equal voice in the discussion. They contributed through insightful questions and statements and shared appreciation for a candid approach toward understanding the impediments and finding solutions, which of course begin with a clear vision and meritocracy above anything else.

# Abbott faces US criminal probe: WSJ

NEW YORK (Reuters): Abbott Laboratories' Michigan plant, which was at the center of the US baby formula shortage last year, faces a criminal investigation by the Justice Department, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Panicked parents emptied baby formula aisles at supermarkets last year as a recall of formulas by Abbott due to complaints of bacterial infections exacerbated a shortage that began due to pandemic-induced supply chain issues.

The White House intervened to address the short-

age.

Attorneys with the Justice Department's consumer-protection branch are conducting the criminal investigation, the WSJ report said, citing people familiar with the matter.

"DOJ has informed us of its investigation and we're cooperating fully," an Abbott spokesman told Reuters, without commenting further on the nature of the probe. The DOJ did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In February 2022, Abbott, the biggest US supplier of baby formula,

recalled Similac and other infant formula products produced at the Michigan facility after reports of bacterial infections in babies who had consumed products made there.

The US Food and Drug Administration found "shocking" results during an inspection such as cracks in vital equipment, a lack of adequate handwashing and evidence of previous bacterial contamination.

The regulator and the company later reached an agreement that allowed the plant to reopen.

decisions that led us here."

Pichai said that the cuts would "sharpen our focus" on priorities including artificial intelligence.

"Being constrained in some areas allows us to bet big on others," he said.

Google's world-dominating search engine has found itself under pressure with the emergence of ChatGPT, a Microsoft-backed chatbot that can generate elaborate, human-like content in just seconds.

Microsoft has said the technology will be used to strengthen Bing, the long-

time rival to Google search.

Google has turned to founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, who have left their daily roles at the tech titan, for help responding to the threat posed by the chatbot, according to a New York Times report.

Brin and Page met with Google executives several times last month to brainstorm, the Times reported.

Google declined to comment directly on the Times report.

"We have long been focused on developing and deploying AI to improve

people's lives," said Google spokesperson Lily Lin. "We continue to test our AI technology internally to make sure it's helpful and safe, and we look forward to sharing more experiences externally soon."

Pichai announced severance packages for US employees, who will receive at least 16 weeks of salary, their 2022 bonus, paid vacations and six months of health coverage.

He said he remained "optimistic about our ability to deliver on our mission, even on our toughest days."

Wall Street welcomed the cuts: Alphabet shares ended the formal trading day up more than 5 percent to \$98.02. This tracked the effect of job cuts on other tech giants, with Meta's share price up 35 percent since it announced 11,000 job cuts on November 9 and Amazon's stock was up 13 percent since 18,000 people were let go earlier this month.

Analysts have said tech's big guns had previously overspent, not seeing a slowdown on the horizon. Daniel Ives of Wedbush

Securities said the layoffs highlight a long period of irresponsible spending across a sector basking in "hypergrowth."

"The reality is tech stalwarts overhired at a pace that was unsustainable and now darker macro is forcing these layoffs across the tech space," he said.

According to tech site Layoffs.fyi, nearly 194,000 industry employees have lost their jobs in the US since the beginning of 2022, not including those announced by Alphabet on Friday.

# Google cuts 12,000 jobs as tech woes bite again

NEW YORK (INP): Google's parent company Alphabet announced Friday it will cut about 12,000 jobs globally, citing a changing economic reality as it became the latest US tech giant to enact large-scale restructuring.

The layoffs come a day after Microsoft said it would reduce staff numbers by 10,000 in the coming months, following similar cuts by Facebook owner Meta, Amazon and Twitter as the tech sector girds for economic downturn.

The cuts follow a major

hiring spree during the height of the coronavirus pandemic when companies scrambled to meet demand as people went online for work, school and entertainment. "Over the past two years we've seen periods of dramatic growth," Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai said in an email to employees.

"To match and fuel that growth, we hired for a different economic reality than the one we face today." A review is taking place to make sure that people and their roles are in line with the company's

priorities, Pichai said, adding that the workforce would be reduced by around 12,000 positions.

Alphabet employed nearly 187,000 workers worldwide at the end of September 2022. The cuts represent a little over 6 percent of its total workforce.

The cuts will be "across departments, functions, levels of responsibility and regions," Pichai added.

"The fact that these changes will impact the lives of Googlers weighs heavily on me, and I take full responsibility for the





## In brief

## Smith's second Big Bash ton helps Sixers win

SYDNEY (Agencies): Australian batter Steve Smith put in a stellar performance with his second successive Big Bash century for the Sydney Sixers. Smith's 125 net out included nine sixes and five fours off 66 balls as his side made 187-2 against the Sydney Thunder. The Sixers went on to dismiss their opponents for 64, with 4-10 for Steve O'Keefe to win by 125 runs. On Tuesday, former Australia captain Smith hit 101 as the Sixers beat the Adelaide Strikers. Earlier this week the 33-year-old confirmed he will warm up for this summer's Ashes with a stint at Sussex in the County Championship. He will be available for three matches before the first Ashes Test begins at Edgbaston on 16 June.

## PCF to send TOs to Uzbekistan

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Cycling Federation three Technical Officials (TOs) including Barrister Adnan Ahsan Khan, Haroon General and Sarmad Shahab Saturday decided to send an International Technical Course to Uzbekistan to be starting from January 26. This was stated by President Pakistan Cycling Federation Syed Azhar Ali Shah while talking to APP here on Saturday. He said the Technical Course UCI MBX National Elite Commissaire is scheduled from January 26-29, 2023 at Jizzax Region Uzbekistan. He said so far Pakistan has services of 10 such international TOs, both male and female, which enable the Pakistan Cycling Federation to hold any of the international events in Pakistan. He said Pakistan Cycling Federation is trying hard to get equipped with qualified TOs even in the coaching and training sections as well for which they have also sent cyclists to get international coaching and training for their future assignments in their respective fields.

## KP Jr Tennis enters into final stage

PESHAWAR (APP): The first Haji Malik Umar Khattab Khalil Memorial KP Junior Tennis Championship being played at the Synthetic Courts of Peshawar sports Complex here Saturday entered the final stage. Secretary General of KP Tennis Association Umar Ayaz Khalil was the chief guest on the occasion. In the quarter-final matches of U-16, Shah Sawar defeated Zain Roman by 6-2 and 6-3, Muhammad Uzair upset seeded 3 Arsalan by 6-2 and 6-4 while Ryan Khalil upset seeded No. 6 Faisal Khan by 6-4 and 6-4 in a tough match and Hamza Rehmat defeated Talha Khan by 6-3 and 6-3 and qualified for the semi-finals. In the U-13 competitions, Arsalan Khan defeated Zain Roman 6-4 and 6-3. Talking to media men, Umar Ayaz Khalil said that they were focusing on junior players and that was why holding the tournaments in different age groups. He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa got an honor of having more than 10 national ranking players in various age groups. He expressed his determination that the players would bring more international honors for the country and the nation. Through competitive exposure, these players will get opportunities to come forward in the same way in future, he added.

## Djokovic battles into Australian Open last 16 but Murray bows out

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Novak Djokovic's hamstring just about held up as the hot favourite reached the Australian Open last 16 on Saturday, as Andy Murray's heroic run ended in typically defiant style.

Hard-hitting Aryna Sabalenka meanwhile burnished her title credentials as she barreled into round four along with several other women's seeds. An ailing Djokovic had heavy strapping and needed treatment twice on his troublesome left hamstring before defeating Grigor Dimitrov 7-6 (9/7), 6-3, 6-4 on Rod Laver Arena.

The Serb will face home hope Alex de Minaur for a place in the quarter-finals as he closes on a 10th Melbourne Park crown and a record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam title. "Obviously, I didn't know how I'm going to feel physically, it was going up and down," said Djokovic. "It was an incredible battle, three sets over three hours. Let's rest up and

prepare for the next one."

Djokovic's fellow 35-year-old Murray will not join him in the next round, however, as the Briton's 4:05 am finish eventually caught up with him. Former number one Murray was clearly feeling the effects of his epic five-setter in round two, which started on Thursday but ended in the early hours of Friday.

The 24th-seeded Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut won 6-1, 6-7 (7/9), 6-3, 6-4 and faces unseeded Tommy Paul of the United States in the last 16. Also in the men's draw, fifth seed Andrey Rublev surged into a clash with Holger Rune -- then thanked his beaten opponent Dan Evans for giving him a banana mid-match. The Russian crushed the Briton 6-4, 6-2, 6-3 to make the fourth round for a third time.

He will face Danish teenager Rune for a place in the quarter-finals after the ninth seed survived a nasty fall to sweep past unseeded

Frenchman Ugo Humbert 6-4, 6-2, 7-6 (7/5). His friend and 25th seed Evans threw a banana to Rublev at a changeover when he ran out.

"I didn't ask him, I asked the ball boy, but Danny asked for bananas earlier and he had two so he just said 'take it', and I caught it," said Rublev. "He helped me with some energy, for sure," he joked. In two all-American matches, Jeffrey Wolf strolled past Michael Mmoh in three sets while Paul made equally light work of Jensen Brooksby.

- Ominous Sabalenka - Sabalenka is building a head of steam in her pursuit of a first Grand Slam title.

The Belarusian fifth seed blew away 26th-seeded Elise Mertens 6-2, 6-3 to set up a clash with Olympic champion Belinda Bencic.

Thirtieth seed Karolina Pliskova and 23rd seed Zhang Shuai also went through in straight sets on day six at Melbourne Park, and will clash in the fourth round. Sabalenka is trying not to get carried away.

The Minsk-born 24-year-old teased the Margaret Court Arena crowd for supporting Belgium's Mertens over her, but said she was enjoying the ride into the second week.

"About the favourite, that I am on that favourite list... I mean, it's really good that I'm there," said the Belarusian, who is yet to drop a set.

"But I better focus on myself, on my game, make sure that my dream will happen," Bencic has also not dropped a set in Melbourne. The Swiss 12th seed eased past unseeded Italian Camila Giorgi 6-2, 7-5. Also into the fourth round is the 17-year-old Linda Fruhvirtova, who beat her fellow Czech Marketa Vondrousova in three sets. She faces Donna Vekic of Croatia. "It feels pretty surreal," the teenager told reporters. "It's an incredible feeling. I'm just so happy and excited to be able to say: 'Hi second week!'"



MELBOURNE: Andy Murray of Great Britain plays a backhand in the third round singles match.

## Two int'l squash events for men, women to be organized this year; Qamar Zaman

PESHAWAR (APP): One each PSA Ranking Tournament for Men and Women among 24 others squash tournaments would be organized this year in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, former World Champion Qamar Zaman said while addressing a press conference here Saturday.

He said it is a big achievement of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Squash Association, headed by President Dawood Khan, for receiving the President Pride of Performance Trophy for holding most tournaments in the province.

Announcing a complete schedule of the Annual competitions for the year 2023, Former World Champion and Squash Legend Qamar Zaman said that Pakistan Squash Federation had given formal approval to all our events in their annual Calendar for Year 2023.

Accompanied by Associate Secretary and Treasurer of the Association Sajjad Khan, Wazir Gul and President Pakistan sports Writers Federation Amjad Aziz Malik, Qamar Zaman, who is also Chairman KP Squash Association, said that like every year, this year too, they will try to hold as many tournaments as possible.

A total of 24 tournaments will be held, including 12 national and 12 provincial level competitions with two international circuits under

PSA. According to the schedule, the All Pakistan Junior Boys Squash Championship will be held in Peshawar from January 23-26. The prize money will be Rs. 100,000. All Pakistan Senior Men's Squash Championship will be held in Peshawar from Feb 13-17, the prize money of which is Rs. 100,000. A 10-day training camp will also be organized from May 20-30, 2023. There will be an All Pakistan Junior Squash Championship with a prize money of Rs. 200,000. All Pakistan Junior Boys Squash Championship will be held from August 8-13, 2023 with a prize money of Rs. 300,000 along with 15-day training camp.

The All Pakistan Women's Senior Squash Championship will be held from Oct 10-14, with a prize money of Rs. 100,000. There will be a 20-day training camp for KP boys while from Dec 12-17 there will be an All Pakistan Junior Squash Championship with a prize money of Rs. 300,000 and a 15-day training camp.

The prize money was Rs 60, 000 and a ten-day event will be organized for it alongside KP Junior Squash Championship from Feb 5-8, KP Junior Girls Squash Championship from March 21-27, and a month-long camp in April and May.

Competitions between training camp and age group

players will be held from June 14-17 alongside Inter-Schools Boys and Girls Squash Championship from June 28-30. KP Junior Boys Squash Championship from July 14-16, KP Junior Boys Girls' Squash Championship from August 11-14, KP Men's Senior Squash Championship from August 22-27.

The KP Senior Squash Championship will be held in Peshawar from Oct 24-29, the Inter-District Boys U21 Squash Tournament will be held in Abbottabad from Nov 18-22, while the KP Women's Senior Squash C'ship will be held from Dec 5-10. Qamar Zaman said that there is more focus on juniors and we are also giving opportunities to girls players as well. The PAF Squash academy selected the players by visiting the schools, so Inter-School competitions could be organized to find out new faces from schools as well, he added.

He lauded Ex-Chief Minister KP Mahmood Khan and Ex-Sports Minister KP M Atif Khan for the construction of squash courts inside educational institutions both for girls and boys students because players are getting opportunities at the grassroots level. Now there are facilities of squash courts in each district and hopefully players from other districts would also come up at national and international level.



SYDNEY: Australia celebrate the run out of Sadaf Shamas of Pakistan during game three of the Women's One Day International Series between Australia and Pakistan.

## Shami helps India hammer New Zealand to clinch ODI series

RAIPUR (Agencies): Mohammed Shami led an inspired pace attack to set up a crushing eight-wicket, series-clinching win for India in the second one-day international against New Zealand on Saturday.

Shami, India's pace spearhead, returned figures of 3-18 to help dismiss the Black Caps for 108 after the hosts elected to bowl first in Raipur. Skipper Rohit Sharma made 51 and Shubman Gill an unbeaten 40 as India romped home in 20.1 overs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

At the toss Rohit took a while to announce his decision to field and told the presenter he "forgot" about the team call. But things soon turned serious when Shami struck in the first over and with his fellow quicks had the tourists reeling at 15-5 by the 11th over.

Glenn Phillips made 36 as he combined with the middle- and lower-order batsmen including Michael Bracewell (22) and Mitchell Santner (27) to take the total past 100, but the innings lasted only 34.3 overs.

After Shami's opening-ball heroics, fellow quick Hardik Pandya and spinner Washington Sundar took over to return two wickets each. Shami bowled Finn Allen on the fifth ball of the first over at a venue making its international debut.

Mohammed Siraj sent back Henry Nicholls, caught at slip for two, before Shami and Pandya took two wickets caught-and-bowled to rattle the visitors, whose skipper Tom Latham fell for one.

Phillips and Bracewell attempted to rebuild and hit back in a 41-run sixth-wicket stand before Shami broke through.

He got Bracewell, who hit 140 in his team's 12-run loss in the opener, caught behind. Phillips kept up the defiance in another partnership with the left-handed Santner. The pair put on 47 before Pandya bowled Santner. Phillips departed in an attempt to hit out spinner Sundar only to be caught at mid-wicket, and the innings soon folded.

The Indian openers Rohit and Gill, who hit a match-winning 208 in the opener, put on 72 runs for the opening wicket.

Rohit struck some delightful boundaries including a six off his trademark hook shot to ease into the target.

## Australia beat Pakistan to take series 3-0

BRISBANE (Agencies): Australia women beat Pakistan women by 101 runs in the third ODI at the North Sydney Oval, Sydney to win the three-match ODI series 3-0.

After opting to ball first, Australia team scored 336 for nine in their 50 overs courtesy century from wicketkeeper-batter Beth Mooney. Mooney top-scored for her side with 133 off 105 balls, hitting 14 fours and four sixes. Skipper Meg Lanning scored her second half-century in the series with 72 off 70 balls, smashing eight fours and one six.

For the tourists, Fatima Sana was the most successful bowler with three 53, while Nida Dar and Diana Baig bagged two wickets each. In return, Pakistan

team showed much improved performance with the bat as they managed to play their full 50 overs and scored 235 for seven -- their joint highest total against Australia.

Pakistan openers provided a solid 61-run start to the innings with Sadaf Shamas playing her first match in the series scored 30 off 50 balls, laced with six fours. Her partner and experienced Sidra Amin scored 34 from 66 balls, hitting three boundaries.

For Australia, Ashleigh Gardner picked three for 30, while Jess Johanssen took two wickets for 25 runs.

Earlier in the day, Tuba Hassan made her ODI debut. She became the 88th player to play for Pakistan in this format.

Pakistan and Australia will now feature in the T20I series. The three-match series will begin from Tuesday, 24 January. The match will be played at the North Sydney Oval.

**Scores in brief**  
Australia women beat Pakistan women by 101 runs

Australia Women 336-9, 50 overs (Beth Mooney 133, Meg Lanning 72, Tahlia McGrath 30; Fatima Sana 3-53, Nida Dar 2-50, Diana Baig 2-56)

Pakistan Women 235-7, 50 overs (Bismah Maroof 44, Sidra Amin 34, Sadaf Shamas 30; Ashleigh Gardner 3-30, Jess Johanssen 2-25)

Player of the match -- Beth Mooney

Player of the series -- Beth Mooney.

## Shiffrin still has plenty of chances to break Vonn's record

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO (AP): Mikaela Shiffrin will have plenty more chances -- better chances, actually -- to claim a record-breaking 83rd World Cup victory.

After missing out on the podium on Friday and Saturday in two straight downhill -- far from her best event -- she'll expect more for upcoming races in disciplines that she excels in.

The Cortina weekend wraps up with a super-G on Sunday then there are two giant slaloms in nearby San Vigilio di Marebbe on Tuesday and Wednesday before two slaloms in the Czech Republic next weekend. Of Shiffrin's 82 wins, 51

have come in slalom, 17 in giant slalom, five in super-G and only three in downhill. She's also won a combined and a handful of parallel and city races.

"I am enjoying each race and the process is like an opportunity," Shiffrin said after a seventh-place finish on Saturday. "I don't feel that I have to win again. Of course I care. I want to win. That's obvious. But I don't feel that I have to win; that I'm supposed to win. I'm just here trying to figure out the track like all the other racers on the course and see if I can do my best and if it's good enough to be close to the top. "Maybe sometimes it is the

fastest run. And that's that's the best place to be," she added. "When I look forward I see opportunity, but I don't see pressure."

Having matched former teammate Lindsey Vonn for the women's record at 82 wins each by claiming a giant slalom in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia, earlier this month, Shiffrin then finished second in a slalom in Flachau, Austria, and fourth in the first of the two Cortina downhill on Friday. In her latest record attempt, Shiffrin finished 0.39 seconds behind Slovenian winner Ilka Stuhec on the course that will be used for the 2026 Milan-Cortina Olympics.



HYDERABAD: Body Builders shows the cuts of their body during competition of Mr and Mr Junior Hyderabad, organized by Hyderabad District and Divisional Body Building Association at Sindh Museum. —INP Photo

## PM Youth Program opens online registration

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Youth Program has opened the registration for Sports Trail in Hockey, cricket and Football under Talent hunt Youth Sports League for men and women to promote healthy physical activities among the youth.

The intended participants can register themselves through the online facility till January 30 while the on-the-spot registration facility will also be available for the players who meet the eligibility criteria. According to the eligibility criteria for participation in the talent hunt, all Pakistani including nationals

from Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit Baltistan (GB) aged between 15-25 years on January 30, 2023, are eligible to participate in the sports league.

However, the departmental players are not eligible to participate in the talent hunt. Trials for both men and women players will be conducted in 25 different locations across the country including the Federal capital, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, AJK, and GB.

In Balochistan, the trials will be held at Dera Murad Jamali, Sibbi, Turbat, Khuzdar, Uthal-Hub, Quetta and Loralai, while

in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the locations will be Mardan, Bannu, Swat, Peshawar, and Hazara. In Punjab, the participants can visit Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Lahore and Bahawalpur/ Multan for participating in the trials.

In Sindh, the trails will take place at Hyderabad, Karachi, Sukkur, Larkana and Shaheed Benazirabad however other locations will include Islamabad, Mirpur, Gilgit, Muzaffarabad and Skardu.

The provincial and national leagues will be held after the finalization of the teams through

conducting trials. The online application must be submitted through the web link: <https://pmyp.gov.pk/hec/SportsForm> The participants can contact Higher Education Commission Call Centre at UAN: 111-119-432 or 0334-1119432 Web link: <https://onlinehelp.hec.gov.pk/> for further information.

Under the PM youth sports initiative registration for Table Tennis, Badminton and Squash are also open while the trials' for these sports will open soon. Under PM Youth program the Talent Hunt Youth Sports League intends to hunt talent in

various games including Badminton, Boxing, Cricket, Football, Handball, Hockey, Judo, Squash, Table Tennis, and Volleyball for men and women whereas Weightlifting and Wrestling for men only.

Moreover, the project provides equal growth opportunities to both males and females and promotes excellence in sports with a view of spotting right talent for right sports to nurture them systematically through coaching and mentorship. PM Youth program under the Talent Hunt Youth Sports League intends to provide unlimited opportunities to the

selected players after winning National Leagues in their respective games.

The opportunities include provision of coaching and development facility under the patronage of Pakistan Sports board and award of scholarships for pursuing higher education.

After the trails, the selected players (men and women) will be attached with sports academies (High Performance and Resource Center) to continuously develop their skills, competency and physical fitness that are required to be a professional player.





## In brief

### Six held with illegal arms

RAWALPINDI (INP): The police arrested six culprits after recovery of illegal weapons and ammunition during separate actions in different areas of Rawalpindi on Saturday. According to details, operations against illegal weapons were conducted in Civil Lines, Morgah, Saddar Wah, Mandra, Saddar Beroni and Kahuta police station jurisdictions. In separate actions, six outlaws identified as Waseem, Bilal, Amad Anjum, Imran, Nisar and Ubaidur Rehman were arrested with six 30 bore pistols and ammunition from their possession. Separate cases against the detainees were registered at concerned police stations and they were being investigated.

### IRSA releases 42,800 C-water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 42,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 41,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1497.87 feet and was 99.87 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16,300 cusecs while outflow as 25,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1125.35 feet, which was 75.35 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 7,200 cusecs and 100 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 35,000, 25,500, 13,500 and 5,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 10,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 7,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### 48 professional beggars held

RAWALPINDI (INP): The police geared up campaign against beggars and rounded up 48 professional beggars during separate actions in different areas of Rawalpindi on Saturday. According to details, in line with directives of CPO Syed Shahzad Nadeem, Incharges of beggars squads along with their teams conducted operations against beggars at traffic signals, business centres and other public points of Rawalpindi. During separate actions, 48 professional beggars were held who were being interrogated after registering separate cases against them at concerned police stations. CPO Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari lauding the performance of beggar squads said that these professional beggars not only disrupt the flow of traffic but often result in road mishaps besides teasing the citizens. He also urged the citizens to discourage such elements to bring betterment in the society.

### 15 held with stake money

RAWALPINDI (INP): The police arrested 15 gamblers betting on cockfights, recovered hundreds of thousands rupees stake money, cell phones and impounded a vehicle here on Saturday. The police on a tip-off conducted a raid in Mandra area of Rawalpindi where gambling was underway on cockfighting. During raid, the police arrested 15 gamblers including Kausar, Fazl, Shafqat, Waleed, Pehlwan, Shehbaz, Qaiser, Ansar, Aqeel, Saqib, Maisam, Waqas, Usman and Mustabir besides taking into custody two gamecocks, 1,12,000 stake money, 15 cell phones and a Suzuki van.



ISLAMABAD: Former President of Azad Kashmir Muhammad Yaqoob Khan launching Six months of report on human rights violation in IOJK all parties hurriyat conference.

## Death penalty awarded to accused involved in cop murder

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Islamabad police said on Saturday that death penalty has been awarded to the accused by a court who were involved in murder of sub-inspector of the force. According to details, Sub-Inspector Aslam Gul Shaheed of Islamabad Capital Police was on traffic duty at Police Line turn when the robbers in the vehicle tried to rob the citizen upon which the martyred sub-inspector showed

courage and chased them in order to arrest them.

The accused opened indiscriminate fire due to which Sun-Inspector Aslam Gul embraced martyrdom. A case was registered at Shams colony police station no. 85/20 under section 302/394 PPC.

The investigation team used all the technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending three accused who were identified as Ajmal Khan,

Mustafa and Zabih Ullah.

The police gathered solid evidence and submitted a challan to the relevant court, where the full trial of the case was held and the honorable court convicted the three accused and sentenced them with death penalty.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan appreciated the efforts of the police team and announced rewards and commendation certificates.

## PTA issues ultimatum to unregistered social media companies

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has issued a final notice to unregistered social media companies operating in the country, warning them to register and cooperate in blocking immoral and illegal content, including blasphemy.

In a statement, the authority has also recommended action against these companies by other government regulators such as the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), and commerce ministry.

The PTA has also urged organizations and businesses to check the status of social media companies before conducting any business with them, and to end cooperation with those that are not registered.

The authority has expressed disappointment over the non-cooperation of these companies on such sensitive issue and has deemed it unacceptable.

The PTA has also warned that penalties will be imposed against unregistered companies under social media laws, and that companies that ignore the instructions of the government of Pakistan may face closure.

## Bids to smuggle 1300 bags flour foiled

RAWALPINDI (INP): The police foiled two bids to smuggle flour and impounded two vehicles with 1300 bags flour and arrested the drivers here on Saturday.

The Nasirabad Police and Food Department during actions arrested driver identified as Islam after recovery of 1000 bags flour and Rehmanullah after recovery of 300 bags flour being smuggled.

The vehicles were impounded with recovered flour and the detainees were being investigated.

SP Pothohar reiterated to take strict action against elements involved wheat and flour smuggling.

## 700 kites confiscated during crackdown

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested eight kite sellers and confiscated 700 kites and strings from their possession during a crackdown here on Saturday. According to the details, Bani police held two kite sellers Tayyab, Ahmed and recovered 95 kites, along with 04 strings from their custody.

Similarly, Naseerabad police nabbed two kite sellers Hasnain, and Gulfam and recovered 210 kites and 04 strings from their possession.

While, Civil Lines Police arrested three kite sellers Shahroz Arshad, and Ahmed Adeel and recovered 300 kites and 06 strings from their possession. Sadiqabad police recovered 75 kites from Sameer.

## BISP list: Kundi alleges PTI govt excluded 800,000 people

ISLAMABAD (INP): Special Assistance to Prime Minister (with the status of Minister of State) on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi has disclosed that dynamic survey will soon be conducted to include maximum deserving families in the Benazir Income Support Programme.

He said this while responding to callers in Radio Pakistan's Programme Hotline. Mr. Faisal Karim Kundi said the previous government had excluded 800,000 people from the list of BISP beneficiaries and now we are reviewing this decision.

He said women with a poverty score of 32 or below will become part of BISP. He urged the people to take part in the survey so that no genuinely deserving person is left behind. Mr. Faisal

Karim Kundi said the coalition government has released 55 billion rupees for 8.7 million beneficiaries. Besides, two instalments were released for educational stipend to the children of BISP beneficiaries.

He said educational stipend of 1,500 rupees and 2,000 rupees is being given to male and female primary class students respectively. Replying to another caller, the SAPM said cards of beneficiaries, who visited abroad, have been blocked and now we are taking this issue into consideration to unblock their cards if their poverty score is less than 32. He said we are working to change the mode of payment via beneficiaries' banks accounts.

The Special Assistant to Prime Minister directed the officials concerned to take required actions to address

the complaints. Mr. Faisal Karim Kundi further said that 70 billion rupees have been disbursed among 2.8 million flood affected BISP cardholders.

He said cash assistance of 25,000 rupees was provided to each family of 2.8 million flood affected BISP beneficiaries. Mr. Faisal Karim Kundi said that in kind assistance, including ration, medicines, and food, was also provided under the banner of BISP.

He noted with concern that the number of BISP beneficiaries may witness a surge as flash floods in different parts of the country have increased poverty level. People from across Pakistan actively participated in the programme to discuss and get resolved their issues related to Benazir Income Support Programme.

## ANF recovers over 172 kg drugs; arrests seven

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting four counter-narcotics operations seized over 172 kg narcotics and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Saturday.

He informed that the ANF Khyber Pakhtunkhwa arrested two drug suppliers, residents of Khyber allegedly involved in supplying drugs to the students of educational institutions

from Peshawar Hayatabad Ring Road and recovered over 4.8 kg charras.

In another raid near Swabi Toll Plaza, the ANF recovered 50.4 kg charras and 15.6 kg opium from a truck and arrested two accused residents of Upper Dir and Chitral.

Two drug smuggling bids from Peshawar to Lahore were foiled and the ANF recovered 49.2 kg charras and 31.2 kg opium from a car near Kala Shah Kaku Interchange and net-

ted an accused resident of Peshawar. Similarly, 19.2 kg charras and 1.8 kg opium were recovered from secret cavities of a car intercepted near Ravi Toll Plaza.

Two drug smugglers residents of Charsada and Nowshera were also sent behind the bars.

The spokesman said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.



ISLAMABAD: Girl busy painting on wall to enhance beatification of Capital City.

## Courses being held for CTD personnel

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, combat refresher courses are being organized to further enhance the capabilities and professional skills of the Counter Terrorism Department Islamabad personnel, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, during the

combat course the personnel were trained to control armed elements, maintain law and order, so that any emergency situation can be controlled.

IGP Islamabad said that, CTD Islamabad shows its expertise and takes immediate action against terrorism and criminal elements, which is a testimony to their excellent training, the role of counter terrorism

department Islamabad is very important in improving the security of the federal capital and ensuring the prevention of any untoward incident.

The purpose of organizing these training courses is to increase the capabilities of officials and adopt the best strategy in case of emergency, while ensuring the safety of life and property of the citizens.

## Wanted member of bike lifter gang arrested

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police Ramna police team has arrested a wanted member of a bike lifter gang and recovered five stolen motorbikes from his possession, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensi-

fied crackdown against the criminal elements involved in bike and car lifting incidents in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

According to the details, the Ramna police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a wanted member of a bike lifter gang involved in numerous bike lifting incidents. The accused was identified as Imran Gul.

Police team also recovered five stolen motorbikes from his possession. Cases were already registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

Senior police officials appreciated the performance of the police team and further directed the police teams to intensify efforts against criminals involved in cars and motorbikes lifting incidents.

## ICT admin to hold Health C'hip 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): Office of Chief Commissioner Islamabad has announced "Islamabad Health Champion 2023" which will commence on February 5. According to the details, participants would register themselves in six categories including Girls Kids Health Camp, Girls Health school Camp, Girls Health College Camp, Boys Kid Health Camp, Boys Health School Camp, and Boys Health College Camp. From each category one camp will be selected as a winner and would receive awards and certificates. The criteria of the contest would be set by the Islamabad Healthcare Regulatory Authority and Pakistan Medical Council. All the students in the age group of 5 to 16 and enrolled in the schools of Islamabad would be eligible to participate in the contest.



ISLAMABAD: A visitor family feeding a monkey on way to picnic spot at Daman-e-Koh.



### Minister travel to Herat

KABUL (Agencies): The Acting Minister, of Energy and Water Mullah Abdul Latif Mansour, traveled to Herat to assess production power projects. Minister Mansoor in a working meeting with Mawlawi Noor Ahmad Islam Jar, Governor of Herat, discussed the acceleration of power and irrigation projects in that province, according to the Ministry's officials. The meeting mainly concentrated on the balanced development and the solution of power shortage in that province, source said.

## The Frontier Post

Jamadi-us-Sani 29, 1444 — Sunday, January 22, 2023

### Alcohol factory discovered

FARYAB (Agencies): Local officials of Faryab say, an alcoholic beverage production factory was discovered and seized in Maymana city, the capital of Faryab province. The factory was discovered following the detective and security bodies' operations, said officials. According to the source, hundreds of liters of alcohol were discovered in this factory. The security officials arrested the lessor of the factory and another person in charge of this case.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

# Through positive interaction we can address issues: FM



KABUL (Agencies): Acting Foreign Minister, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi in a meeting with Muhammad Saeed Al-Ayash, representative of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) said that through positive interaction and coordination, we can make progress in solving problems.

Saeed Al-Ayash the representative of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation shared his condolence regarding the bloody explosion in front of the Ministry of Foreign's gate, according to the Ministry's statement. In this meeting he said

that a delegation of world scholars headed by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the technical delegation in the sector of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan will travel to Kabul. He added that the process of distributing 3 million dollars of aid from

this organization began.

For his part, Foreign Minister Muttaqi thanked for their sympathy and called their friendship with the people of Afghanistan appreciable and expressed hope that through positive interaction progress can be made in addressing problems.

## Some Taliban open to women's rights talks

LONDON (BBC News): A top UN official believes progress is being made towards reversing bans on women taking part in public life in Afghanistan.

Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed has been in Kabul for a four-day visit to urge the Taliban to reconsider.

Last month, the country's Islamist rulers banned all women from working for non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The move caused several aid agencies to suspend operations.

Speaking to the BBC at the end of her trip, Ms Mohammed said most senior Taliban officials she met had been ready to engage over the rights of girls and women.

However, she described the talks as tough and cautioned that it would be a very long journey before the leadership took the fundamental steps required for international recognition of their rule.

"I think there are many voices we heard, which are progressive in the way that we would like to go," Ms Mohammed said. "But there are others that really are not."

"I think the pressure we put in the support we give to those that are thinking more progressively is a good thing. So this visit, I think, gives them more voice and pressure to help the argument internally."

Ms Mohammed also criticised the international community, including other Islamic states, for not doing enough to engage on the issue.

Since seizing back control of the country last year, the Taliban has steadily restricted women's rights - despite promising its rule would be softer than the regime seen in the 1990s.

As well as the ban on female university students - now being enforced by armed guards - secondary schools for girls remain closed in most provinces.

Women have also been prevented from entering parks and gyms, among other public places.

It justified the move to ban Afghan women from working for NGOs by claiming female staff had broken dress codes by not wearing hijabs.

Ms Mohammed's comments come as Afghanistan suffers its harshest winter in many years.

# ‘Nearly 70% of Farahrud residents have no ID cards’

FARAH (TOLONews): Local officials in Farah province in the west of the country said that at least 70 percent of residents of the newly-formed Farahrud district have no national identity cards.

"Only 30 percent of the residents have identity cards," Farahrud district governor Mohammad Sadiq said.

A number of residents of the district said that some of them are 40 years old and they don't have an

identity card so far. They said there is a need to start the distribution of identity cards in the district.

"I want them to give me an identity card here," said Abdul Hakim, a Farahrud resident. "We don't have money to go to the center and apply for an identity card," said Rahim, a resident of the district.

National Statistics and Information Authority in Farah said that the department of ID card distribution will be activated in the district in the coming year.

"Hopefully, in the new year, our personnel and everything will be ready and we will start our work," said Abdul Karim Yusuf, head of the National Statistics and Information Authority in Farah.

Figures by the National Statistics and Information Authority in Farah show that at least 14,000 people hold identity cards in Farahrud while the remaining 70,000 are yet to get the national document.

# Afghan Business Council meets in Dubai — addressing challenges of private sector



DUBAI (Khaama Press): Afghan Business Council members held a meeting at JW Marriott hotel in Dubai, United Arab Emirates aimed at addressing the challenges of the private business sector in Afghanistan and beyond.

Haji Obaidullah Sader Khail, Head of Afghanistan Business Council (ABC) said on Twitter that the second meeting of the council was held at JW Marriott hotel in Dubai on January 18, aimed at finding a comprehensive solution to the challenges Afghan businessmen are currently faced with in Afghanistan and overseas.

"A delegation of Afghan businessmen should travel to Kabul and Kandahar, meet with the Islamic

Emirate officials, and address the many issues private businesses are faced with. As of now, some 300,000 Afghan nationals reside in the UAE, 80 percent of whom are entrepreneurs and business people," Sader Khail said.

Sader Khail further added that the owner of renowned private companies and banks in Afghanistan including Azizi Bank, Afghanistan International Bank, Afghan United Bank, Ghaznafar Bank, KamAir, Coca-Cola, and Pepsis reside in the UAE.

The first meeting of ABC was held on January 3, and soon, a third gathering will be held intended to invite those members who have not been part of the past two meetings.

Previously, Afghan Business Council in the United Arab Emirates in a statement had called on de facto authorities of Afghanistan and the United States to fully implement Doha Peace Agreement.

Afghan Business Council in the UAE stated in its newsletter that since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, Afghanistan's economy has faced a 30% recession and the country's gross domestic product has decreased by 35%.

Meanwhile, the country's Chamber of Commerce and Investment says that the due to the imposed sanctions, foreign investment and trade relations have been substantially reduced in Afghanistan.

# Wardak green grocers seek fruit and veggie mart

MAIDAN SHAHR (Pajhwok): Some shopkeepers in central Maidan Wardak province have asked the government to establish a separate fruit and vegetable market for them.

Agha Gul, a green grocer in the city, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "Lack of such a market is a huge problem. We urge the gov-

ernment to build a fruit and vegetable marketplace for us."

Mirajan, another shopkeeper, said all types of fresh fruits and vegetables were grown in the province. But the absence of a standard marketplace forced farmers to take their produce to other provinces and sell them at low prices,

he deplored.

"Maidan Wardak's fruits — particularly apples — are famous but the province doesn't have a standard bazaar. Traders from other provinces come here to purchase them," he added.

Most vegetables had been affected by the current cold snap, he noted, believ-

ing if there was a standard market, crops would have been better protected.

Yet another shopkeeper, Mandozai, said: "Our people, particularly farmers and orchard owners, are financially unstable. When they transport their produce to Kabul or other provinces, they sell their produce cheaply."

He also urged the government to create a standard fruit and vegetable market in the province to enable them to expand their businesses to other provinces and even abroad.

However, municipality officials say there was a fruit and vegetable market in the province previously, but it was currently inactive.

Eng. Mir Agha, a senior municipality official, said they had a market building in the province, but it was no longer functional. He assured it would be reactivated in the near future.



# IEA assured maintaining national projects security

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan for Economic Affairs in a statement said that many projects remain incomplete in the country including TAPI, under invasion of US in Afghanistan.

The statement said that with the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, complete security has been ensured in the country providing a better opportunity for the implementation of these project now than ever before.

The IEA places a high priority on the security of national projects, and it is fully equipped to imple-

ment the TAPI project, which it considers to be a crucial piece of the country's economic infrastructure.

The project's practical launch is wonderful news for Afghans, the statement added.

According to the statement, earlier officials of the Ministries of Interior, National Defense and General Directorate of Intelligence held a meeting with the representatives of Turkmenistan to assure them of the project's complete security.

The statement declares saying that in case needed, the Islamic Emirate is prepared to form a special force to safeguard the TAPI

project.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan views the reconstruction of the country and the revitalization of its economic infrastructure as its responsibilities and believes that the political, security, and economic prosperity of the region is a shared responsibility of the member states.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan reaffirms its commitment to enhancing relations and economic cooperation with neighboring, regional and other countries around the world based on mutual benefits, added to the statement released by Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs' office.

# Police arrest 9 people on charges of dealing drugs

KABUL (Agencies): The Counter-narcotics police arrested nine people on charges of drugs dealing and trafficking.

The Interior Ministry in a statement said that their counter-narcotics police in the provinces of Farah, Parwan, Takhar, Badakhshan, and Faryab discovered 8 acres of poppy land, an alcoholic beverage factory, and arrested 9 people detained on charges.

Meanwhile, an alcohol production factory discovered in Faryab province and two people were arrested on charges, according to police source.

# Cotton processing factories opened in Helmand

HELMAND (Agencies): Local Chamber of Commerce officials of Helmand say that two cotton processing factories opened in that province with an investment of 65 million Afghanis.

During the inauguration ceremony of the factories, Ghulam Yahya Pashtun head of Helmand Chamber of Commerce called the construction of this factory a great achievement said that 41 different factories are currently operating in Helmand, which employ over 3,500 people.

He added that the department of Chamber of Commerce strives to inspire national businessmen to invest in this province and provide employment opportunities to the youth.

Meanwhile, the founder of the



factory, Rahmatullah Nazari, while talking to newsmen, said that 65 million Afghanis invested in these two factories, which has the capacity to process 74 tons of cotton in 24

hours.

The factories has been built in a period of 8 months, in which 200 people have been provided job opportunities.

# Devastated Janan Mama plays flute to distract his grief

GHAZNI (Pajhwok): Janan Mama, the resident of Khawaja Umari district in



southern Ghazni province, lost his three sons during past war and now played flute to deflect the sorrow and pain he carried.

Janan Mama, 70, is currently living in the Qala-i-Naw locality of Khawaja Umari district 15 kilometres north of Ghazni City, the provincial capital.

He played the flute with the art of his voice and fingers, tears flow from his eyes. He told Pajhwok Afghan News that that over the past 15 years he had been playing the flute. He dropped rears due to the pain he suffered after the loss of his sons but other people enjoyed his flute playing art.

Janan Mama said he offered happiness and joy

to other besides his the sorrow he had been suffering from.

He could not stop his tears that flow on his face when he started his painful story saying: "My life is full of pain and grief, I have never tasted pleasure in my life. I have witnessed a lot of pain and problems in my 70 years of life that nobody else could have witnessed."

I have inherited orphan life from in my childhood, I had eight uncles but they were cruel and tyrant. When he grew up then his brother did not behave with him properly.

He said life was going in this way when five years ago his two sons who served in police were killed on the same day.

He said his deceased sons were married, one left a widow and four children and another left a widow and five children.

He added his third son who was not married was killed during a clash, he was not married.

"My children had dreams, but they could not reach to their dreams. They said they served the country but both were killed on the Eid-ul-Adha day and another was killed in a clash," said the bareheaded elderly Janan Mama.

He added one of his sons went abroad on illegal rout but his another son is sick all the time.

Janan Mama said in the past he drove a truck but currently he has nothing to

do and lived a painful life with this orphan grandsons.

He said he did not felt devastated by the loss of his sons but the current situation of the country was painful for him as well.

"My heart is broken due to the four decades of conflict, the loss of youth, injured people and unfortunate incidents happening in the country," he added.

He said he played the flute to distract the sorrow and pain that surrounded him, adding that every evening he clime to the hill side near his house and played the flute till late night.

He said sometimes the youth also forced him to play the flute and they gather at this home to listen to

the flute.

Janan Mama said his biggest dream was peace and stability in the country where the bloodshed is stopped and no mother lose her son or daughter.

Mohammad Amin Khelj, Janan Mama's villager, said that Janan Mama was devastated by the loss of his sons and tears flow from his eyes when he play the flute.

He added Janan Mama was expert in playing flute and he could play many songs.

Janan Mama is not the only person who is devastated by the loss of his sons but there are hundreds of other people in the country who had been devastated by the past war and conflicts.





**LAHORE:** A delegation of German Press Federation led by its President Christian Zarm called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

# Mustafa fears Pakistan near ‘political breakdown’

QUETTA (Agencies): Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, former senator and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) member, Saturday shared fears of Pakistan standing near a political breakdown. “We have become politically and morally bankrupt. Even today, people are not being told the truth, which the country needs,” Khokhar said while addressing the second session of the national dialogue in Quetta.

The conference, which Khokhar kickstarted, along with his colleagues including Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Miftah Ismail, aims at identifying the country's problems and providing solutions for them. Presided by Nawab Lashkari Raisani, the session was organised by the Balochistan Peace Forum.

At the occasion, Khokhar added that the communication between the people and political parties is broken. The ex-PPP leader stressed the need to address people's issues rather than being engaged in irrelevant political discourse such as the Panama Papers and Toshakhana case, Khokhar said: “There were discussions on Panama [Papers] and Toshakhana [case], but where were the issues of people? The situation has gotten to a point where if one doesn't leave the country, they are going to the mountains.” The former senator lamented that democracy was buried the day when the dictator violated the constitution.

“It was decided on the first day that democracy wouldn't be allowed to flourish in the country. What did we do to the constitution maker of the country?” he said, raising questions on the treatment meted out to former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was hanged by then-army chief General Zia-ul-Haq. The politician, who hasn't joined any political party since his departure from the PPP, questioned steps taken to ensure the provision of human rights in the country on the basis of Article 8 to 28. “Courts have been given the responsibility of human rights; they, too, are silent and not paying atten-

tion to these issues. The society is disintegrating,” Khokhar said.

Speaking about the intention of the national dialogue series titled “Reimagining Pakistan”, the former PPP member stated that these sessions are intended to listen to people's discussions and find solutions for them. Khokhar, when commenting on the issues of Balochistan, asked what is the difficulty if there is a supposed interest in solving the problems of the province. “If the parliament can immediately unite to provide an extension to someone, then why can't they do for solving issues? Despite the passage of 75 years, we [are still not] showing seriousness in solving the problems,” he said, further lamenting about politicians only indulging in “power politics”.

Khokhar insisted on the need for ending political instability for the betterment of the country's economy. “Parties are willing to do anything for the greed of power. The same conversation is going on in Punjab as well,” he said. The ex-senator said that people's relationship with the constitution is breaking. “If this conversation doesn't take place on streets and neighbourhoods, then the country will suffer,” Khokhar said, highlighting their aim to ensure the sanctity of the constitution. PPP's senior leader Farhatullah Babar, who joined the session via video link, stressed following the constitution. “It is time to reimagine Pakistan and restore the sanctity of the constitution,” the veteran politician said, further highlighting the need to form an agreed charter to reimagine the country.

In his address to the event, former finance minister Miftah Ismail said it was crucial for Pakistan to “stand on its feet” if it wishes to become a respectful nation. “And if we want Pakistan to become self-sufficient, then every Pakistani's role is important. In this regard, it is vital to send every child to school,” the two-time finmin said. Ismail said that the country should spend more than Rs2 billion on education, while also ensuring

that it improves the schooling system. The former finance czar, while lamenting over the situation of women in Pakistan, said that 40% of females between the ages of 15-50 have iron deficiency.

Ismail stressed the need to provide employment to every Pakistan and noted that unemployment was not an issue restricted to Balochistan, but that it was a country-wide phenomenon. “More than 80 million people in Pakistan are living below the poverty line. As many as 60% of Pakistanis earn below Rs35,000,” the PML-N leader said. Ismail added that every citizen's income should increase. He also stressed the need to promote harmony and love in the country.

Speaking at the occasion, former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi commented on the ongoing tug-of-war between the treasury and the opposition. “When politics turns into enmity, people's problems remain. “It is unfortunate that the economic crisis and failure of politics has reached its peak,” Abbasi said. He also lamented that there was no forum where issues could be discussed openly, adding that Pakistan's “extraordinary” situation must be meted with “extraordinary action”. He also stressed the need for governments to actually perform. Abbasi also commented on the issues of Balochistan, saying that despite having the most resources, it was the poorest of all provinces. He touched upon various issues, including the issue of missing persons.

“Solution to all the problems of Balochistan from utilities, to Gawadar, is in the constitution,” the former PM said, “however, as long as senators come to power by paying crores of rupees, nothing will change.” He also added that all stakeholders in the country had contributed to creating the chaos that pervaded and that all must now turn from the blame game and work together to resolve the country's many crises. “There is a need to discuss the new social contract,” he said.

## Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Iran flays EU vote over ‘terrorist’ designation

TEHRAN (Agencies): The European Parliament's approval of a resolution calling on the bloc to consider a “terrorist” designation for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has received strong condemnation from senior Iranian officials and commanders. The European Parliament overwhelmingly approved a resolution that calls on the European Union to recognise Iran's elite force and its subsidiaries, like the paramilitary Basij and the Quds Force, as “terrorist” organizations.

It also condemned the Iranian government's response to the protests that have been taking place in the country since September, the executions linked to the protests, and drone sales to Russia, while also recommending sanctions against Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, President Ebrahim Raisi and all IRGC-linked foundations.

The EU is not obliged to enforce the resolution. While senior EU politicians have voiced their support for the resolution, it is not expected to be among new sanctions on dozens of Iranian individuals and entities expected to be approved by the bloc. Response from Tehran move has ranged from defiance to warnings of consequences for Europe. IRGC commander-in-chief Hossein Salami met parliament speaker Mohammad

Bagher Ghalibaf – a former IRGC commander – early on Saturday to coordinate a potential response.

The IRGC, the foreign ministry and lawmakers are also expected to hold a closed-door meeting on Sunday. “If it wasn't for the efforts of the IRGC, especially the Quds Force and martyr Soleimani, the terrorism volcano created by the Americans would have engulfed the Europeans and the security that prevails in Europe today would have been destroyed,” Salami said in reference to Qassem Soleimani, who was killed by a United States drone strike in Iraq in 2020.

Ghalibaf and other lawmakers have also threatened European armed forces with a “terrorist” designation. The US, which has supported the European Parliament's proposal, has blacklisted the IRGC. The Iranian foreign ministry has responded to US and EU sanctions with sanctions of its own, many related to Soleimani's assassination. The ministry termed the IRGC “the world's largest counterterrorism institution” while claiming a potential designation of the force – which is an official entity of the Iranian establishment – would constitute a violation of the United Nations Charter.

During a phone call, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian told the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell that the

move “was like Europe shooting itself in the foot”. Several of the statements released by Iranian entities and officials say designating the IRGC signals “desperation” by European politicians after they failed to achieve their goals during “riots” in Iran. This is in line with Iranian authorities' repeated stance that the West has been behind the protests aiming to destabilise Iran, a claim that has been rejected.

Meanwhile, talks to restore Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers that the US unilaterally abandoned in 2018 also remain in limbo. European politicians continue to view the nuclear accord as the only viable remaining option to contain Iran's nuclear programme, and the European Parliament also earlier this week voted against a motion to declare the talks dead.

Meanwhile, Iran's troubled currency fell to a record low against the US dollar on Saturday amid the country's increasing isolation and possible Europe Union sanctions against Tehran's Revolutionary Guards or some of its members. Ties between the EU and Tehran have deteriorated in recent months as efforts to revive nuclear talks have stalled. Iran has detained several European nationals and the bloc has become increasingly critical of the violent treatment of protesters and the use of executions.

## Schoolgirl torture case: Court grants bail to suspects

LAHORE (PPI): A sessions court on Saturday granted pre-arrest bail to the three schoolgirls involved in torturing their class fellow at a private school in Lahore. Additional Sessions Judge Chaudhry Zafar Iqbal heard the bail plea filed by three of the suspects. Advocate Mian Rab Nawaz appeared on behalf of the three girls and told the court that the victim was a drug addict herself and wanted to engage his clients in the illegal act.

The lawyer argued that his clients were being implicated falsely and they were ready to cooperate with the authorities in the investigation. The video footage of the attack was uploaded on the social media, in which the three girls could be seen violently beating the victim.

According to the FIR, the complainant Imran (girl's father) has said her daughter was beaten by her class fellows Jannat, Umaima and Noor Rehman. He said that, “The main suspect had offered my daughter a dose of a drug to inhale in the school, which she refused to do, and as a result, she was badly tortured”. As per the FIR, boxer Umaima beat her violently and she even knifed her multiple times. It is claimed that the girl Jannat was drug addict and she wanted to drag the injured girl in drugs culture.

## HEC puts ban on private MA, MSC admissions

KARACHI (PPI): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has put a ban on private MA and MSC admissions and Punjab University (PU) has also stopped registration for these degrees until the issue is resolved on Saturday.

It merits here to mention that the registration in private MA, MSc was started on the instructions of former Acting Vice-Chancellor of PU. Following the former VC's approval, the administration started the private registration process from December 5. The deadline for private candidates' registration was March 15th. However, on January 6th, the HEC issued a warning to the applicants not to get enrolled. A university delegation will meet the HEC officials to resolve the issue.

## Hipkins set to replace Ardern as NZ's PM

WELLINGTON (Agencies): New Zealand's police and education minister Chris Hipkins will replace Jacinda Ardern as prime minister after emerging as the only candidate nominated to lead the ruling Labour Party. The senior politician must now be formally backed by Labour members of parliament on Sunday to take over as the country's 41st prime minister, following Ardern's shock resignation.

“The Labour Party caucus will meet at 1pm [00:00 GMT] on Sunday to endorse the nomination and confirm Chris Hipkins as Party Leader,” senior party member Duncan Webb said in a statement on Saturday. First slated to parliament for the Labour Party in 2008, the 44-year-old Hipkins became a household name fronting the government's response to the pandemic after being appointed minister for COVID-19 in November 2020.

Hipkins, who is currently minister for police, education and public service, as well as leader of the House of Representatives, will lead his party's uphill battle in the

general election on October 14. Labour is lagging in opinion polls and has been criticised by opponents over rising prices, poverty and crime rates. Ardern, a global figurehead for progressive politics, stunned New Zealand and the world by announcing her abrupt exit from office, less than three years after securing a second term in a landslide election win.

Ardern, 42, had steered the country through natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic and its worst-ever terror attack, but said she no longer had “enough in the tank” to continue in her position. Former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark said Ardern had “faced a level of hatred and vitriol” that was “unprecedented in our country”.

Her successor is widely seen as a safe pair of hands with more than 14 years in parliament. Political commentator Josie Pagani has described Hipkins as “sensible, likeable, tough and capable”. There was no immediate reaction from the country's main opposition National Party to Hipkins's

nomination.

The right-wing ACT Party urged him to “deliver on substance instead of snowing New Zealand with spin”, criticising his party's record on the number of welfare recipients, rising food prices and a tight labour market. The Green Party said it looked forward to working with him to “end poverty, take bold climate action and protect our native wildlife”. Hipkins's appointment has quashed speculation that Minister of Justice Kiri Allan, one of Labour's senior Maori MPs, might have become the country's first Maori prime minister.

A Horizon Research snap poll obtained by local media organisation Stuff showed that Hipkins was the most popular potential candidate among voters, with the backing of 26 percent of those surveyed. A Taxpayers' Union-Curia poll released and based on data from before Ardern's resignation announcement showed Labour's popularity falling to 31.7 percent, with 37.2 percent of respondents backing the National Party.

## Saad briefs Shehbaz F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met Federal Minister for Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique in which the latter gave a detailed briefing to the former regarding the situation of the forthcoming Punjab elections.

The minister also presented the preliminary investigation report of the attack on the railway track amid the direction from the premier to improve the railway journey. Sources said the PM and the minister discussed the country's political situation. The chief executive was briefed on the elections in Punjab after the assembly's dissolution.

Earlier, the chief executive had called for the deliberative session to discuss the current unrest in the politics of Punjab and for the plan of action for the next elections in the province.

## Ghani hugs Haleem Adil

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Minister for Labour and Human Resources Saeed Ahmed Ghani on Saturday hugged Opposition Leader Haleem Adil Sheikh during hearing of the defamation case. During hearing, the court argued with Saeed Ghani that have you filed defamation case against Haleem Adil and whether money could be superior than respect?

The court asked the provincial minister and opposition leader to be generous and forbid each after which Saeed Ghani hugged Haleem Adil. Speaking on the occasion, Haleem Adil Sheikh said that we will not accept anything against interests of the people of Sindh and will continue to raise voice for their rights. Saeed Ghani said that he was sure allegations on him were baseless, you should take back the allegations and the cases would end.



**MUZAFFARABAD:** A man carrying water basket on his way due to closed road after the heavy snowfall at Saran area.

# UN officials urge Taliban to reverse decrees limiting women's freedoms

UNITED NATIONS (APP): A high-level United Nations delegation, led by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, wrapped up its 4-day visit to Afghanistan during which it conveyed directly to the Taliban authorities the alarm over the recent decree banning women from working for national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a move that undermines the work of numerous bodies helping millions of vulnerable Afghans, according to a UN spokesperson.

UN Deputy Spokesman Farhan Haq said that the delegation, which included Executive Director of UN Women, Sima Bahous, and Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of Political, Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, Khaled Khiairi, held meetings with the authorities in both Kabul and Kandahar. During the visit to Kandahar, the UN delegation held talks

with the deputy governor of the province in what was described as a rare meeting by a foreign delegation with the Taliban's leaders in its southern heartland.

Also recently, the Afghan government have moved to close universities to female students across the country until further notice, and have barred girls from attending secondary school, restricted women and girls' freedom of movement, excluded women from most areas of the workforce and banned women from using parks, gyms and public bath houses. “My message was very clear: while we recognize the important exemptions made, these restrictions present Afghan women and girls with a future that confines them in their own homes, violating their rights and depriving the communities of their services,” Amina Mohammed said.

“Our collective ambition is for a

prosperous Afghanistan that is at peace with itself and its neighbours, and on a path to sustainable development. But right now, Afghanistan is isolating itself, in the midst of a terrible humanitarian crisis and one of the most vulnerable nations on earth to climate change,” she said. “We must do everything we can to bridge this gap.” During their mission, Amina and Bahous met with affected communities, humanitarian workers, civil society and other key actors, in Kabul, Kandahar and Herat.

“We have witnessed extraordinary resilience. Afghan women left us no doubt of their courage and refusal to be erased from public life. They will continue to advocate and fight for their rights, and we are duty bound to support them in doing so,” Bahous said. “What is happening in Afghanistan is a grave women's right crisis and a wake-up call for the international communi-

ty. It shows how quickly decades of progress on women's rights can be reversed in a matter of days. UN Women stands with all Afghan women and girls, and will continue to amplify their voices to regain all their rights.”

The United Nations and its partners, including national and international NGOs, are helping more than 25 million Afghans who depend on humanitarian aid to survive, and remain committed to staying and delivering. The most recent decrees issued by the Taliban authorities banning women from working for NGOs has forced many partners to pause operations which can no longer be safely and meaningfully delivered. While the recent exemptions to the ban introduced by the authorities are opening spaces for humanitarians to continue – and in some cases resume – operations, these remain limited to few sectors and activities.

“The effective delivery of humanitarian assistance is predicated on principles that require full, safe and unhindered access for all aid workers, including women”, Amina said. The visit to Afghanistan followed a series of high-level consultations on Afghanistan across the Persian Gulf and Asia. The delegation met with the leadership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Islamic Development Bank, groups of Afghan women in Ankara and Islamabad and a group of Ambassadors and Special Envoys to Afghanistan based in Doha.

The delegation convened with government leaders from the region and religious leaders to advocate for the crucial role and full participation of women, and rally support for the Afghan people. Throughout the visits, countries and partners recognized the critical role of the UN in building bridges to finding lasting solutions, as

well as the urgency to deliver lifesaving support and maintain effective engagement, led by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

They asked that efforts be intensified to reflect the urgency of the situation and stressed the importance of a unified response by the international community. The need for a revitalized and realistic political pathway was consistently highlighted and all remained firm on the fundamental principles, including women's and girls' rights to education, work and public life in Afghanistan. There was broad consensus that the region and the OIC's leadership on those issues was critical, the spokesman said. The proposal of an international conference on women and girls in the Muslim World during the month of March 2023 was also considered and agreed in principle.