

**Levies soldier martyred**  
BOLAN (INP): A jawan of Levies Force was martyred in a terrorist attack in Bolan District of Balochistan on Friday. The terrorists targeted a check-post of the Levies Force in Bala Nari area of Bolan and opened indiscriminate firing on the personnel deployed there. In the ensuing battle, Levies jawan Khalid Ahmad embraced martyrdom. The terrorists fled from the scene while firing.

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**Maryam leaves from London**  
F.P. Report  
ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Friday that Senior Vice President and Chief Organizer of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Maryam Nawaz had left from London for Pakistan. In a tweet, she said, "Maryam Nawaz Sahiba will reach Lahore at 3.05 p.m. on Saturday, January 28, Insha Allah."

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# PM confident of deal with IMF current month

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday expressed confidence that Pakistan would conclude a deal with International Monetary Fund (IMF) the current month in a bid to overcome the financial challenges.

Addressing here at the launch of the Green Line train service between Islamabad and Karachi, the prime minister said the headway in talks with IMF would help the country address the current economic situation. The IMF delegation will be visiting Islamabad from January 31 to February 9 to continue discussions regarding the ninth review of the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

The prime minister emphasized the adoption of austerity at a massive scale to tackle difficult economic problems. He said the government had set its priority keeping in view its foreign exchange reserves, thus allowing the import of medicine and food as essential items. He said courageous nations stand united while braving the challenges with resilience.

Shehbaz Sharif expressed confidence that with dedication and commitment, the country would soon regain its glory. He regretted that the Green Line project, which was initiated during the tenure of then prime minister Nawaz Sharif, was delayed by the previous government in a mala fide. He endorsed the concept of outsourcing Pakistan Railways to make it better equipped and at par with contemporary services.

The prime minister said Main Line-I (ML-1) railway track was a top priority for the government and mentioned that China was committed to its early completion.

## Premier for translating fraternal Pak-Qatar ties into concrete economic partnership

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, recalling the long-standing and fraternal ties between Pakistan and Qatar on Friday, underscored the importance of translating the relationship into a concrete economic partnership.

The prime minister was taking to the Ambassador of the State of Qatar in Pakistan, Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, who called on him here. The ambassador conveyed a special goodwill message of Amir of Qatar to the prime minister. PM Shehbaz congratulated Qatar on hosting the most successful FIFA World Cup in history and noted with appreciation the important role played by the Pakistani security forces in ensuring foolproof, unblemished, and impeccable security at the event. Reiterating his resolve to work towards further expansion and diversifying of bilateral cooperation, the prime minister highlighted trade, investment, energy, and manpower sectors in that regard. Qatar is home to one of the large Pakistani diasporas in the Gulf Region. Pakistan and Qatar enjoy close and cordial ties resting on the firm foundation of shared faith and values. The two countries closely collaborate bilaterally, as well as on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

He pointed out that the previous government indulged in baseless accusations of corruption against Chinese companies, and stressed that the coalition government was working on restoring the ties. The new train service comprising modern coaches imported from China was launched from the Margalla train station, Islamabad.

The prime minister visited various coaches of the train and appreciated the services provided for the travellers to make their journey comfortable. The Green Line train will have stops at the stations at Rawalpindi, Chaklala, Lahore, Khanewal, Bahawalpur, Rohri, Hyderabad and Drigh Road, Karachi stations. The turnaround time of the Green Line is set at 22 hours, which will be reduced gradually.

Minister for Railways

Khawaja Saad Rafiq said the ticket would cover breakfast, lunch, hi-tea, and dinner besides wifi. Apart from this, he said, high-quality bedding and utility kits will also be provided to the passengers. He said around 2,200 passengers would benefit from the train service to be run between Islamabad to Karachi. He said Pakistan Railways would formulate rules for the approval of the cabinet in the next few days regarding the collection of revenue from its land. He stressed

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said Pakistan had become the 24th largest economy in the world under the leadership of then prime minister Nawaz Sharif. Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said the delay in development projects by the previous government incurred irreparable losses to the country.

## Shehbaz, Fazl discuss political situation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-F chief Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Friday.

Overall political situation in the country was discussed during the meeting, which was also attended by Minister for Finance and Revenue Ishaq Dar and advisors to the PM Ahad Cheema and Engr Amir Muqam.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also ordered to replace the outdated power grid of Chitral with modern infrastructure in order to ensure uninterrupted of electricity to residents. He directed the Ministry of Power to collaborate with Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Board and devise a strategy in this regard.

Chairing a high-level meeting to address the problems of electricity in Chitral, the prime minister directed Minister for Power Khurram Dastagir Khan, and the Secretary Power Division to submit a report in this regard after holding a meeting in Peshawar. PM Shehbaz Sharif also stressed urgent measures to reduce power load-shedding in Chitral. He said ensuring facilities for the people of far-flung and underprivileged areas was the government's top priority.

The meeting was attended by Power Minister Khurram Dastagir Khan, Chairman Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Lt Gen (Retd) Sajjad Ghani, the power secretary, and the representatives from Chitral. The residents of Chitral apprised the prime minister about the problems of load-shedding and infrastructure.

They thanked Shehbaz Sharif for his personal interest in the relief and rehabilitation of the flood-affected people in Chitral. The prime minister also directed the authorities concerned to submit him a report on the compensation money disbursed among the flood-hit people.

## Governor doesn't see KP elections in 90 days

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Hinting at the possible delay in elections, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali has said that he does not see the conduct of polls in the province within the stipulated time frame of three months.

During an interaction with journalists on Friday, the governor said: "400 tribal elders have requested him that elections should be held after three to four months." He added: "If a province demands to conduct census first or intelligence agencies advise to postpone elections then how will the elections be held?" According to the governor, a tribal jirga — comprising 400 elders belonging to merged districts — demanded the conduct of a census before holding the general elections.

## 17 Pakistanis imprisoned in India repatriated

LAHORE (PPI): Seventeen Pakistani nationals imprisoned in the Indian jails were repatriated via Attari-Wagah border on Friday.

According to Pakistan High Commission information on Twitter, "17 Pakistani nationals imprisoned in India were repatriated today via Attari-Wagah border after hectic efforts of Pakistan High Commission in India and Foreign Office and cooperation of the Indian side. Our efforts will continue to repatriate all prisoners from India on completion of their sentences, said the commission.

bringing these illegal incursions and actions by the Israeli occupation forces to a halt and ensuring adequate protection of the human rights of the Palestinian people. "Pakistan reiterates its strong and unwavering support to the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for full realization of their fundamental rights including the right to self-determination," the FO statement said.

Bank called for the strongest condemnation. He stressed sustainable peace in the Middle East, saying that it was linked to two-state solution. Pakistan on Friday strongly condemned Israel's brutal attack on the city and camp of Jenin in the State of Palestine, killing several Palestinians.

The Foreign Office in a statement called upon the international community to assume its responsibility in

## Senate adopts resolution against desecration of Holy Quran

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate on Friday adopted a unanimous resolution to condemn the vile act of desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and the Netherlands which has hurt the religious sentiments of 1.5 billion Muslims around the globe.

The upper house of the parliament strongly protested the governments of Sweden and the Netherlands for allowing the extremist elements for this heinous crime in the garb of freedom of expression. The Senate termed this disgraceful incident of Islamophobia as hateful and contrary to the principles of international law laid down in several instruments, including United Nations General Assembly resolution number 36/35 of 25th November 1981 which proclaims the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights and European Guidelines on

Freedom of Religion or Belief which states that responsibility and freedom of expression go hand in hand and the latter should not incite hatred, shock or disturbance to any segment of society, the call of the World Conference on Human Rights upon all governments to take all appropriate measures to counter intolerance, United Nations General Assembly resolution 56/6 of 9th November 2001 on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, Resolution of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2005/40, and International Day to Combat Islamophobia.

According to the resolution, the Senate, therefore, stands for upholding the universal principles highlighted above and expresses the collective will of the state and people of Pakistan against the act of desecration of the Holy Quran by racists and extremists. It said this vicious crime is a calculated and deliberate attempt to harm interfaith harmony, social peace, and religious tolerance, and ultimately it will prove to be divisive for peace and

stability amongst countries, cultures and civilizations.

The Senate urges Muslims to maintain calm and composure, refuse to be intimidated by the hate-mongering Islamophobes, and promote Islam's message of peace, tolerance and universal brotherhood. It also called upon the government to initiate prompt action on the following lines such as; to summoning the ambassador of Sweden and Netherlands and conveying the strong sentiments, shock and anger felt by the people of Pakistan against the desecration of the Holy Quran.

It also emphasized Sweden and Netherlands for firm lawful action against those who desecrated the Holy Quran. It also proposed the government contact, coordinate and cooperate among the members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to take a unified position on this issue which is central to the core beliefs of all Muslims. The Senate further asked to take up this highly important and urgent issue before the upcoming session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, which is meeting in Geneva next week.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Qatar in Pakistan, Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## ECP announces by-polls on 33 NA seats vacated by PTI

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday announced to hold by-polls on 33 vacant National Assembly seats on March 16.

According to the ECP's election schedule, candidates will be able to file their nomination papers between February 6-8. The names of the candidates will be published on February 9 and the returning officers (RO) will carry out the scrutiny of the nomination papers till February 13. The last date to file appeals against the RO's decision on the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers is February 16. The last date for the appellate tribunal to decide on the appeals is February 20. After this, the revised list of candidates will be published on February 21. The last date to withdraw candidature and release of revised list of candidates is February 22, while the election symbols will be allotted on February 23 and the polls will be held on March 16.

The constituencies, where by-polls will be held on March 16 include: NA-04 Swat-III, NA-53 Islamabad-II, NA-126 Lahore-IV, NA-247 Karachi South-II, NA-17 Haripur-I, NA-54 Islamabad-III, NA-130 Lahore-VIII, NA-250 Karachi West-III, NA-18 Swabi-I, NA-57 Rawalpindi-I, NA-155 Multan-I, NA-252 Karachi West-V, NA-25 Nowshera-I, NA-59 Rawalpindi-III, NA-156 Multan-III, NA-254 Karachi Central-II, NA-26 Nowshera-II, NA-60 Rawalpindi-IV, NA-191 Dera Ghazi Khan-III, NA-256 Karachi Central-IV, NA-32 Kohat

NA-62 Rawalpindi-VI, NA-241 Korangi Karachi-III, NA-265 Quetta-II, NA-38 D.I. Khan-I, NA-63 Rawalpindi-VII, NA-242 Karachi East-I, NA-43 Khyber-I, NA-67 Jhelum-II, NA-243 Karachi East-II, NA-52 Islamabad-I, NA-97 Bhakkar-I and NA-244 Karachi East-III.

These seats fell vacant after the PTI MNAs had tendered their resignations en masse after the Imran Khan-led government was ousted via a no-confidence motion in April of last year. A few days ago, their resignations were accepted by the National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf and consequently the ECP de-notified them. The resignations of 123 PTI MNAs have so far been accepted and all have been de-notified by the ECP.

Meanwhile, The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has decided to contest upcoming by-polls in nine National Assembly (NA) constituencies. Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan will be PTI's candidate from all nine Karachi constituencies, sources within PTI told media.

The decision comes hours after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) released the schedule for by-polls on 33 National Assembly (NA) vacated by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MNAs. According to details, the ECP has decided to hold by-polls on 33 NA seats on March 16, for which nomination papers can be received from February 6 to 8.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has fixed February 11 as last date for

receipt of applications for postal ballot papers for NA 193 by elections.

According to the ECP, this facility is being extended only to government officials, members of armed forces, holders of public offices, their wives and children stationed at a place other than the constituency, where their votes are registered.

Persons detained in prison and persons with physical disability who are unable to travel and hold a National Identity Card with a logo for physical disability issued by National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) are also entitled to vote by postal ballot. Similarly, the persons appointed by the Returning Officer, including police personnel for the performance of any duty in connection with an election at polling stations other than the one at which they are entitled to cast their vote should apply for postal ballot to the Returning Officer within three days of the their appointments.

The ECP has explained that applications for postal ballot should be submitted on the prescribed form with the returning officer of the constituency in which such persons are enrolled as voters. Application forms for postal ballot can be obtained from Shahab-ud-Din, District Election Commissioner/Returning Officer, from his office situated at Municipal Committee (MC), Jampur, Rajanpur; Contact no 0604-685969. The application form may also be downloaded from ECP's website www.ecp.gov.pk. The voters to whom postal ballots are issued will not be entitled to vote in person at the polling stations.

## Fawad remanded in 14-day judicial custody

ISLAMABAD (INP): An Islamabad district and sessions court on Friday sent PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry to Adiala jail on a 14-day judicial remand in a case over alleged incitement of violence against a constitutional institution.

The court on Wednesday night had granted police an initial two-day remand of Fawad, hours after he was arrested. The former information minister was taken into custody after a first information report (FIR) against him was registered at Islamabad's Kohsar police station by an official of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for "threatening" the electoral body's members and their families.

The ECP's plea for an extension to Fawad's remand was heard in the courtroom of Judge Raja Waqas Ahmed today. At the onset of the hearing, the election commission's lawyer Saad Hassan, the prosecutor in the case, informed the court that the PTI leader's voice matching had been completed. He requested an extension in remand, saying that Fawad had to be taken to Lahore for a photogrammetric test.

The prosecutor contended before the court that the former federal minister was inciting hatred against a constitutional institution. "Fawad is trying to create unrest," he said. "The statement threatens the lives of the election commission's workers." The ECP lawyer argued that an extension to the PTI leader's remand was imperative to carry out further investigation in the case.

## Imran sees Zardari behind latest assassination bid

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has claimed that Pakistan Peoples Party Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari is behind his latest assassination bid — after the previous two attempts "failed". In a virtual press conference on Friday, Khan — who was ousted as the prime minister in April last year — said four people orchestrated a plan "behind closed doors" to assassinate him.

"I got to know about it and then I recorded my video explaining the attack. In a public rally, I announced that I would release the video if something were to happen to me. They stepped back after this." Without naming anyone again, Khan said that another plan was made to have him killed by a religious extremist — indicating towards the November 3, 2022, Wazirabad attack, where he was shot in the legs and is still recovering from the injuries.

"Now, there's a Plan C. Asif Zardari is behind this. He has amassed a lot of money through corruption and he has invested that money in terrorists and hired a militant organisation." Khan claimed that "power agencies" were involved in this attempt. "I am [revealing] these names as my nation should know who were [behind] these attacks," he said. The ex-prime minister said that the nation should be aware of who was behind his assassination bid so "they cannot enjoy their lives after they have done this".

Following the rupee's historic fall against the US

dollar in the country, the PTI chief hit out at the incumbent government and predicted hyperinflation and "insurmountable" economic challenges in days to come. "During the past three days, the local unit plunged by Rs33 against the US dollar," he said. "The rupee fell by Rs84 during the last nine months."

While giving the reasons behind the devaluation of the local currency, the deposed prime minister said that the country's foreign currency reserves have reached a record low. "Foreign currency reserves sank to \$3.6 billion." The ex-premier also lambasted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, saying he had now become aware of what sort of a "genius" Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Ishaq Dar was.

The Pakistani rupee extended its downward trend today with the local currency plunging Rs7.17, or 2.73%, against the US dollar in the interbank market as the government eased its control over the currency in order to convince the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to release pending loan tranche.

Attempts by FinMin Dar to defend the rupee since his appointment in September, including reported currency market interventions, had run counter to the IMF's advice. Facing an acute balance of payments crisis, Pakistan is desperate to secure external financing, with less than three weeks' worth of import cover in its foreign exchange reserves, which fell \$923 million to \$3.68 billion in the latest

data.

Pakistan secured a \$6 billion IMF bailout in 2019. It was topped up with another \$1 billion last year to help the country following devastating floods, but the IMF then suspended disbursements in November due to Pakistan's failure to make more progress on fiscal consolidation. In 2019, the PTI government brokered a multi-billion-dollar loan package from the lender of the last resort. But the economy slid backwards when Khan reneged on his promise to cut subsidies and market interventions that had cushioned the cost-of-living crisis.

## Farrukh gets interim bail

LAHORE (INP): A local court in Lahore on Friday granted interim bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Farrukh Habib in a case registered against him for allegedly attacking law enforcement personnel to get Fawad Chaudhry released. The Ferozewala court granted interim bail to PTI leader till February 16.

A First Information Report (FIR) was registered late night at Ferozewala police station on the complaint of federal police officer Adeel Shaukat. The first information report (FIR) was lodged against Farrukh Habib for 'interfering in official affairs' and 'tearing uniforms of policemen'. The PTI leader has been booked under sections 148, 149, 186, 225, 341, 353, and 395 of the Pakistan Penal Code.



who have not been able to afford education for their children at the prestigious NED university.

## ADP Scheme No. 1140/220671 (2022-23) District Development Plan for Dir Lower.

نمبر شمار	نام سکیم	تعمید اگست	زرمعات	میڈیکل وصولی کو کھولنے کی تاریخ	دست
1	قیرانی بی ایس آر ڈاؤن ٹری بنڈی کوچہ جات بمقام الصفاق آباد چارنان	9,00,000/-	18,000/-	15/02/2023	بمطابق ووک آرڈر
2	قیرانی بی ایس آر ڈاؤن ٹری بنڈی کوچہ جات بمقام ڈھان کورون سیوا	6,50,000/-	13,000/-	//	//
3	نیو بیل روڈ اسٹیشن ٹیمن ایوب پور بمقام قلعہ خضیل اور عزیزئی	40,00,000/-	80,000/-	//	//

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الہدیہ: تحصیل آفیسر (انفراسٹرکچر) ٹی ایم اے اڈیزنی / حکم: تحصیل میونسپل آفیسر، ٹی ایم اے اڈیزنی

[illegible]

اشتر: تحصیل آفیسر انفراسٹرکچر، تحصیل میونسپل اینڈسٹریشن خال دیرپا مین / بحکم: تحصیل میونسپل آفیسر، تحصیل میونسپل اینڈسٹریشن خال دیرپا مین





## Report on computerization of land record in 7 districts submitted to Governor



PESHAWAR (APP): Director General Audit District Government Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Rehman on Friday called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali here and presented him a special study report for the

Government Shah Rehman told the Governor that under the Local Government Act 2013, these reports were to be submitted for discussion in the District Accounts Committees, but unfortunately this did not happen and since then almost all the reports are pending.

He said that the Punjab and Sindh government has amended the Local Government Act according to which the audit reports of the district government can be presented for discussion in the provincial assembly.

He further informed that the Auditor General of Pakistan has also requested the Provincial Government of KP through the Governor to amend the

Local Government Act in the province like Punjab and Sindh but it was not implemented.

He requested the governor to take special interest in the report and take it up with the provincial government.

Governor Haji Ghulam Ali assured the DG Audit of his full cooperation and said that a meeting of the relevant authorities would be convened very soon so that a best solution could be found by discussing the issue.

The governor said that the issues highlighted in the report would be sent to the concerned commissioners so that immediate and best steps could be taken to resolve the long lingering issue.



PESHAWAR: Provincial president of PPP Women Wing Senator Robina Khalid addressing a gathering. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

## MTI-HMC achieves ISO certification

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Medical Teaching Institution Hayatabad Medical Complex Peshawar (MTI-HMC) achieved yet another landmark this time by being officially certified as ISO 9001:2015 accredited.

It has been acknowledged that the services and facilities provided by the hospital are one of the best in the country. A team of experts from ISO led by Dr. Nadia Nisar and Hassan Faraz made the decision here on Friday during their audit inspection visit where the team inspected patient care, equipment, environmental compliance, management, employability, and other facilities before recommendation.

Medical Director MTI-HMC Prof. Dr. Shahzad Akbar on the occasion paid tribute to the Board of Governors MTI-HMC led by Sahibzada Saeed and all the administrative and

clinical staff of MTI-HMC for their efforts in getting due recognition for the institution.

He stressed that the institution will use this certification as a platform to further improve the facilities being provided to patients and with the constant input of the quality department, ensure that it is recognized as one of the best teaching institutions at the international level.

A lead auditor of the ISO team Dr. Nadia Nisar said that the healthcare facilities provided to the patients at MTI-HMC are one of the best she experienced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

She appreciated the efforts of the leadership of MTI-HMC to ensure quality management in the hospital.

She said that the "Patient Facilitation Center at the hospital is an example for other hospitals of the province to facilitate patients under one roof".

The Hospital Director Dr. Shahzad Faisal on the occasion appreciated the efforts of the quality management department of the hospital, and the administrative and clinical departments to put efforts into getting this achievement.

This has also been ratified by a number of third-party performances covering treasury care facilities in the province.

A couple of years back MTI-HMC and its teaching undergraduate college Khyber Girls Medical College were rated as the best public sector teaching institution in the country in an audit carried out by Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC).

With this latest feather in the cap and being acknowledged by ISO certification the institution has led the foundation for building on the series of successes, it has achieved over the course of time.

## ACS chairs meeting on MAGP

PESHAWAR (APP): Additional Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ikram Ullah Khan on Friday chaired a meeting on Merged Areas Governance Programme (MAGP).

The Additional Chief Secretary was briefed on the comprehensive governance initiatives of the programme and also discussed the ongoing Citizen Perception Survey.

Secretary P&DD, Shah Mahmood Khan, Strategic Advisor MAGP Javed Iqbal, Musharraf Rasool Lead Economic Advisor MAGP, Raluca Eddon Programme Manager MAGP and other relevant officials also attended the meeting.

## Open katchehry held

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration on Friday organized an open katchehry in Hayatabad to listen to and resolve the problems of citizens.

A large number of people participated in open court and informed the district administration about his problems.

Additional Assistant Commissioner Sameera Saba, officers of sub-departments, revenue staff, public representatives, people and local leaders participated in large numbers in open court.

On this occasion, people complained about out-of-order street lights in most areas and parks and demanded to fix them immediately.

They also informed about illegal hostels, poor cleanliness conditions and the use of loudspeakers by vendors causing inconvenience to the residents.

They demanded an increase in the graveyard area, action against illegal parking and more civic facilities.

The district administration assured to resolve their all problems on a priority basis. In the end, people thanked the district administration for organizing the open court.

## ECP promotes SLO



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has promoted Senior Law Officer Riaz Ahmad Khattak to BPS-19 serving at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa office, on Friday.

In this regard ECP has issued notification, while Riaz Ahmad Khan was appointed as Law Officer in 2008 at the Election Commission.

Senior Law Officer had obtained law degree from International Islamic University Islamabad.

Riaz Ahmad Khan has also served as Civil Judge from 2001-4 while he is belonging a respected and educated family from Karak and his Late father Mumtaz Ahmad was an educationist of the area.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali administering oath from caretaker minister Manzoor Khan Afridi.

## Legal fraternity elects KPBC's Vice Chairman

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council (KPBC) elected Zar Badshah as vice chairman and Syed Mubashir Shah as Executive Committee's chairman respectively, on Friday.

The election was held under chairmanship of Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shumail Ahmad Butt in which Zar Badshah obtained 17 votes while with competitor Nauman Kakakhel Advocate obtained 10 votes for the slot of KPBC's vice

chairman.

Moreover, Syed Mubashir Shah also secured 17 votes against Amjad Saleem who obtained 10 votes respectively for the position of chairman of KPBC's Executive Committee chairmanship.

The newly elected office-holders claimed that they will utilize their energies and potentials for welfare of legal fraternity as well as for working coordination between bench and bar. They added that current lawyers are facing security threats and it should be address on priority basis by upholding the issue on competent forums.

The newly elected KPBC officeholders claimed that role of legal fraternity has increased in current economic crisis in Pakistan while they are committed to play their role in establishment rule of law.

Chairman KPBC's Executive Committee Syed Mubashir Shah said that he is first advocate from district Swabi who is elected for this position. He added that this is an inspiration for young lawyers that commitment brings result.

## 15th member of KP cabinet takes oath

PESHAWAR (APP): The 15th member of the caretaker cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Manzoor Khan on Friday took oath here at the Governor House.

KP Governor Ghulam Ali administered oath to Manzoor Khan and felicitated him on his new constitutional responsibilities.

Caretaker Chief Minister Azam Khan, provincial ministers Shafiullah, Fazl Elahi, Hamid Shah, Commissioner Peshawar division Riaz Khan Mehsood administrative officers and social and civil personalities witnessed the oath taking ceremony.

## ASI arrested in Obaid murder

PESHAWAR (APP): In a breakthrough in Obaid Khan custodial murder, Swat Police arrested the accused Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI), Faizullah Khan on Friday.

The accused ASI presented himself before the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) in Mingora Police Station wherein he was formally arrested. All four wanted accused of the case have been arrested and murder instrument has also been recovered from them. Further investigations were in progress.

According to a spokesman of Swat Police, the JIT is determined to ensure the requirements of justice in any circumstances.

## Renowned food outlets sealed

PESHAWAR (APP): On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Shafiullah Khan, the district administration conducted night-time raids on renowned food outlets in the city.

Assistant Commissioner Rao Hashim inspected various restaurants, marts and hostels on University Road, said a press release issued here on Friday.

Afghan Sadaqat Juice Corner, Pot Snooker Club and Dehli Pizza were sealed for not having fire safety equipment.

Similarly, the managers of Silver Dragon, University Tikka and Islamia Restaurant were arrested for compromising on public safety. Legal action was initiated against the arrested managers.

## Power suspension

PESHAWAR (APP): PESCO on Friday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132KV Chakdara Grid Station on 30th January from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The maintenance work would affect consumers of 11kv Khadagzai, Khanpur, City Chakdara, Shahi Khel, Yar Steel and Swat Motorway feeders. It said the power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV University Grid Station on 28th and 31st January from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Achini, Abdara, Sufed Dheri and Pawaka feeders will face inconvenience.

## Hurdles in beginning work on Surizai Housing Scheme removed

PESHAWAR (APP): Hurdles in beginning work on Surizai Housing Scheme removed as both rival parties agreed on signing a formal agreement on January 30, 2023.

In this connection a meeting was held herewith Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Khan Mehsood in the chair. Besides, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Shafiullah Khan, Director General (DG) Provincial Housing Authority (PHA), Roshan

Mehsood, Collector Provincial Housing Shafiq Afridi and the representatives of Tilla Band and Surizai also attended the meeting.

The meeting unanimously agreed on a formula for the resolution of the dispute and convened a meeting on January 30th to give it formal shape. During the meeting to be held under the chairmanship of the Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Khan Mehsood, both parties will sign a formal agreement.

The residents of Surizai and Tilla Band were having a long standing dispute over the ownership and occupation of 5800 jirb land, which was a big hurdle in initiating work on Surizai Housing Scheme.

For the resolution of the dispute, Commissioner Peshawar Division held several rounds of negotiations for the resolution of the problems and at last succeeded in agreeing both parties on a formula of land distribution.



PESHAWAR: Chairman Oil Tankers Association Muhammad Shafiq Marwat with provincial president Haji Muhammad Ayub addressing a press conference.

## Workshop for tribal elders concluded



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A three-day workshop for tribesmen on social integration and uplift of erstwhile Fata concluded at Peshawar, on Friday.

According to details, the workshop was arranged by CRA North for tribal elders to ensure socio-economic integration in newly

merged districts of erstwhile Fata to contribute in national production.

Assistant Commissioner Revenue Khyber Amir Zeb Khan and Tehsildar Orakzai Fahim addressed the tribesmen as chief guests of the workshop while stressed upon role local elders for good governance and development of

the region. They claimed that administration along with all public sector offices had prioritized uplift of erstwhile Fata.

The chief guests distributed certificates of participations among tribal elders and hopeful for their role in uplift of merged district of erstwhile Fata with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## KPCTA installs sign boards on tourist places

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cultural and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) has installed various road side boards near famous tourist attractions for facilitation and orientation of visitors.

According to KPCTA here Friday, boards are installed on roads of Chakdara, Timergara, Khazana Bypass, Dir Lower, Panah Kot Chitral road Dir Upper, Swat, Kalam, Malam Jabba, Miandam, Miandam picnic spot, Shangla top, Gabeen Jabba, Nathiagali,

Thandiani Road Abbottabad, Mansehra, Naran, and Kaghan.

The sign boards were mentioned with helpline number 1422 for assistance of visitors. Visitors can easily acquire information related to weather, famous tourist places, traffic and emergency center of KPCTA.

The boards were installed for first time and depict commitment and professional approach adopted by KPCTA to guide visitors and promote tourism sector

of KP province.

Director General KPCTA, Bakhtiar Khan said that facilitation of tourists is vital to promote tourism sector and installation of boards were meant to facilitate visitors and provide them easy access to get needed information.

He said that 1422 helpline would work round the clock and provide tourist information of weather, road clearance, emergency situation, snow, availability of patrol and other guidelines.

## Rain, snowfall predicted

PESHAWAR (APP): The Met Office on Friday predicted rain with snowfall over the hill in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during January 28 to 30 due to which a cold wave would grip most parts of the province.

It said moderate to isolated heavy snowfall over the hills in Chitral, Lower and Upper Dir, Malakand, Swat, Buner, Shangal, Kohistan, Battagram, Torgar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur and Swabi districts.

Light rain with light to moderate snowfall over the hills is expected in Mardan Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, Hangu, Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, DI Khan, North and South Waziristan districts from Sunday and Monday.

Moderate to heavy snowfall would disrupt and cause closure of road in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torgar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur and Swabi districts.

har, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Khyber, Kurram districts during the period, it warned.

It further said that rain could trigger landslides in vulnerable areas of Chitral, Swat, Shangla, Buner, Kohistan, Battagram, Torgar, Mansehra and Abbottabad districts.

Meanwhile PDMA directed all district administrations to take precautionary measures in order to avoid human losses or damages to property.





## In brief

### Police seize 28 timber sleepers Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Swat Police during a crack-down against timber mafia has seized 28 sleepers of various sizes from a datsun pick-up at Khawazakhela area of the district, said a press release issued here on Friday. On the special directives of the Regional Police Officer (RPO) Malakand, Sajjad Khan and District Police Officer (DPO) Swat, Shafiullah Khan Gandapur, Swat Police has launched a crackdown against timber mafia. Police has arrested the accused Omar Rehman son of Rasool Khan, resident of Masko Mini and Fazal Bacha son of Said Waqar, resident of K a s h k o r , Khawazakhela and for further legal proceedings they were handed over to the Forest Department.

### PML-N leaders' condole death F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) provincial leader Malik Liaqat Ali Wazir condoled with bereaved family of Dawar Kundi over his father departure and prayed for his highest place in heaven, on Friday. Adnan Mehsud, general secretary of PML-N South Waziristan Upper, was also condoles with Senior Vice President and former MNA PML-N Dawar Kundi's residence. PML-N provincial leader Malik Liaqat Ali Wazir recited Fatiha on the death of PML-N Senior Vice President Dawar Kundi's father and prayed for the repose of the deceased. He said that he is an equal participant in this pain and suffering with the bereaved. The struggle of the deceased will be remembered. The deceased was an excellent person and sympathetic to the poor people.

### Health facilities inspected F.P. Report

BANNU: Assistant Commissioner Shakeel Ahmed visited Bakakhel tehsil and reviewed various health facilities while taking notice of the inactivity and non-availability of facilities of various health centers, he directed the officials that legal action will be taken against the officials who are not doing duty. Legal action will be taken against owners who use health centers as their homes. Assistant Commissioner Shakeel Ahmed directed the health department to supply medicines on time. AC clarified that negligence will not be tolerated in any case and the district administration will take all possible steps to make the health centers functional in order to improve the health facilities of Tehsil Bakakhel.

### Two killed in road accident

SARGODHA (INP): Two people were killed in a collision between a speeding dumper and a motorcycle near Daoud Khail here on Friday. Police said Qubla Khan, 50, and Shaban Khan, 43, of Esa Khail were traveling on motorcycle when a speeding dumper hit it. Resultantly, the both died on the spot.

### Fines imposed on profiteers

NAROWAL (INP): District Officer (DO) Industries Zeeshan Niaz has said that on the special orders of chief secretary Punjab and Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Shahrukh Niazi, the process of price checking on a daily basis across the district is in progress. Under which price magistrate was checking the shops on a daily basis to ensure the price control.

# QWP chief says PTI responsible for crises in KP

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Friday held Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership responsible for plunging the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province into a host of crises due to their stubbornness.

Addressing a gathering at Tangi tehsil in Charsadda district, he said the PTI leaders dissolved the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly for the ego of a person, who was least bothered about the problems being faced by the common people. He maintained that the PTI ruled Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for over nine years, but it failed to execute any mega uplift project in the province.

He said the people had given a mandate to the PTI for five years but it insulted the masses by quitting the government. He elaborated that the dissolution of the

assembly was a constitutional provision, which could be invoked when a crisis arose. "How would now the PTI leaders seek votes from the people who have been exposed to a number of problems?" he asked.

Aftab Sherpao said that the PTI quit the government at a time when the province was facing flour crisis while skyrocketing inflation and lawlessness had also made life miserable for the people. Expressing concern over the worsening law and order in the province, he said the personnel of the law-enforcement agencies and the police were facing attacks on a daily basis while the people were receiving calls for extortion.

The QWP leader said the incidents of target killings and other crimes had recorded a sharp increase. He said the people have been left at the mercy of the robbers and outlaws.

Coming down hard on the previous PTI government, he said former prime minister Imran Khan undermined the economy and now the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government was busy taking tough decisions to fix it.

He said the component parties in the PDM had put their political capital at stake to save the country from facing a default-like situation. Aftab Sherpao said now the people would decide the future of the country through the power of their votes.

He said the wrong policies of the previous PTI government led to the deterioration in the law and order in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, adding that terrorism was once again rearing its ugly head in the province. Holding the PTI responsible for the prevailing crises, he said that Imran Khan and his team ruined the economy and added to the woes of the common people.

## Protest held against burning of Holy Quran in Sweden

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: The Tribesmen of Landi Kotal have pledged that they will uphold respect of their religion and the holy Quran with their blood in a protest held at Bacha Khan Square main Bazaar on Friday organized against the mishap of burning copies of the Muslims holy Book in Stockholm, Sweden.

It is to be stated here that last week protestors in Sweden burnt copies of the holy Quran during a demonstration organized by Rasmus Paludan, leader of the Danish far-right political party hard line. The move sparked riots not only in Sweden but across the Muslims world.

People from different walks of life while carrying placards inscribed with slogans against the blasphemous act participated in the protest rally initiated at



Bacha Chowk, Landi Kotal Bazaar. Addressing the angry mob Qari Naushad, Qari Iftekhar, Syed Sadeeq Banuri, Kaleem Ullah and others firmly rejected all such practices that insulted religion and emphasized the importance of respecting religious symbols and sanctities.

"We are competent enough and will adopt all necessary initiatives to uphold respect and honor of the holy Prophet

Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and the holy Quran," they remarked. The protestors urged the Muslim countries to respond to the blasphemy event more effectively and suspend their diplomatic ties with Sweden. Chanting slogans against Sweden, the demonstrators marched in front of the Landi Kotal press club and after offering prayers for solidarity of the Muslim world dispersed peacefully.

## CCTV control system inaugurated in Lodhran

Saqib Mushtaq

LODHARAN: Regional Police Officer Multan Moin Masood inaugurated CCTV cameras system and added that integrated system of cameras will help in crime fighting in Lodhran, on Friday.

During inaugural ceremony, District Police Officer (DPO) Lodhran Muhammad Kashif Aslam briefed RPO Moin Masood about the control room. SP Investigation Kaiwan Abbasi, Private Secretary Yusuf Bhatti were also present on this occasion.

RPO Multan Moin Masood said that DPO Muhammad Kashif Aslam has taken a positive step for the protection of citizens. The DPO and his entire team are commendable. With the help of cameras, it will help to make the city peaceful and apart from



security, in case of any accident or illegal activity, it will be possible to trace it through the camera. The video of the accident will also be part of the record.

Detecting crime with the help of cameras will also significantly reduce the crime rate. Earlier, the armed police saluted RPO Moin Masood at Javed Islam Police Line. RPO Moin Masood along with DPO Kashif Aslam also

inaugurated the newly constructed firing range in the police line. DSP Headquarters Masoodul Haque Bhatti, Dr Naveed and Rizwan Bhatti were also present on the occasion. RPO Multan Dr. Moin Masood said that the morale of the police force will be increased by the shooting practice and the establishment of the firing range is commendable.

## Anti-drug awareness campaign launched

F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: Anti-drugs awareness has been launched in Kurram district under Drug Free Pakistan campaign while public at large has welcomed the initiative for eradication of this menace from society.

In order to eradicate the scourge of drugs and to create awareness among the people, a walk was organized across the district under the supervision of District Administration Karam in the name of Drug Free Pakistan. Which started from different places and ended at the respective press club.

The walk was attended by Assistant Commissioners, Additional Assistant Commissioners including Tehsildars, Revenue Staff, Line

Departments, Tribal Elders, Youth, Trade Community, Social Workers and Civil Society. On this occasion, the speakers while briefing the media said that drugs are a killer poison. Drugs are a curse and a silent killer along with cancer. We have to fight together for drug prevention and eradication.

According to Deputy Commissioner Karam, in the next phase, the police and the district administration will start the action to prevent and eradicate drug addiction. In which 3MP action will also be taken against the arrested persons. So the people are requested. That the police and district administration can contact the Giant Control Room of Karam to identify the drug dealers.

### Flour quality inspected

F.P. Report

KHAR: Deputy Commissioner Bajaur, Fahad Wazir Friday visited various flour mills and inspected quality of wheat flour.

He also inspected weight of flour bags, price and record of mills. He also contacted flour distribution outlets and inquired about availability of staple item. He warned strict action against flour mills and dealers who failed to compile record and said that overpricing of flour would not be tolerated. He also directed food department to check record of dealers and flour mills daily without any discrimination.



CHARSADDA: Chairman of Qaumi Watan Party Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao addressing a public gathering in UC Mirza Dhare.

### Beggary in our community Waliah Fatima

BEGGARS can be seen on street corners, outside of stores, and even at busy intersections, asking for money and food. While it is important to have compassion for those who are struggling and in need, it is also important to recognize that beggary can be a complex issue with multiple underlying causes, such as poverty, mental health issues, and addiction. Simply giving money to beggars is not a sustainable solution and may even perpetuate the problem.

Instead, we should focus on addressing the root causes of beggary by investing in social welfare programs, mental health services, and affordable housing. We should also support organizations that provide job training and employment opportunities for those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

As a society, we have a responsibility to help those in need, but we must do so in a way that is effective and sustainable. Beggary is not just a problem for the individuals involved, but for the entire community. It is time for us to take action and come up with solutions to address this issue. I would be looking forward to hearing from you.

The author is student at NED University of Engineering and Technology.

### DPO visits check-points F.P. Report

GHALANAI: District Police Officer (DPO) Mohamad Abdur Rashid visited Chupan check post and inspected mobile patrolling along with law and order measurements in the premises, on Friday.

According to details, DPO upheld the morality of personnel and directed to prioritize community and proactive policing for elimination of crimes from the area. He appreciated security personnel while performing their duties with honesty and responsibility. DPO also appreciated tribesmen for their sacrifices during war on terror and restoration of peace in the region. He argued public to cooperate with security forces for elimination crimes for sustainable peace in the region.

### 1 killed over land dispute

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: A man shot killed by two persons over land at Tajazai area of Lakki Marwat, Friday while police claimed that the accused Tahir along with his unknown accomplice killed Pir Muhammad and escaped from the crime scene.

According to police, deceased's friend Waheed Ullah was injured in the attack. Injured Waheedullah told police that he and Pir Muhammad were on the way to the village after attending a local court when Tahir son of Pir Muhammad along with an unidentified accomplice attacked them. He said that Tahir sprayed his father with bullets while his accomplice opened fire on him.

The complainant told police that Pir Muhammad sustained serious bullet wounds and died instantly while he was injured in the firing attack.

## Tributes paid to Shaheed Malik Saad

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: The police officers and people from different walks of life paid respect and tribute to Shaheed DIG Malik Saad on his 16th martyrdom anniversary at his grave in Ghalm Banda here on Friday.

Regional Police Officer Kohat, Dar Ali Khattak, DPO Abdur Rauf Qaisarani, DSP Headquarters, Shahid Adnan, the son of Malik Saad, Malik Salam Khan including the police staff and people from all walks of life attended the special function at the grave of Shaheed Malik Saad to pay homage to the martyrs of the deadly Dhaki Dalgaran suicide attack on 27th January, 2007.

A smartly turned out contingent of police offered



salute to the grave of the Shaheed Malik Saad and laid floral wreaths at the martyr's grave. The participants of the function offered Fateha and prayed for a high place in heaven for the departed soul of the martyrs.

RPO Dar Ali Khattak paid glowing tributes to the services of Malik Saad and other martyrs who rendered

their lives in the line of duty while inspecting security arrangements for mourning processions at Dhaki Dalgaran in Qissa Khwani Bazaar. He said services of the martyrs for the cause of the nation will always be remembered adding that Malik Saad and others who embraced martyrdom on that day were indeed the brave sons of the nation.

## Dyeing industry and pollution

Annus Khan

GLOBAL warming is one of the most important issue addressed these days, the increase in the pollution is the main of reasons that is causing global warming. Effluent pollution that is the type of water pollution that mainly is discharged from industries is one of the reasons of this pollution that is directly related to the global warming. Pakistan plays a vital role in the textile sector, the most used material is cotton.

"The textile dyeing industry is well-known for being a major polluter of the environment" (Christie, 2007): This is primarily due to high effluent discharges of inorganic salts, alkalis, other processing aids like surfactants, and organic matter like dyes. Effluents from reactive dyeing cotton are particularly polluted, with high oxygen demand, color, and salt load. The

industry also consumes a significant amount of clean water. Effluent treatment and water recycling can help to reduce discharge pollution and provide reusable processing water.

The obvious better approach would be to modify textile processing technologies and chemistry to reduce effluent pollution. Such a proactive approach to environmental protection has grown in importance around the world. There are some techniques that textile sector should adopt in order to save our planet. Like, the use of non-toxic biodegradable dyes and chemicals for dyeing is a direct approach to reducing effluent pollution. The use of specific organic compounds has been shown to be a viable alternative to inorganic salt. Because most of these compounds are biodegradable, they reduce effluent load.

Cotton cationisation has been shown in reactive dye-

ing to be capable of eliminating the use of inorganic salt and alkali while leaving a reduced amount of unfixed dye. This has significant environmental advantages. Biological treatment is typically considered to be the most efficient method for removing the majority of toxic pollutants from complex organic effluent. The biodegradation of synthetic dyes and other dissolved substances is typically accomplished by natural or regenerated bacteria in these processes.

To conclude biological treatment is typically considered to be the most efficient method for removing the majority of toxic pollutants from complex organic effluent. The biodegradation of synthetic dyes and other dissolved substances is typically accomplished by natural or regenerated bacteria in these processes.

The author is Student at NED University of Engineering and Technology Karachi.

## Energy crisis hits industry badly: HIA

F.P. Report

HARIPUR: The current energy crisis has hit the second largest industrial estate Hattar which has ultimately impacted national export in the global market.

This is claimed by Hattar Industrialists Association (HIA), Chief Patron Qadir Mehmood while addressing press conference that more than 480 factories are operating in Hattar Industrial Estate, the largest industrial zone of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including oil and ghee, food manufactures and beverages. More than 60,000 households are employed in steel, minerals, carpets, pharmaceuticals and other factories, but in the current situation, the goods loaded on domestic pot containers have stopped due to lack of imports and exports.

Already, the country's business conditions are not favourable, Chief Patron Qadir Mehmood said, saying that the gas and taxes have taken away the electricity due to additional load at the existing grade station for Hattar Industrial Estate by Pesco. Machines and other related tools get damaged due to the blind spot which has badly affected the production activities, the indus-

trialists are facing difficulties due to many hours of load shedding while even the sub division office is not present in Hattar, he said.

HIA claimed that the largest industrial city of the province 132kv grid station iii Hattar is in final stages to be completed by DC Haripur section 4 at an accelerated speed so that power problems can be solved in industries, total injustice in one line in Hattar Industrial Estate which pays billions of rupees annually. The industrialists have urgently demanded a sub-divisional office with staff in Hattar so that electricity problems can be resolved.

The industrialists in an emergency press conference jointly said regarding Sui Gas that despite paying GIDC, the industrial sector is suffering due to interest over interest. The Supreme Court had already waived it but the interest in the bills has not ended. What is being done? The industrialists also said that the industrial sector is already paying taxes in various categories and is playing a significant role in improving and stabilizing the country's economy. have started recovery which is like pushing the falling wall, the industrialists said that it has

become very difficult to continue business with these atrocities but the biscuit factories are facing severe shortage of flour, said that flour is not available within the limits of Hattar Industrial Estate, which has badly affected the production activities, it has become necessary to take a regular license from the federal government to buy flour, while there is an urgent need to take up matters with the federal government in this regard. So that business activities can be restored.

Chief Patron Qadir Mehmood said that the federal government and the caretaker government of KPK demanded that PESCO, Sui Gas authorities and other authorities should solve the problems of industrialists and the government should immediately issue orders to the relevant authorities to open the LCs so that business can be done.

The community can continue their business and the federal and provincial governments should adopt such a strategy to apply minimum taxes in terms of taxes on the business class and give relief to the business class through a special package and the federal government should continue the business activities of biscuit factories.





## Cops hunt Oregon torture suspect jailed in Vegas kidnap case

SALEM, Ore. (AP): Police in southern Oregon were searching for a man accused of torturing a woman he held captive, less than two years after he was convicted in Nevada of keeping another woman in captivity for weeks before the victim managed to escape. Grants Pass Police Chief Warren Hensman said in a telephone interview that he finds it "extremely troubling" that the felon is wanted in an attempted murder instead of still being behind bars for the Nevada crimes.

Benjamin Obadiah Foster, 36, is now charged in Oregon with attempted murder, kidnapping and assault. Foster tried to kill the victim in Grants Pass while "intentionally torturing" her and secretly confining her "in a place where she was not likely to be found," Josephine County District Attorney Joshua Eastman wrote in a court document. "We are laser-focused on capturing this man and bringing him to justice," Hensman said at a news conference. "This is an all-hands-on-deck operation."

In 2019, before moving to Oregon, Foster held his then-girlfriend captive inside her Las Vegas apartment for two weeks. He initially was charged with five felonies, including assault and battery, and faced decades in prison upon conviction. But in August 2021, Foster reached a deal with Clark

County prosecutors that allowed him to plead guilty to one felony count of battery and a misdemeanor count of battery constituting domestic violence. A judge sentenced him to up to 2 1/2 years in a Nevada prison. But after the 729 days he had spent in jail awaiting trial were factored into his punishment, Foster was left to serve less than 200 additional days in state custody.

Foster's girlfriend at the time had suffered seven broken ribs, two black eyes and injuries from being bound at the wrists and ankles with zip ties and duct tape during her two-week captivity, according to a Las Vegas police report obtained by The Associated Press. The woman also told police she was forced to eat lye and choked to the point of unconsciousness. She escaped during a trip with Foster to a grocery store and a gas station, after Foster had let the woman out of his sight. According to the police report, the woman ran to a nearby apartment complex and found a resident who rushed her to a hospital. Foster was arrested by SWAT officers later that day.

At the time, court records show, Foster was out of custody on a suspended jail sentence for carrying a concealed weapon without a permit. He also was awaiting trial in another 2018 case

involving domestic violence. But Foster's plea deal with prosecutors in 2021 settled the domestic violence case, a copy of the agreement shows, and he was "sentenced to credit for time served." Police in Grants Pass, a town of some 40,000 in southwest Oregon, provided recent photos in a news release of Foster and the Nissan Sentra car he was driving. They said he is believed to be armed and is "considered extremely dangerous."

"We are using every piece of technology available to locate this man," said Hensman, the police chief. "And I'll leave it at that." Police went to a home in a residential neighborhood of Grants Pass to investigate an assault, although Hensman didn't want to discuss yet how the officers were alerted. When they arrived, the officers found a woman who had been bound and beaten unconscious. She was taken to a hospital in critical condition, police said.

"This is a very serious event, a brutal assault of one of our residents that we take extremely seriously," the police chief added. "And we will not rest until we capture this individual." Hensman said he doesn't have time now to explore how authorities in Nevada handled Foster's crimes there. "Whatever happened in the past," he said, "we can talk about those situations later."

## Germany apologizes for leopard jibe

CAPE TOWN (AP): Germany apologized for using a leopard emoji in a jibe at Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Twitter that ended up offending some Africans. The German foreign ministry poked fun at Russia's top diplomat during his tour of Africa when it tweeted that he wasn't there looking for leopards, but using the trip to try and justify Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The tweet, and the leopard emoji the foreign ministry used on its official account, played off Germany's decision to send some of its advanced Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine to help its military fight off

Russian forces. But an African Union official took offense at what she said was the continent being portrayed as only about wild animals. Ebba Kalondo, the spokeswoman for AU Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat, tweeted back to the German government account questioning if Africa, its people and its wildlife was "just a joke to you?" "Foreign policy is not a joke nor should it be used to score cheap geopolitical points by illustrating an entire Continent with colonial tropes," Kalondo wrote in a follow-up tweet.

The German foreign ministry apologized and said that the tweet wasn't

meant to offend, but rather "to call out the lies that Russia uses to justify its imperialist war of aggression against Ukraine," Lavrov has visited South Africa, Eswatini, Angola and Eritrea this week, where he has repeated his claims that the United States and its Western allies are using Ukraine as a tool in a "hybrid war" against Russia. Many African nations still hold historical ties with Moscow. South Africa was one of several to abstain from a UN vote last year condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Eritrea voted against the resolution alongside Russia, Belarus, North Korea and Syria.

## One dead, 8 taken to hospitals in Chicago

CHICAGO (AP): Chicago authorities said one person has died and eight others were taken to hospitals as firefighters responded to a high-rise apartment building fire on the city's South Side, battling flames that leaped up 10 floors as snow fell.

Chicago Fire Commissioner Annette Nance-Holt said the eight people taken to hospitals were all stable. She said one firefighter had a minor injury but was doing well.

Sophia King, the alderman for the area, said the person who died was found in the apartment where officials believe the fire began. Authorities have not released further information about the person who died. Video from outside the building in the Kenwood neighborhood

showed bright orange flames on multiple floors before firefighters got them under control. Damage was visible from the ground, including blown out windows and a blackened building exterior. The Chicago Fire Department said the fire was initially reported around 10 a.m. and was under control by 12:30 p.m. Nance-Holt said more than 300 fire and Emergency Medical Service workers responded to the blaze; the cause is still under investigation.

She said the fire began on the 15th level and lapped up to the 24th level, traveling from one floor to another as firefighters raced to stay ahead of the flames. "They did an outstanding job," Nance-Holt said. "It just went straight vertically,

and they did everything they could to put that fire out." King said many of the residents of the building are older. "I will tell you when I first walked up, I was agast and my heart sunk," she said. "But after talking to leadership, first responders, they have the situation under control."

Barbara Joiner, a 69-year-old resident, stood outside the building with other neighbors as snow continued to fall. Joiner said she acts as a caretaker for another woman who lives in the portion of the building affected by the fire and was anxiously trying to reach her. "Oh, my God," she said, remembering her reaction to seeing the flames once she got outside. "These flames are still rising."

## Man appears in court to face Capitol riot charges

FLINT, Mich. (AP): A mid-Michigan man says he's innocent of the charges brought against him in connection with the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot in Washington. Isaac Thomas of Genesee County appeared in US District Court in Flint on, WJRT-TV reported.

"I was being told I was being charged with one count of second-degree misdemeanor for trespassing. I get in there today, they hand me this paper that says you are a felon," Thomas said after the hearing. The 10 federal charges Thomas faces include entering or remaining in a restricted building; disorderly or disruptive conduct in a restricted building; disorderly conduct in a Capitol building; act of physical violence in the Capitol grounds or buildings; and assaulting, resisting or impeding certain officers using a dangerous weapon. Thomas admits being at the US Capitol, but he disputes the charges.

"I didn't have any weapons. I don't own weapons, I don't own firearms," he said. "If any laws were broken, it was not my intent in any way, shape or form." Thomas was released on a \$10,000 unsecured bond. His case is being transferred to federal court in the District of Columbia. His next court hearing is scheduled for Feb. 7.

## Ex-student gets 8 years for spying for Chinese govt

CHICAGO (AP): A former Chicago graduate student was sentenced to eight years in prison for spying for the Chinese government by gathering information on scientists and engineers in the US with knowledge about aerospace and satellite technology. A federal jury in Chicago in September convicted Ji Chaoqun, 31, of conspiracy to act as an agent of China's Ministry of State Security without notifying the US attorney general, acting as a spy in the US, and lying on a government form about his contacts with foreign agencies.

The charges alleged that Ji was targeted by agents with the Ministry of State Security, or MSS, shortly before he came to the US in 2013 to study engineering at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. After traveling back to China for the winter break, prosecutors said, Ji was "wined and dined" by his MSS handlers. He was eventually given a top secret contract in which he swore an oath of allegiance to the agency's cause, agreeing to "devote the rest of my life to state security," according to prosecutors.

Ji ultimately gathered background reports on eight US citizens, all born in Taiwan or China, with careers in science and technology industries, including several who specialized in the aerospace field, prosecutors said. Seven worked for US defense contractors. He sent the reports back to his handlers in a zipped attachment that was falsely labeled as sets of "midterm exam" questions, Assistant US Attorney Barry Jonas said at Ji's trial. In 2016, a year after Ji graduated from the college, he enlisted in the US Army Reserve through a program to recruit foreigners who have skills considered vital to the national interest.

## Egypt unveils tombs and sarcophagus in new excavation

CAIRO (AP): Egypt unveiled dozens of new archaeological discoveries, including two ancient tombs, at a Pharaonic necropolis just outside of the capital Cairo. The artefacts, unearthed during a year-long excavation, were found beneath an ancient stone enclosure near the Saqqara pyramids and date back to the fifth and sixth dynasties of the Old Kingdom, spanning from roughly 2500 B.C to 2100 B.C., the excavation team said.

One of the uncovered tombs belonged to a priest from the fifth dynasty known as Khnumdjedef, while the other tomb belonged to an official named Meri, a palace official who held the title of "the keeper of the secrets," the team said. Other major findings from the excavation include statues, amulets, and a well-preserved sarcophagus. Egypt's most renowned archaeologist and director of the excavation, Zahi Hawass, personally unveiled the new discoveries from the stone enclosure, known as Gisr al-Mudir.

"I put my head inside to see what was inside the sarcophagus: A beautiful mummy of a man completely covered in layers of gold," Hawass said. The Saqqara site is part of a sprawling necropolis at Egypt's ancient capital of Memphis that includes the famed Giza Pyramids as well as smaller pyramids at Abu Sir, Dahshur and Abu Ruwaysh. The ruins of Memphis were designated a



UNESCO World Heritage site in the 1970s. Unveiling comes amid a flurry of new discoveries announced by Egyptian authorities over the past week. Near the southern city of Luxor, authorities said they found dozens of burial sites from the New Kingdom era, dating from 1800 B.C. to 1600 B.C. Discovered nearby were the ruins of an ancient Roman city, it said.

In a separate announcement, a group of scientists from Cairo University revealed previously unknown details about a mummified teenage boy dating to about 300 B.C. By using CT scans, the team of scientists were able to shed new light on

the boy's high social status by affirming the intricate details of the amulets inserted within his mummified body and the type of burial he received. Egypt often publicly touts its ancient discoveries to attract more tourists, a significant source of foreign currency for the cash-strapped North African country. The sector suffered a long downturn after the political turmoil and violence that followed a 2011 uprising. Egypt's tourist industry was also hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic and is currently suffering from the fallout from the war in Ukraine. Both Russia and Ukraine formerly comprised a large source of tourists visiting Egypt.

## Thai activist sentenced to 28 years for online posts on king

BANGKOK (AP): A court in Thailand sentenced a 27-year-old political activist to 28 years in prison for posting messages on Facebook that it said defamed the country's monarchy, while two young women charged with the same offense continued a hunger strike after being hospitalized. The court in the northern province of Chiang Rai found that Mongkhon Thirakot violated the lese majeste law in 14 of 27 posts for which he was arrested last August. The law covers the current king, his queen and heirs, and any regent.

The lese majeste law carries a prison term of three to 15 years per incident for insulting the monarchy, but critics say it is often wielded as a tool to quash political dissent. Student-led pro-democracy protests beginning in 2020 openly criticized the monarchy, previously a taboo subject, leading to vigorous prosecutions under the law, which had

previously been relatively rarely employed. Since November 2020, according to Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, a legal aid organization, at least 228 people, including 18 minors, have been charged with violating the law, even as the protest movement withered due to arrests and the difficulties of conducting protests during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chiang Rai court found that 13 messages posted by Mongkhon, an online clothing merchant, did not violate the law because they related to the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the father of current King Maha Vajiralongkorn, or did not mention a specific royal figure. Mongkhon was found guilty and sentenced to three years in prison for each of the other 14 posts. The 42-year total prison term was reduced by one third, to 28 years, because of Mongkhon's cooperation with the court.

Mongkhon was granted release on bail while his

case in on appeal, under the conditions that he does not engage in acts that damage the monarchy or leave the country.

Prosecutions under the lese majeste law have recently drawn increased public attention because of a prison hunger strike by two female activists charged with the offense. The two, Tantawan "Tawan" Tuatulanon and Orawan "Bam" Phupong, had been free on bail but announced earlier this month that they were revoking their own release to return to prison in solidarity with others held pending trial on the same charge. They issued demands including reform of the justice system, the release of political prisoners and the restoration of civil liberties by abolishing legislation such as the lese majeste law.

After three days back in prison, they began a hunger strike in which they are not consuming either food or liquids, a life-threatening tactic. They were trans-

ferred from the prison hospital to a state hospital with better facilities. As their strike continued, supporters staged small protests. The opposition Move Forward Party, which has been offering support, has proposed amending the lese majeste law, but no action has been taken in Parliament.

The proposal would reduce the punishment for defaming the king to a maximum of one year in prison and a fine of up to 300,000 baht (\$9,160), while an offense against the queen, the king's heirs or the regent would be subject to a maximum six-month prison term and a fine of up to 200,000 baht (\$6,100). "The entire Thai justice system has a problem and so does the enforcement of the lese majeste law, which is also used as a political tool. Thailand has to solve this and make its distorted justice system better," said Pita Limjaroenrat, the party's leader.

## California winter storms boost water allocations for cities

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP): Weeks of historic rainfall in California won't be enough to end a severe drought, but it will provide public water agencies serving 27 million people with much more water than the suppliers had been told to expect a month ago, state officials announced. The Department of Water Resources said public water agencies will now get 30% of what they had asked for, up from the 5% officials had previously announced in December. That's because for the first three weeks of January nine atmospheric rivers dumped an estimated 32 trillion gallons of rain and snow on California. It was enough water to increase storage in the state's two largest reservoirs by a combined 66%.

"We're not out of drought in California, but this certainly makes a significant dent," said Karla Nemeth, director of the California Department of

Water Resources. California pumps water from its major rivers and streams and stores it in a bunch of reservoirs known as the State Water Project. State officials then deliver that water to 29 public agencies that supply the state's major population centers with drinking water and irrigate 1,151 square miles (2,981 square kilometers) of farm land. Years of drought have depleted many of those reservoirs to dangerously low levels, forcing significant cuts to water agencies across the state. Many agencies imposed mandatory restrictions on customers, and Gov. Gavin Newsom called on people and businesses to voluntarily reduce their water use by 15%.

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which includes major population centers like Los Angeles and San Diego counties, last month declared a drought emer-

gency for all of its 19 million customers. It has imposed mandatory restrictions on 7 million customers, meaning they can only water their lawns one day per week. announcement did not automatically end those restrictions. Adel Hagekhalil, the district's general manager, said the extra water "will certainly help communities hit hardest by this drought." But he warned that "Southern California's water challenges are far from over." The district gets about a third of its water from the State Water Project, a third from the Colorado River and a third from other sources. The Colorado River system has benefited from the recent storms, but not to the same extent as California's water system. Hagekhalil warned Southern California may "see significant reductions" from the Colorado river beginning next year.

"To replenish local stor-

age and reduce reliance on imported supplies, we must all use water as efficiently as possible," he said. The US Drought Monitor said that severe drought was reduced to moderate drought in most of the San Joaquin Valley and the lowest category - abnormal dryness - has replaced moderate drought on the entire central coast, including Monterey Bay. Most of the state, however, remains in moderate or severe drought, with only a fraction on the far north coast entirely free of drought.

The worst categories of drought - exceptional and extreme - were eliminated from California earlier this month. The recent storms have highlighted how difficult it is to manage water in the West, where long dry spells are often punctuated by intense periods of rain and snow that leave officials scrambling to capture it all before it flows out to the Pacific Ocean.

## Central American gangs raising fears in southern Mexico

TAPACHULA, Mexico (AP): With threatening phone calls, burned minibuses and at least three drivers shot to death, street gangs more closely associated with Central America are imposing their brand of terror-based extortion on public transportation drivers in southern Mexico. Organized crime groups including the rival Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18 gangs have long maintained a presence along the border between Mexico and Guatemala, but Mexican authorities say their numbers have increased over the past year as El Salvador cracks down on gang members and their criminal enterprises.

Drivers of the passenger vans and taxis people depend on for transportation in largely rural Chiapas say they live in fear for their livelihood, or their lives. They have raised the alarm, holding temporary work stoppages to get authorities' attention. The owner of

one transport company in Tapachula has started moving with bodyguards. Some admit to paying the extortion, having seen what happens to those who didn't. "If we don't do anything we're going to be a little (El) Salvador," said a leader of drivers in the town of Huixtla, where a driver was shot by two men on a motorcycle last February. The man requested anonymity, fearing gang reprisals.

Drivers in Huixtla showed The Associated Press vouchers dating back a year, documenting the payments. Generally, it starts with someone climbing aboard the bus and handing a phone to the driver, sometimes while pointing a gun at the driver's head. The drivers are told to give the phone to the owner of the bus, van or taxi, establishing a direct line of communication. Then the threats begin.

Callers show the owners that they know who they are, where they live,

their routines and their livelihoods, according to recordings reviewed by the AP. Speaking with distinctive Central American accents, Salvadoran slang and vulgarity, they ask for \$50 initially and then \$50 per month for each van or taxi, said a representative of drivers in Tapachula, who also requested anonymity out of fear. The latest attack came, when an unidentified man fired into the local bus terminal in Cacahoatan. No one was injured, but bullets struck a parked van and led drivers to suspend service. The shooter fled with another man on a motorcycle. Earlier this month, a van was set on fire in the same municipality. Local authorities formed an anti-gang task force and posted police at transport hubs, and last month Mexico's military deployed an additional 350 soldiers to communities along the Guatemalan border.

"The intent is to support the civilian

population to decrease the homicides tied to organized crime and the level of violence that has been on the rise in recent days," said Angel Banda Lozoya, commander of the local army regiment. But the drivers remain exposed as they make frequent stops on long rural routes, and military might can't easily quash a threat that arrives unseen, through menacing calls and messages. José Mateo Martínez, Chiapas state prosecutor for migrant affairs, says El Salvador's crackdown on organized crime is behind the increase in criminal activity in Mexico. "People are coming to hide from that, but there are also gang leaders who come to create a criminal group here," he said.

In March 2022, El Salvador suspended some constitutional rights in reaction to an explosion of violence. The state of exception has continued since then, despite wide criticism by

human rights organizations, with more than 60,000 people arrested on suspicion of gang ties. Enforcement has been less forceful among El Salvador's neighbors: From 2018 through November 2022, Mexico arrested and deported 97 Salvadorans allegedly tied to gangs, mostly in the last two years, according to the Chiapas state prosecutor's office. Neighboring Guatemala deported 90 alleged Salvadoran gang members last year, National Civilian Police spokesman Edwin Monroy said. The gangs are transnational by nature, with tens of thousands of members in the United States as well as Central America and Mexico. El Salvador's dominant street gangs formed in Los Angeles among communities of immigrants who had fled armed conflicts in the 1980s. Eventually deported, they found fertile ground for more violence, committing crimes in one country and then hiding

out in another, blending in with the daily flow of migrants across borders.

These gangs have long operated along Mexico's borders, sometimes providing street muscle for Mexico's powerful drug cartels or running their own criminal enterprises, profiting from the illicit traffic of drugs, guns and migrants. And some Mexican cartels extort businesses in other parts of the country. But another Tapachula transportation leader, who requested anonymity because he feared reprisals insisted that these extortionists are Central American gangsters, not Mexican cartel members. Extorting local transportation has been a key line of their revenue in El Salvador. Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele said in August that extortion of that sector had fallen dramatically. His transportation minister estimated bus companies had stopped paying some \$50 million to gangs.



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## Afghan economy versus Dar’s Dogma

**R**ECENTLY, the World Bank released a report on Afghanistan while declaring a positive trend in the overall economic activities and growth in the country. According to the details, the headline year-on-year inflation in November 2022 decelerated to 9.1 percent from its peak of 18.3 percent in July 2022. It further said that the 3.9 percentage point Year-to-Year decline between November 2022 and December 2022 can be explained by a drop in inflation of fuel, wheat, sugar, cooking oil, and bread. According to the global lender, the exchange rate remains substantially stable against major currencies, whereas Afghan currency slightly depreciated against the USD, Euro, and Chinese yuan, while it got appreciation against the Pakistan and Indian rupees significantly.

Afghanistan, a war-hit nation has witnessed unending hostilities and communal unrest in the past while no institutional development, economic uplift, agriculture subsidies, and industrial revival occurred in the country over the past four decades. Afghan Central bank is still not linked with global banking mechanisms while a majority of local and foreign investors and entrepreneurs left Kabul after the Taliban takeover over one years ago. Besides, all those debacles and shortcomings, the country’s economy is in an upward direction while the Afghan currency has got appreciation against its regional rivals over the past year.

On the other hand, Pakistan, a 220 million-strong nuclear power and agricultural nation deprived of basic necessities including wheat flour, vanaspati ghee, sugar, rice, and pulses, while rising inflation, energy crisis, and sharp depreciation of the rupee vis-a-vis foreign currencies have become a permanent dilemma for the country. Awfully, Pakistan has no scarcity of resources, agri-land, industrial base, and hard-hitting labour, thus corrupt leadership and bureaucracy, disloyal strategists, and incompetent economists plunged the nation into unending miseries and fiscal woes.

This day, the Pakistani nation is utterly annoyed by its political leadership which reinvented the country’s early days after seven decades of the journey. Every other leader displayed a personalized approach toward national affairs that flourished his politics and business but hurt the national interest forever. In fact, Pakistan needs to take a rational approach to its domestic and foreign policies vis-a-vis its relations with other countries, because unwise measures destroyed our economy, emotional foreign policy damaged our global perception, and Afghan Policy pushed the nation into the menace of terrorism, social crimes, and depletion of resources. Today, all indicators of the Afghan economy are encouraging if peace prevails in the country while Pakistan’s had been stung by the most powerful corridor who earned a treasure of miseries in reward for their wrong choices.

## Pak Railway, past and present

**T**HE Supreme Court of Pakistan Thursday allowed Pakistan Railways to lease its land after getting approval of its rules from the Parliament or the federal cabinet. According to the details, a three-member bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Umar Ata Bandial was hearing the review petition of the federal government against the Supreme Court’s ban on the leasing of Railway property dated back in January 2019. During the course of the hearing, the honorable Chief Justice remarked that it was not the job of the state institutions to do business, however, our state institutions are in losses because they are overburdened.

Pakistan Railway, once a booming sector of Pakistan’s economy during the early days of the Country’s Independence, now relies on government grants to run its routine operations. The main reasons behind Railway’s decline were underinvestment, overstaffing, political interference, institutional corruption, and idle peddling on unprofitable routes as well as the closure of cargo service across major cities over the past two decades. Once the primary mode of intercity and the interprovincial journey has now become the second priority for the masses due to prolonged delays in train schedules, insufficient facilities along with overcrowdedness. According to the statistics, Pakistan Railways had a 73 percent share in freight traffic during the 1950s and 1960s which had been reduced to below 4 percent in recent years. Currently, the majority of the cargo business is being handled by the NLC and private sector, while thousands of cargo wagons are parked unused at various railway stations for years.

Historically, Pakistan Railway is the second largest institution after the Pakistan military which has a countrywide infrastructure, including railway stations, rail tracks, and hundreds of thousands of acres of commercial and residential land and properties worth billions of rupees. Pakistan Railway annually generates millions of rupees from its rented properties, railway vendors, contractors as well as private firms which share railway operations on various tracks, particularly branch lines. Factually, Railways authorities have now paused their endeavors to revive railway businesses in passengers transportation and cargo handling and spared these avenues for private giants thus Railways’ top brass is more interested in making money out of auctions of Railway assets, trading of institutional ruins and renting of Railway stations, railway tracks, engines, and buggies for advertisement and publicity purposes by private entities.

There had been casual efforts to make this huge transport system a profitable business through multiple recipes including Railway vision 2025, but recurrent changes in policies, institutional leadership as well as political governments led the department to non-implementation of plans, and thus a gradual decoy is continuing in already exhausted setup.

In fact, no genuine effort had ever been made by the administrators to overcome institutional losses and transform the railway into a lucrative setup. Ostensibly, all miracles could be visualized in the modern world if Railway high-ups spare a few hours for their primary job, otherwise, time is not far when Railway facilities would be used as museums and recreational places for the public.

### Quote of the day

“Most politicians are corrupt as they do not represent the masses that voted for them, but rather they choose to return numerous favors to the corporations that funded their election campaigns.”  
— Steven Magee

# Switzerland breaks the policy of neutrality

Connor Echols

leaders in Bern have signaled that Madrid’s petition is unlikely to be approved.

If passed, the proposal would create an exception whereby Swiss weapons could be re-exported to an active war zone as long as they are used to fight “a violation of the international ban on the use of force.”

In other diplomatic news related to the war in Ukraine:

— Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited South Africa Monday as the two countries prepare for joint military exercises, according to the Associated Press. The trip gave Moscow a chance to reinvigorate ties with South Africa, a key Russian partner in “a continent that is divided over the invasion of [Ukraine] and related Western isolation attempts,” argued Eleonora Tafuro, a senior research

fellow at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies. “[Russian] narratives [about] Western double standards & [patronizing] attitudes resonate well in Africa and speak to the history of the USSR helping anti-colonial movements,” Tafuro tweeted. “They are a key part of Moscow’s soft power strategy on the continent today.”

— Estonia and Latvia announced Monday that they will remove Russia’s ambassadors in their countries after Moscow asked Estonia’s ambassador to leave over allegations of “Russophobia,” according to Politico. The pair will become the second and third Baltic countries to downgrade ties with Russia following Lithuania’s decision to expel its Russian ambassador in April of last year.

— Western officials want Ukraine to shift its focus away from Bakhmut in order to prepare for an offensive in the south, according to CNN. On Wednesday, shortly after CNN’s report came out, Ukraine conceded that it had lost Soledar, a key town outside of Bakhmut.

— In a major reversal, the U.S. and Germany agreed to send tanks to Ukraine despite concerns about how the move would be received in Moscow, according to the Associated Press. Ukrainian officials have now set their sights on modern Western fighter jets to replace or at least strengthen Kyiv’s Soviet-era fleet.

— Turkey’s foreign minister said it would be “meaningless” to restart NATO accession talks with Sweden and Finland after a protest in Stockholm in which a far-right activist burned a Quran, according to Reuters. Ankara’s tough talk may be an effort to build support

for embattled President Recep Tayyip Erdogan before elections in May.

U.S. State Department news:

In a Wednesday press conference, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said Washington is committed to improving ties with African countries that are skeptical of American policies, including those who have been historically tied to Russia. “The United States is ready, willing, and able to be a partner of first resort to the countries across Africa,” Price said. “We are not looking to use Africa as a new geopolitical stomping ground or playground. We’re not looking for relationships that are extractive, that export chaos, that export instability, that advantage only American private companies, as you’ve seen an approach taken by countries who have a different model.”

## What will the West do to keep and prolong the usual status quo?

Irina Alksnis

ly in Eastern Europe. It would be left to NATO to provide intelligence and modern means of communication, as well as, if necessary, replenishment with mercenaries and some financial injections.

According to the original plan, in Ukraine, Moscow was to overstrain in all respects - first, incurring huge losses during the hostilities, and then gaining control over the destroyed and devastated (both war and three decades of mismanagement) territories. Moreover, the farther to the west, the more anti-Russian the population is, it would demand to feed it and at the same time would launch a permanent sabotage war (also with the active, but mostly unofficial support of Europe and the United States).

The development of the SVO made adjustments to these plans. Its extremely unhurried move and some successes of the Armed Forces of Ukraine during the autumn offensive gave rise to confidence among the Western establishment that Russia could be inflicted a purely military defeat. And this idea was seized with both hands.

The West has bet everything on this outcome and is now dealing with the consequences of its decision.

sion.

He was forced to take Ukraine to the full content, because it did not have its own economy. Against the backdrop of trillion-dollar bubbles in world markets and a printing press at hand, this is not a very large cost, but we are still talking about many billions - such large-scale expenses were clearly not included in the original plans, and in a situation of a growing economic crisis, they can become sensitive.

Soviet military equipment and individual samples of the old foreign ones are over. The idea of supplying “Leopards”, “Abrams” and other modern Western equipment is bad in every respect: and because it’s expensive; and because one has to empty one’s own reserves, often already visibly laid bare; and because it is not known whether this technique can adequately show itself against Russian troops and in the local climatic conditions (if not, this will be a strong blow to the reputation of manufacturers and, as a result, to their business prospects); and because the ability to quickly train qualified Ukrainian crews is questionable, which means that they will have to send their own “retirees” to Ukraine; and because the

fig “proxy” sheet of the West’s war against Russia will finally slip.

But now another, in the future, the biggest headache is becoming more and more acute: the West has begun to run out of Ukrainians. Information is coming from all over Ukraine about the deployment of the next wave of mobilization, and by much more stringent methods than before. The country’s mobilization reserve is close to exhaustion. Experts unanimously believe that another 200-300 thousand people will probably be able to gather, but that’s all. Absolutely everything.

This means that in a few months (by summer or autumn) the West will face a problem in full growth: it will simply have no one to fight with. And he will have to make a much more difficult decision than the current one with the Leopards and Abrams: either admit defeat by abandoning Ukraine, like Afghanistan a year and a half ago, or officially send his own armies to war with Russia.

The trouble is that the West cannot admit its failure and Moscow’s victory without catastrophic consequences for itself.

We have repeatedly said, including at the highest state level, that for Russia the current confrontation is

of an existential nature, the very existence of our country is at stake.

However, the West is in a similar position. His situation is much more complicated than just the destruction of the unipolar world or even the crisis of the global dollar system. The half-thousand-year-old system of Western dominance over the world has come close to its final exhaustion (primarily resource and economic). Half a thousand years of the West being in the status of the king of the mountain - the most developed, the richest, the most powerful, the most prosperous, the freest, in general, the very, very part of the planet. And all this is slipping through your fingers.

What will the West do to keep and prolong the usual status quo? There is a suspicion that everything.

He chose military victory over Russia as the instrument of his salvation. Now the West is rolling along the chosen track and is getting more and more nervous, because events are not unfolding the way they expected, planned and wanted. Soon he will have to answer the question of whether he is ready for a face-to-face meeting on the Ukrainian battlefield of the Wehrmacht, that is, excuse me, the Bundeswehr, and other NATO armed forces with the Russian army.

## The ‘break out of its difficult geography’

Mikhail Katkov

**T**HERE is serious talk in Chisinau about lifting neutrality and joining NATO, which the government says is vital to protecting democracy. The opposition fears that Moldova will be drawn into an armed conflict. What is happening in the republic - in the material of RIA Novosti.

"Big Alliance"

Maia Sandu, in an interview

However, Nosatii said

Moldovan Foreign Minister

and Deputy Prime Minister

Nicu Popescu noted that there are many trials ahead, but

with the support of the West, the country will overcome everything. "We will be able to preserve peace, democracy

and the European spirit," he assured. At the same time, if a pro-Russian government were to head Moldova, the

republic "would suffer the fate of Belarus," the diplomat believes. Representatives of NATO speak in the same

vein. In particular, Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana said that Chisinau has a real chance to "break out

of its difficult geography" and become part of "civilized Europe." True, there is no talk of membership in the

alliance yet. In the near future, Joana is going to Moldova to discuss with the local authorities the refusal of neu-

trality and the supply of Western air defense systems.

view with Politico, said that the fighting in Ukraine made us think about abandoning neutrality. According to her, there is a lively discussion on this topic in the republic, and in the future Chisinau may become part of a "larger alliance." At the same time, the president stressed that Moldova remains "very vulnerable due to Russian propaganda and disinformation."

She did not mention the name of the organization, but in Moldova and in the West they considered that it was about NATO. There is only one alternative to the bloc in the region - the CSTO. Since Chisinau openly and consistently condemns the special operation in Ukraine, it is obvious that Sandu will not enter into a military alliance with Moscow.

Moreover, recently Moldova has been working more closely with the North Atlantic Alliance. Since the summer, the Minister of

powers defeat Napoleon Bonaparte for the second and final time. Since then, the country has managed to avoid direct participation in any foreign conflict. Even during World War II, Bern studiously avoided taking sides in order to avoid being drawn into the war.

But the war in Ukraine has tested this policy. In May of last year, Swiss authorities agreed under pressure from the West to freeze the assets of several hundred sanctioned Russians, including President Vladimir Putin. Bern also closed its airspace to Russian planes.

Despite these shifts, allowing Swiss weapons to see the battlefield has so far been a red line. Last year, Switzerland denied several requests from Germany and Denmark to re-export Swiss-made arms to Ukraine. The country is currently considering a similar request from Spain, but

step by step, without giving it the feeling that this is the end and all that remains is to press the red button.

We must pay tribute, this is a very competent approach. But there is a problem: Russia is just as slowly cooking the West itself - and has achieved serious success in this process.

The scandals and squabbles within NATO that accompanied the decision to supply tanks to Kiev were not staged at all. There are enough forces in the West that realize how bad and dangerous the current development of events is for it. The phrase alone "German tanks will fight in Ukraine against the Russians" refers to such depths of national memory (both ours and Europeans) that at the level of the subcortex intelligently conveys the qualitative changes that have taken place in the conflict.

But it's not just the tanks. Ukraine was supposed to become an ideal hybrid war for the West - and at some point it seemed that it even became one. Ukrainians are excellent soldiers who can be put to the last man. No pity. At the same time, it was assumed that they would fight on the old Soviet equipment, which were just mountains both in Ukraine itself and in a host of other countries, especial-

Moldova, the republic "would suffer the fate of Belarus," the diplomat believes.

Representatives of NATO speak in the same vein. In particular, Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana said that Chisinau has a real chance to "break out of its difficult geography" and become part of "civilized Europe." True,

the interests of the country. The head of the Shor party, Ilan Shor, believes that joining the bloc will turn Moldova into a second Ukraine. However, Communist Party chairman Vladimir Voronin warned that Sandu would technically need to find only four loyal deputies in order to change the 11th article of

the constitution on neutrality. After that, Moldova can be drawn into international military conflicts in which it has never participated.

Alexander Odintsov, chairman of the Party of Socialists faction in Chisinau municipality,

noted that there is nothing wrong with the modernization of the army. But he asked himself the question: how much effort and money will have to be spent so that the Moldovan troops become comparable in strength to the neighboring ones? In his opinion, the republic is not able to increase the defense capacity to such a level. Therefore, he considers a neutral status the main guarantee of security and calls on the authorities to enter into negotiations with Romania, Ukraine and Russia in order to strengthen the situation.

**Irritant activity**  
Experts interviewed by RIA Novosti believe that

special operation did not solve, but exacerbated the existing problems. At the same time, it is important for Moscow’s opponents to create the appearance that its neighbors make such decisions themselves,” explains Moldovan political analyst Dmitry Kiseev.

As a result of the refusal of neutrality, or even on the way to the bloc, Romanian troops may appear on the territory of Moldova. According to the expert, with their help, Sandu will be able to demoralize opponents of joining NATO or passing under the rule of Bucharest. And also to intimidate the inhabitants of Transnistria, who will find themselves between the hostile armies of Ukraine and the alliance. In addition, there will be a temptation to solve the problem of Tiraspol by force.

Moldovan political expert Igor Tulyantsev recalls that there are only

is sure.

In turn, Natalya Kharitonova, Doctor of Political Sciences, Professor at the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, believes that the process of military and infrastructural development of the territory of Moldova by the NATO bloc has already been launched, regardless of the legislation of the republic and the opinions of people. “Neither Chisinau nor the West are interested in legal formalities. The consequences of such an approach can have sad consequences for the country,” the expert says. Moldova follows the path of Ukraine.”

However, political scientists are sure that Chisinau, like Kyiv, will not be accepted into NATO in the near future. Instead, Moldova is being turned into a constant factor of irritation and discrediting of Russia.



# The future of ‘decolonized’ countries shown in all its glory

**J**AMES Cameron's recently released *Avatar 2: The Way of the Water* opens with a scene in which a naked, deeply pregnant woman runs through the jungle, trying to shoot herself with a bow for food. Her face and body are completely covered with tattoos, extreme thinness speaks of constant hunger, poverty and dystrophy. Archery and killing bring her obvious pleasure. Who said "Ukraine"?

Classic American cinema Cameron worked on the second "Avatar" for fourteen years. Fantastic money has been invested in production - up to 460 million dollars. Movies are shown on all continents, fees have already exceeded two billion. All in all, this is a very important special item from the American Dream Factory. It contains a lot of smart and talented propaganda.

What strikes at first sight: the main task of this film is to poeticize the most horrific, absurd poverty to the utmost. If we discard the beautiful landscapes drawn on the computer, it is clear that the inhabitants of fantasy Pandora live incredibly badly. There is no homeless person on planet Earth who would survive in such conditions. The poorest, most primitive tribes on our planet can afford much more.

The inhabitants of Pandora have no cities, no schools, no hospitals, no factories, not even any kind of agriculture. They have nothing to wear - they somehow cover their nakedness with some leaves and vines. Their dwellings are huts made of twigs and leaves. They eat only what they can catch in the sea or shoot in the forest.

By protruding ribs and huge eyes, it is clear that they are simply starving. Animals are used as vehicles, and magic collars resembling BDSM accessories are used as means of communication. In terms of technology, they did not even think of the wheel.

Naturally, the poor, unfortunate Pandorians, who spend their short lives in an unsuccessful struggle with nature, are forced to indulge all the time in some kind of meaningless magical rituals. This is a collective neurosis, indeed often

characteristic of people in extreme situations. However, the film honestly shows that witchcraft does not help either cure the sick or raise the dead. From this, the number of mental disorders among the locals is only growing - the heroes and especially the heroines constantly throw tantrums, make funny faces and scream. State life and politics on Pandora boil down to the fact that the new leader cuts the throat of the old leader. Well, really, why is all this so reminiscent of Ukraine?

When the world was still bipolar, Hollywood cinema looked very different. Every film, whether action or comedy, was held to a rigid standard. American life on the screen oozed with wealth and positivity, the life of the conventional "Councils" - with depression and poverty.

And anyway, it worked. The idea that Americans have the best lives in the world has been driven into the backbone of billions of viewers in a variety of ways. And if you are like them, then this is the right path to prosperity. No individual honest films could reverse this trend.

Saying goodbye to the Warsaw Pact, CMEA and the USSR without regret, millions of people kept in mind this simple bunch: we will obey America - we will live just like our favorite movie characters. With a cottage with a swimming pool and two cars per family. Or in apartments with panoramic windows overlooking skyscrapers. Plus, shopping malls, cafe-restaurants, mountains of clothes on sales and more. Hollywood imprinted this picture in the brain tightly.

However, something strange happened next. Dozens of countries - from China to Russia, from India to Brazil - enthusiastically began to build this cinematic America at home, with cottages, malls, cafe-restaurants. And surprisingly, they built it in the best possible way.

Just look at how the appearance of the Russian "suburbia" has changed in recent years, where wooden wrecks on six acres have been replaced by solid two-story houses, with a garage and a flower garden. And if not with a pool, then at

**Victoria Nikiforova** least with a sauna. Not one-story America, but two-story Russia.

I'm not talking about Russian megacities, which have long since left American megacities behind in terms of security, price levels, quality of housing, medicine, transport, and digital services. There has long been simply no comparison - "two worlds, two Shapiros."

And in the same way, the megacities of Asia, Africa, and South America were modernized at full speed. Things have come to a paradoxical situation when rich Americans prefer to live, say, in Dubai or Singapore, and fly to New York only on business - it's too dirty, expensive, unsafe, old-fashioned there.

Objectively speaking, America has begun to live worse, and the so-called developing world has greatly improved consumption standards. Well, in Hollywood, they quickly reflected on the change in trend. Now billions of moviegoers are being sold the exact opposite idea. It turns out that you don't need to be rich anymore, no-no-no. We must romantically vegetate in poverty.

It is no coincidence that the first "Avatar", which set this trend, was published in 2009, when the financial crisis raged in America - the Great Recession. People who have lost their homes and pension savings were delighted with the tale of how distant Pandora's inhabitants drink from puddles, talk to trees, and at the same time enjoy life.

The new "Avatar-2" is great for people who have lost their businesses and jobs during the lockdowns. At the same time, it sends a powerful signal to those countries that are still trying to fit into the American order.

This is how the capitalist hegemon sees the capitalist periphery today. The natives are no longer offered the dream of a cottage with a swimming pool.

The natives must eat bugs, walk around in what their mother gave birth to, shoot, kill and sing beautiful songs.

This idea is accompanied by a leftist approach

about the fact that it is ugly to be rich. In "Avatar" rich people fly on spaceships to Pandora, plunder it for nothing and freely kill the local fauna. These scoundrels have ultra-modern weapons, fantastically advanced medicine, they have learned to stop aging and dangle across the galaxy at superluminal speeds. And all this is bad. Progress is fu. Let's leave progress to the rich scoundrels, and we ourselves will live in an ecologically clean jungle. It's so cute there - birds, fish, the starry sky above your head.

It is not difficult to see that we have before us a poem about decolonization. This is precisely what America is offering to the peoples whom it will try, so to speak, to liberate from colonial oppression. Guys, everything will be torn off from you - to the last thread. You can look at America, and it no longer has a penny left - only unimaginable debts for generations to come.

Not only that: the hegemon will try to do everything to destroy culture, education, science, even take away hope for high technologies and tear off the last touch of humanity from society. Shooting, murder, magical rituals, beautiful songs, hopeless poverty - that's all that awaits the "decolonized" subjects.

Washington has a lot of candidates for "liberation". Hong Kong and Macau, Tibet and Xinjiang will save from authoritarian Beijing. Taiwan will generally be saved in such a way that no stone will be left turned. They will try to free all 88 other subjects from the insidious Moscow, but what's wrong? At the same time, the post-Soviet republics will be freed from Russian influence.

When the goals of the NWO are achieved, the story, unfortunately, will not end there. Many citizens in Moldova and Kazakhstan, in Armenia and Azerbaijan ardently dream of turning their country into Pandora. From Washington they will be happy to help. For Americans, this is also a matter of life and death - as soon as they stop destroying foreign countries,

chaos will come to their homes.

The most frightening entry of the second "Avatar" is the obsessive, tedious identification of the humanoid inhabitants of Pandora with flora and fauna. They communicate with trees, they talk with fish. In the meantime, we are told that the sea animals, with which the inhabitants of Pandora are close friends, are much smarter than people. They, for a moment, have their own music, mathematics and philosophy.

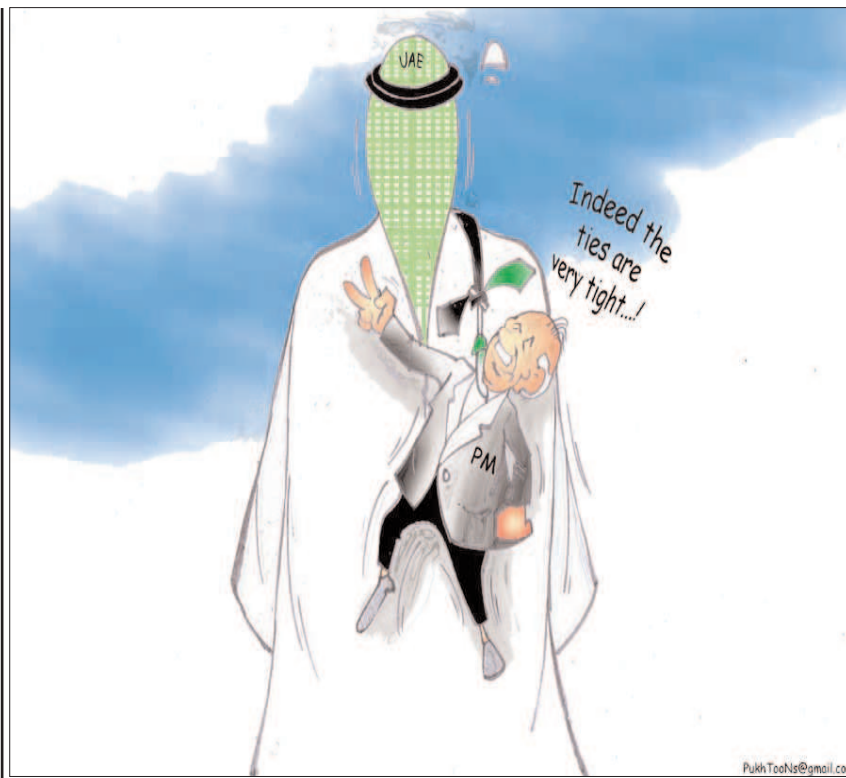
The Pandorians have none of that. And the local fauna has. There, perhaps, their universities at the bottom of the sea, their subway and a library with a concert hall. Meanwhile, the Pandorians are walking along the bank without pants, and they don't even have an ABC.

Yes, this is exactly how Americans treat the native peoples - they are just a kind of wildlife. They are not sorry. They can be completely washed out to make room for cute representatives of flora and fauna.

The surest method of destruction is, of course, civil war. After all, that's how the British conquered America and India - pitting the locals against each other.

For itself, America has plans for high technology, stopping aging, philosophy and concert halls. And for the natives - solid Klaus Schwab with his "I have nothing, and I'm happy". Of course, a funny inhabitant of decolonized lands is by no means the crown of creation, but an insignificant link in evolution, much less important for planet Earth than, say, charming grizzly bears or graceful grasshoppers. Who knows them, grasshoppers, maybe they also have their own philosophy.

In the new "Avatar," Cameron is trying to sell to the masses precisely this version of the cunningly crafted American fascism that appoints billions of people all over the planet as Untermensch. However, there is hope that the masses have already become accustomed to a good life and will not exchange it for the opportunity to cut through the jungle naked and barefoot.



## Moscow and the Washington add to South Korea's economic challenges

**I**N May 2022, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol was elected on a platform calling for a break from his predecessor's income-led growth strategy to one focused on deregulation and corporate tax cuts. While the new administration has taken steps to implement Yoon's free market approach, external events have loomed large over South Korea's trade-dependent economy.

After two years of uncertainty and economic disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, coming into 2022 the worry was that the global recovery would lose steam from the spread of the Omicron variant, inflation and continued supply chain disruptions. These challenges were made more difficult due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which accelerated fuel and food inflation.

Russia's war has most directly impacted the South Korean economy through rising fuel costs. Early on, Seoul took steps to align its policies with the United

**Troy Stangarone**

to deal with the rising costs of energy imports. Energy price increases have also been a factor in inflation, which peaked at 6.3 per cent in July 2022.

More broadly, inflation has also been driven by increases in consumer demand from the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, government stimuli and a significant decline in the South Korean won. The won has been under pressure from the deteriorating South Korea trade balance and the US Federal Reserve's interest rate increases.

Outside of Russia's war and inflation, China's COVID-19 policies and decreasing global demand have weighed heavily on South Korean trade. Overall, exports to China declined during the last seven months of 2022 (year-on-year) and fell 4.4 per cent for the year. Weakening demand for semiconductors — which accounted for 20 per cent of South Korean exports in 2021 — also declined for

have received a one-year exemption, the new export restrictions place deeper constraints on the ability of South Korea's most important industry to do business in China.

The Inflation Reduction Act has perhaps caused the most concern. Currently, only electric vehicles (EVs) assembled in the United States, Canada or Mexico are eligible for a US\$7500 tax credit for consumers. Starting in 2023, additional restrictions on the mineral and component content of EV batteries must also be met to be eligible for this tax break. As Hyundai and Kia will not have an assembly plant ready to produce EVs in the United States until 2025, they are ineligible for the tax credit and are at a disadvantage to US and foreign producers who can meet the requirements.

But in the longer term, South Korean EV battery producers are expected to be the main winners from the legislation. By 2025, the United States is expected to account for 44 per cent of the global EV bat-

**The United States has also continued to tighten export restrictions on the sale of advanced semiconductors and semiconductor equipment to China. While Samsung and SK Hynix have received a one-year exemption, the new export restrictions place deeper constraints on the ability of South Korea's most important industry to do business in China. The Inflation Reduction Act has perhaps caused the most concern.**

States and Europe by agreeing to enforce US and European financial sanctions and export controls on strategic items that could aid Moscow's war effort.

While South Korea did not adopt US or EU sanctions on Russian energy exports, it has worked to reduce energy imports from Russia. In 2022, South Korean imports of Russian crude petroleum dropped by 60.3 per cent, refined petroleum by 72.9 per cent and liquefied natural gas by 31.6 per cent — rising coal imports were the exception to this trend. But overall energy costs have grown. Imports of fossil fuels were up 58.9 per cent by value, but only 3 per cent by volume.

Rising fuel costs from imports have also filtered into the domestic economy. Kepco, South Korea's state-owned energy monopoly, instituted three domestic electricity price increases in 2022 and an additional record 9.5 per cent increase on 1 January 2023

the final five months of 2022. These factors, along with surging energy prices, led South Korea to record its second trade deficit this century.

Beyond the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion, two major pieces of US legislation — the CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act — are expected to have a significant impact on South Korea.

The CHIPS Act is designed to spur investment in US semiconductor production, providing up to US\$3 billion for each investment in the United States. But the caveat is that Samsung and other South Korean chip producers now face restrictions on expanding their production of advanced chips in China.

The United States has also continued to tighten export restrictions on the sale of advanced semiconductors and semiconductor equipment to China. While Samsung and SK Hynix

tery market and thanks to significant Korean investment in US production facilities, South Korea's market share in the United States is expected to grow from 26.5 per cent to 69 per cent.

With GDP growth expected to slow to less than 2 per cent in 2023, factors such as a quick return to growth in China and continued stability in global energy markets are largely beyond the Yoon administration's control. But steps can be taken over the medium term to address policy-related issues. Seoul's Indo-Pacific Strategy hints at one approach involving deeper regional cooperation on energy security and the clean energy transition.

Addressing concerns about the Inflation Reduction Act or US semiconductor policy will require a more direct approach, but deeper regional economic engagement can help minimise some of South Korea's economic risks.

## The ‘first Ukraine test’

**N**EWLY minted Republican senator JD Vance came right out of the gate on Ukraine aid last week, making not a strong case for more, but for oversight on the billions already allocated to Kyiv last year.

He and three dozen other Republican senators and members of the House of Representatives sent a letter to Shalanda Young, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, urging a full accounting of the level and scope of the security assistance sent to the war ravaged country to date.

"Taken together, the four Ukraine supplemental spending bills passed since the escalation of the Ukraine/Russia conflict in February of 2022 amount to arguably the fourth-largest discretionary appropriations bill," the letter reads, calling on the OMB to release a "crosscutting report on U.S. government-wide expenditures for Ukraine and 'countries impacted by the situation in Ukraine' since February 24, 2022."

"The report should include a full accounting of total budget authority in this area by appropriations account after transfers and

reprogramming, as well as obligations, apportionments, and outlays for each account," it adds.

As of January 1, the U.S. government has allocated \$113 billion in aid to Ukraine, some \$67 billion of that to defense-related needs (which also included funds for allies in the region and the U.S. military).

The existence of the letter was first reported by Fox News on January 10, and the first draft of the letter — published by Politico's NatSec daily that same day — did not contain any signatories. The letter sent last week was signed by seven senators and 30 House members. It marks one of the first actions Vance has taken since his inauguration to the Senate earlier this month.

"I am pleased to see JD Vance join the increasing number of Republicans in Congress that are questioning the American foreign policy status quo" Dan Caldwell, vice president for foreign policy at the conservative organization Stand Together, told Responsible Statecraft. "It's always a good thing when a newly elected official keeps their campaign promises and one of the things that JD Vance cam-

**Blaise Malley**

paign on was pursuing a more realist American foreign policy."

Alongside Vance, the six other signatories from the Senate are Rand Paul (R-Ky.), Mike Lee (R-Utah), Bill Cassidy (R-La.), Mike Braun (R-Ind.), Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), and Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.). "Politicians have given over \$100 billion of taxpayer money to Ukraine," a spokesperson for Senator Paul wrote to RS in an email. "Taxpayers deserve to have a full accounting of how their money is being used overseas, particularly before even more is asked of them and especially since priorities in our own nation are being neglected."

On January 11, Vance told the Washington Post in a statement, "The American people deserve to know the extent to which they are underwriting our government's endeavors in eastern Europe." The letter was sent against a backdrop of important developments regarding U.S. support for Ukraine, both domestically, and on the battlefield.

In its earlier reporting this is year, The Washington Post called Vance's missive the "first Ukraine test" for

the new Congress. New House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), who is not among the letter's signatories, pledged last year there would be no "blank check" for Ukraine if his party took over Congress. In the prolonged fight for the speakership in early January, Republican holdouts were rumored to have pushed for a Pentagon budget cut, likely fueled in part by opposition to ongoing aid to Ukraine, as part of the deal that clinched the gavel for McCarthy.

But the signatories of this letter include a mix of McCarthy supporters, notably Thomas Massie (R-Ky.), Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.), and Nancy Mace (R-S.C.) and McCarthy opponents, such as Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.), Lauren Boebert (R-Colo.), and Chip Roy (R-Texas). In addition, polling shows a slight majority of Republican voters support sending military aid, though that number has dwindled from 80 per cent in March to 68 per cent in July to 55 per cent in December, according to surveys from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

Meanwhile, the United States and Germany have reportedly agreed to send

## Lockheed ready to boost F-16 production

**T**HUS far, Washington has kept mum about providing Kiev with the F-16 fighters, or allowing other countries to re-export these US-made warplanes to Ukraine.

Lockheed Martin, the US largest defense contractor, has signaled readiness to boost its production of F-16 fighters as some of Ukraine's allies consider delivering the single-engine jets, which were first introduced in 1978, to Kiev.

The aerospace company's chief operating officer Frank St. John told a UK newspaper on Thursday

that there was "a lot of conversation about third party transfer of F-16s".

The British press recalled in this vein that Lockheed Martin is not directly involved in talks pertaining to the potential supply of the fourth-generation F-16 jet fighters to Ukraine.

In an apparent nod to the Ukrainian conflict, St. John added that Lockheed Martin was "going to be ramping production on F-16s in Greenville [South Carolina] to get to the place where we will be able to backfill pretty capably any countries that choose to do third-party transfers to help

**Oleg Burunov**

with the current conflict."

The newspaper also cited an unnamed US defense official as saying that "along with our [Washington's] international allies and partners, we are in regular communication with the Ukrainians on their needs and requests."

The official, however, stressed that "at this time, we have nothing to announce regarding F-16s."

The remarks came after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky expressed his gratitude to Kiev's allies for pledging tank deliver-

ies, but added that he had asked NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg for more assistance.

"We have to unlock the supply of long-range missiles to Ukraine, it is important for us to expand our cooperation in artillery, [and] we have to achieve the supply of aircraft to Ukraine. And this is a dream. And this is a task," Zelensky noted.

This followed Dutch Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra making it clear last week that Amsterdam looks into delivering the F-16s to Kiev.

The Netherlands' air

force has a fleet of 40 US-made F-16s, with seven other NATO countries in Europe flying the same warplanes, including Poland and Norway. Germany, which doesn't fly the F-16s, ruled out sending its warplanes to Ukraine. "I made clear very early on that we wouldn't be sending combat aircraft and I'll say that again here," Chancellor Olaf Scholz told reporters.

On Wednesday, he greenlighted the delivery of 14 German Leopard 2 main battle tanks to Ukraine, in what was followed by US President Biden announcing the supply of 31 M1

Abrams tanks to Kiev.

Commenting on Berlin's move, the Russian embassy in Germany warned in a statement that "this extremely dangerous decision shifts the Ukrainian conflict to a new level of standoff."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov for his part told reporters that "Western countries' arms supplies to Kiev testify to their direct and grow-

ing involvement in the Ukrainian conflict.

"There are constant statements from European capitals and from Washington that the sending of various weapons systems, including tanks, to Ukraine in no way means the involvement of these countries or the alliance in the hostilities that are taking place in Ukraine. We categorically disagree with

this," Peskov added.

Moscow has repeatedly cautioned that the US and its allies' military aid to Kiev adds to prolonging the Ukrainian conflict. The Russian Foreign Ministry said that NATO countries "play with fire" by supplying weapons to Kiev, and that any convoy of arms for Ukraine will become a legitimate target for Russian forces.

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# SCCI speeds up efforts to strengthen mutual Pak-Türkiye trade

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) has accelerated efforts to further strengthen bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Republic of Türkiye.

Joint initiatives would be taken to explore new avenues and potentials sectors for trade promotion in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Türkiye, says Shahid Hussain, senior vice president of the SCCI while addressing during a visit of Commercial Counsellor of Türkiye in Pakistan, Nurettin Demir here at the chamber's house, said in a press release issued here on Friday.

Apart from traders, importers and exporters, industrialists, the chamber's vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, secretary commercial affairs, Embassy of Türkiye in Pakistan, Engr Abdul Baseer, members of the SCCI's executive committee Haji Ghulam Hussain, S Minhajuddin, Naem Qasmi, Javed Ahmad Khan, Laal Bads-hah, Munawar Khurshid,

Abdul Hakim Shinwari, Ms Qurtul Ain, traders were present in the meeting.

Hussain said prospects of boosting Pak- Türkiye bilateral trade are very bright. However, he emphasized that trade volume between Pakistan and Türkiye is very low owing to lack of information regarding potentials of each other.

KP is gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics, the SCCI senior office bearer remarked.

He noted Pakistan/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a suitable trade route for Türkiye investors to export Central Asian states via Afghanistan.

Nurettin Demir while responding to various queries and proposals from members of the chamber stressed the need for launching joint ventures to further cement trade and economic ties between Türkiye and Pakistan.

The diplomat mentioned his country had passed through a difficult phase of its history due to economic meltdown and other issues.

He, however, said the Republic of Türkiye has

again risen up after fighting against economic turmoil and other depressing matters with full steadfastness.

Demir called for devising a joint roadmap to give new direction to Türkiye-Pakistan bilateral economic and trade relations.

He stressed the need for exploring new avenues of investment and joint cooperation between the brotherly Islamic countries.

So, he expressed hope that the mutual cooperation will improve the mutual trade volume between Türkiye and Pakistan, which is currently very low.

He, on the occasion, mentioned that a preferential trade agreement (PTA) had so far been signed between Türkiye and Pakistan, which is expected to be approved by the parliament of Türkiye next month.

Demir expressed the hope that this agreement would also prove a catalyst for improving trade and economic ties between the two countries.

The envoy also informed a review meeting for exploring potentials of the both countries will be held

next month.

Shahid Hussain hailed the seriousness and keenness of the government and leadership of Türkiye to further enhance bilateral trade with Pakistan.

He said Pakistan is currently confronted with a situation, through which earlier passed by the Republic of Türkiye.

He viewed Pakistan can overcome the current scenario by taking advantage of Türkiye experiences.

The SCCI SVP president invited Türkiye companies to make investments in potential sectors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He also emphasized the need of taking serious measures for bringing the business community of the both countries closer to each other, holding of business to business meetings, joint trade exhibitions and fully exploiting the potential of the two countries.

Executive members of the SCCI also spoke on the occasion and suggested a number of proposals for enhancing the mutual trade between Pakistan and Türkiye.



MULTAN: Vegetable traders displaying bags of tomatoes and waiting for sellers at fruit market.

## Rupee loses another Rs6.82 against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exchange rate of the Pakistani rupee depreciated by Rs6.82 against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Friday and closed at Rs262.60 against the previous day's closing of Rs255.42.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan, the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs264 and Rs266 respectively.

The price of the euro appreciated by Rs6.77 and closed at Rs285.60 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.83, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen increased by 04 paise to close at Rs2.01, whereas an increase of Rs8.24 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British pound, which was traded at Rs324.94 as compared to its last closing of Rs316.60.

The exchange rates of the Emirates dirham and Saudi riyal increased by 95 paise and 91 paise to close at Rs71.49 and Rs69.95 respectively.

## WCCIS team visits station HQrs

SIALKOT (APP): Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS) delegation paid a visit to the station headquarters to have a meeting with Station Commander Brigadier Hamid.

The main purpose of the meeting was to share the message of forthcoming exhibition 'We-Exhibit 2023' by WCCIS and to have Hamid's point of view on the subject.

President Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS) Dr. Mariam Noonan, Chairperson WE-Exhibit Committee Nadia Qaiser and Kinza Asif attended the meeting.

## Delegation of KP business community calls on Chairman

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation of the business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa led by Syed Jawad Hussain Kazmi, President of Khyber Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Friday called on Chairman FBR Asim Ahmed here at Peshawar Customs House.

The President of KCC&I and Chairman Council of Border Trade Chambers, Syed Jawad Hussain Kazmi informed chairman FBR about the problems being faced by traders during clearance of goods through Pakistan Single Window System (PSW) and by different other departments including Animal Quarantine Department (AQD) and Plant Protection Department at Torkham, Khairi,

Glulam Khan and Angor Adda border crossings connected with Afghanistan. Kazmi welcomed the construction of an international-style terminal in Torkham but added that due to undue delay in the project the miseries of traders have been aggravated. He urged to ensure early completion of the project and employment of locals for facilitate of traders and local people.

On this occasion, Chief Collector Customs KP Muhammad Salim, Director Transit Trade Arbab Qaiser Hamid, Collector Appraisal Muhammad Ashfaq, Collector Enforcement Burhanuddin Ahmad Wani, DGI&I and other senior officials of FBR, including Iranian Consul General and Commercial

Attaché Peshawar, Afghan Consul General Peshawar Hafiz Mohibullah Sahib, Ziaul Haq Sarhadhi Sahib, Khyber Chamber Senior Vice President Sagheer Dad Afridi, Vice President Haji Zaheerullah Shinwari, Executive Director Mohammad Haroon Saber Sahib, Focal Person Pak Afghan Trade Wajid Ali Shenwari, Hazrat Ali Shenwari, Ali Faisal and other customs officials were present on the occasion.

In the meeting, barter trade with Afghanistan and Iran was also discussed. The delegations of the two Islamic brother countries, the consul generals, the business community and the chairman of FBR agreed that they would discuss with their respective governments to facilitate mutual trade.

## MCB Bank partners with Telenor Pakistan — to enhance digital banking ecosystem



## F.P. Report

LAHORE: MCB Bank Limited, one of Pakistan's leading banks, has entered into a strategic partnership with Telenor Pakistan, a leading telecommunication services provider, to facilitate its digital banking customers with greater access to Telenor Pakistan's pre-paid recharge services, special bundles and post-paid services.

Under the partnership, MCB Live users will be able to pay for new Telenor packages, special bundles, post-paid services and a host of other services directly from within the MCB Live app, at a single click of a button. The integration provides MCB Live users greater flexibility and convenience in acquiring Telenor Pakistan's services on the go from wherever

they may be. The agreement was signed between Mr. Shahzad Ishaq - Group Head Digital Banking, MCB Bank and Mr. Umair Mohsin - Chief Marketing Officer, Telenor Pakistan at MCB House, Lahore in the presence of Mr. Jaffar Abbas Shirazi - Division Head Digital Channels & Branchless Banking MCB Bank, Ms. Ambreen Latif Bawany - Head Marketing MCB Bank and other representatives from MCB Bank and Telenor Pakistan.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Shahzad Ishaq, Group Head Digital Banking, MCB Bank lauded the shared objective of creating customer convenience and enhancing customer experience through offering Telenor packages and bundles to MCB Bank

customers. He also said that "Having a direct connectivity between leading players in banking and telecommunication will be a beginning of deeper cooperation between the two companies. We will continue building shared-value to succeed our customers."

Mr. Umair Mohsin, Chief Marketing Officer, Telenor Pakistan also added, "We're continuously exploring new channels to facilitate our customers, and this partnership is a testament to that. Through our digital collaboration with MCB, we are creating even more accessibility for our customers so they can recharge their package and make product/bundle purchases from the comfort of their homes. Direct integration with MCB will give sustainable connectivity and improved portfolio."

## Pakistan Stock Exchange witnesses bearish trend, loses 396 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Friday, losing 396 points, a negative change of 0.97 percent, closing at 40,450.53 against 40,846.53 points the previous day.

A total of 191,327,163 shares were traded during the day as compared to 364,131,735 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs7.119 billion against Rs14.480 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 333 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 76 of

them recorded gains and 238 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 19 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Pak Refinery with 14,225,354 shares at Rs13.61 per share, Cnergyco PK with 13,167,971 shares at Rs3.89 per share, and Fauji Foods Ltd with 12,526,831 shares at Rs5.19 per share.

Mari Petroleum witnessed a maximum increase of Rs12.29 per share price, closing at Rs1,450.14, whereas the runner-up was Hafiz Limited with a

Rs10.39 rise in its per share price to Rs148.98.

Bhanero Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs83.24 per share closing at Rs1,026.76, followed by Siemens Pakistan with Rs49.71 declines to close at Rs613.19.

**Gold prices jump all-time high to Rs 202,500 per tola:** The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed an increase of Rs7,000 on Friday and was traded all-time high at Rs202,500 against its sale at Rs195,500, the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased

by Rs6,000 to Rs173,610 against Rs167,610, whereas that

of 10 grams of 22 karat increased to Rs159,144 from Rs153,642, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of one tola silver increased by Rs50 to Rs2200 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs42.86 to Rs1886.14.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by US\$6 to US\$1,930 as compared to its sale at US\$1,936 on the last trading day, the association reported.

## Weekly inflation up by 0.45%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.45% for combined consumption group during the week ended on January 26, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 221.54 points as compared to 220.54 points during the past week, according to PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of

32.57 percent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732 witnessed a 0.41 percent increase and went up to 229.83 points from last week's 228.90 points.

Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption group from Rs 17,732-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 0.38 percent, 0.42 percent, 0.41 percent and 0.54 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 25

(49.02%) items increased, 06 (11.76%) items decreased and 20 (39.22%) items remained stable.

The items which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis included potatoes (4.47%), chicken (1.63%), gur (0.90%), sugar (0.85%), powdered milk (0.26%) and vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.08%).

The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices included onions (5.51%), rice irri-6/9 (4.51%), tomatoes (4.18%), bananas (3.57%), rice basmati broken (3.56%), garlic (3.47%), wheat flour (1.81%), pulse gram (1.74%), pulse moong

(1.38%) and non-food item, LPG (5.29%).

On a year-on-year (YoY) basis, the commodities that witnessed a decrease in prices included chillies powdered (15.32%), electricity for Q1 (12.31%) and gur (0.89%). The commodities that witnessed an increase in prices on a YoY basis included onions (53.23%), chicken (102.09%), eggs (69.48%), tea lipton (63.92%), rice basmati broken (61.23%), diesel (57.34%), pulse moong (57.16%), rice irri-6/9 (57.05%), bananas (53.95%), salt powdered (49.50%), wheat flour (48.71%), bread (46.53%) and petrol (45.21%).

## Tokyo shares close flat ahead of earnings season

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo shares ended nearly flat Friday, staying in a narrow band throughout the day as investors waited for Japan's earnings season to get into full swing.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added just 0.07 percent, or 19.81 points, to 27,382.56, while the broader Topix index rose 0.22 percent, or 4.26 points, to 1,982.66.

The dollar stood at 129.91 yen, off from 130.25 yen in New York late Thursday.

"Gains of US shares

provided support, but the market barely moved as investors waited for corporate earnings reports," Daiwa Securities said in a commentary.

Confidence among global investors brightened overnight after US GDP data was better than expected in the final months of last year, renewing hopes for a "soft landing" in the world's biggest economy.

But shortly before the opening bell, the Tokyo region reported rising inflation, prompting buy-

ing of the yen against the dollar which spooked the stock market, the brokerage said.

Under the weight of the yen's advance and rising yields for Japanese government bonds, the market became trapped in a narrow range, IwaiCosmo Securities said.

Semiconductor shares suffered on reports that Japan and the Netherlands plan to join the US-led efforts to control exports of semiconductors and related products to China.

Advantest, a producer of

tests for semiconductors, dropped 1.77 percent to 9,450 yen, and Tokyo Electron, which makes tools to build semiconductors, fell 0.13 percent to 45,480 yen.

Toyota reversed earlier losses and ended 0.40 percent higher at 1,900.5 yen after announcing Koji Sato as its new president and CEO, replacing third-generation chief executive Akio Toyoda who will become board chairman.

Nissan rose 1.53 percent to 457 yen. The automaker and its alliance partner

## Asian markets extend rally on hopes US will avoid recession

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets rose again Friday as fears about a possible recession in the US economy were soothed by data showing it grew more than expected in 2022, adding to the broadly upbeat tone across trading floors this year.

Investors tracked a rally on Wall Street fuelled by the figures, while they are now awaiting the release of closely watched inflation data later in the day and then the Federal Reserve's latest policy decision next week.

There is growing hope that the central bank will

lift interest rates by just 25 basis points, having slowed its pace of increases last month following four straight bumper hikes aimed at bringing inflation down from multi-decade highs.

There was also a suggestion from the Bank of Canada that it could hold fire at its next gathering, following a programme of tightening.

"The BoC's explicit pause signal has many thinking whether other central banks will do likewise - note BoC was one of the first to start the initial hiking cycle," said National Australia Bank's Tapas

Strickland.

Central banks spent last year ramping up borrowing costs to battle soaring prices and any sign of strength in the economy was taken as a bad sign that policymakers would continue to tighten policy sharply, threatening companies' profits.

Concern towards the end of the year focused on a possible global recession caused by the restrictive policies, with several observers warning that top economies were likely to suffer a so-called hard landing.

Thursday's US growth

figures showed a slowdown in 2022 from the previous year but a better-than-expected performance, which was described as a "Goldilocks scenario" -- where the figures are neither too good nor too bad.

Still, Strickland warned the labour market, which has remained tight during the pandemic recovery, could be showing signs of softening.

He added: "Announced layoffs do suggest (initial jobless claims) should start ticking higher and continuing claims did rise more than expected.

"Overnight there were

more announced layoffs happening from IBM, SAP and Dow, totalling more than 10,000. This spread of layoffs outside of tech is potentially important given firms had been holding onto workers after struggling to hire and retain them during the pandemic."

Investors are also keeping a nervous eye on earnings season, which has thrown up some disappointing figures and downbeat forecasts.

The latest was chip titan Intel, which predicted a surprise loss in the current period, while its sales range was well off forecasts by

billions of dollars. Its worst possible scenario could see its lowest revenue since 2010.

Still, Asian traders remain well supported by China's reopening narrative, with expectations the world's second-biggest economy will enjoy a strong recovery this year after three years of damaging zero-Covid policies that essentially cut the country off.

Hong Kong continued its new year rally, while Tokyo, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Bangkok, Wellington, Manila and Jakarta were also on the

rise. London opened with gains, though Paris and Frankfurt dipped.

But Mumbai sank around 1.7 percent, dragged by a sell-off in shares of the business empire of Asia's richest man Gautam Adani after his conglomerate was accused of committing "brazen" corporate fraud.

The flagship Adani Enterprises plunged 15 percent in the afternoon, triggering a trading halt, while subsidiary Adani Total Gas also halted after it tanked 20 percent.

Shanghai was closed for the Lunar New Year break,

with analysts predicting a strong performance when investors return to their desks next week.

Optimism over demand from a rebounding China was also able to provide support to oil prices and offset any lingering worries about the global economic outlook. Both main contracts rose again Friday.

"The theme for oil this year is China plus supply tightness from Russia, against a recessionary backdrop," Sean Lim, of RHB Investment Bank, said. "We expect Brent to average \$85 in the first quarter."





## In brief

## England beat Australia by three runs

POTCHEFSTROOM (Agencies): England reached the Women's Under-19 World Cup final with a thrilling three-run win over rivals Australia. In a low-scoring semi-final, England successfully defended 99 all out in Potchefstroom to earn a final place against India, who beat New Zealand earlier. Australia lost early wickets but looked in control at 56-4 before their last six wickets fell for just 40 runs. Hannah Baker starred for England with 3-10 from her four overs. After winning the toss and opting to bat, England were reduced to 45-7. Alexa Stonehouse compiled a gritty 25 as they clawed their way to 99 before being all out in the 20th over. In what transpired to be a low-scoring nail-biter, Australia stumbled in their chase - but needed just eight to win from 18 balls with two wickets in hand. However, Milly Illingworth was run out hunting a quick single, before Maggie Clark was trapped lbw by Grace Scrivens in the next over to seal England's progress. England now face India, who beat New Zealand by eight wickets, in the final at the same venue on Sunday (11:45am GMT). In the group stages, England finished top of Group Two with four wins from four, while India topped Group One ahead of Australia.

## Asjad downs Gilbert in Snooker Shoot Out

LEICESTER (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's professional snooker player Asjad Iqbal stunned former English Open runner-up David Gilbert in the Round of 128 clash of the ongoing Snooker Shoot Out here on Thursday. Asjad, who earned a two-year professional card for the World Snooker Tour (WST), tasted the first triumph of the season as he edged Gilbert by the scores of 35-30. Gilbert was dominating Asjad till the eighth minute with a 14 points difference before he scratched the cue ball and allowed the latter to script an astounding comeback with a break of 15 and took the lead. The enthralling contest went right down to the wire with Gilbert failing to capitalize on multiple opportunities in the closing minutes; allowing Asjad to taste his maiden triumph of the season. Following the victory, Asjad advanced to the Round of 16 where he will take on English cueist Jimmy Robertson. Meanwhile, besides Asjad, another national cueist Mohammad Asif, however, lost to Northern Ireland's Gerard Greene by the scores of 21-42.

## Winter Sports Festival 2023 gets underway

LAHORE (APP): Winter Sports Festival 2023 being organised under the auspices of Sports board Punjab (SBP), rolled into action with a colourful opening ceremony at Nishtar Park Sports Complex Gymnasium Hall on Friday. Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Musarrat Jabeen and Director General Sports Punjab Muhammad Tariq Qureshi unveiled the trophy of Winter Sports Festival on this occasion. Musarrat Jabeen announced the beginning of Winter Sports Festival to be staged at different venues of Nishtar Park Sports Complex and ends on 29 January. All the participants stood in respect of the National Anthem in the opening ceremony.

## Governor KP unveils PPC Peshawar Zalmi Media T10 Cricket Cup, kits



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali Friday unveiled the glittering winners and runners-up trophies and playing kits of the first Peshawar Press Club Zalmi Media T10 Cricket Cup at Club premises here. President Peshawar Press Club Arshad Aziz Malik along with Senior Journalists warmly received the Governor. Secretary Peshawar Press Club Irfan Mosazai lauded CEO Zalmi Foundation Javed Afridi and its management for extending support to organizing a Zalmi T20 Media Cricket Cup where in a total of 8 teams including more than 200 journalists are taking part. Peshawar Zalmi Javed

Afridi express his happiness to be a part of Peshawar Press Club & Peshawar Zalmi Media T10 Cup and said that Journalist play key part in promotion of Sports in Pakistan and KP.

Javed Afridi said that Peshawar Zalmi will continue to arrange Sports activities for the Youngsters of Peshawar and KP.

Chairman Peshawar Zalmi Javed Afridi said that InshAllah Peshawar Zalmi will play their matches in Peshawar during next season of Pakistan Super League season 9.

President Peshawar Press Club Arshad Aziz Malik while welcoming the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said that sports activities are a regular feature of Peshawar

Press Club with the aim to provide much needed physical and mental relief to its members that increased to over 600 & he appreciate Peshawar Zalmi efforts and support for the event.

He said the Annual Sports Gala for male and female members and the 7th edition of the Twenty20 Media Cricket League-2023 would also be organized wherein such activities would be open for all members.

At the end, Governor KP unveiled the trophies and also distributed Peshawar Zalmi kits among senior journalists and other participating team members. He also lauded Peshawar Zalmi for extending support to journalists for healthy activities.

## First 'KP Badminton League' begins in Peshawar Sports Complex

PESHAWAR (APP): The first Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Badminton League-2023 Friday got underway here at Peshawar Sports Complex in which six best teams of the province are participating.

Badminton League is being organized for the first time with the cooperation of Directorate General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Provincial Badminton Association in which six teams of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Peshawar Falcon, Bannu Green, Deer Royal, KP Police, Future Champions KP, and JJ Sports Peshawar will participate. The Badminton League will continue till January 30.

Talking to the media, DG Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Khalid Khan said that the province was taking vigorous measures for the promotion and development of sports, 90 percent of the work on the Arbab Niaz cricket Stadium was completed and the rest

would be completed by June this year.

The rest of the work will also be completed this way. He said work is also going on the upgradation of Qayyum Sports Complex football ground, apart from this, various sports competitions will continue according to the schemes, in which Inter-Schools competitions and competitions for special individuals will be held in February and March.

On this occasion, the organizing secretary of the league, Nadeem Khan and Hayatullah, said that the purpose of the league is to prepare the players for the National Junior and Senior Championships to be played in February.

They said through such league the juniors players while playing side-by-side learn more from their senior players in the League. After the successful conduct of the Pakistan Badminton League will also be organized very soon. He also thanked

Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Khalid Khan for organizing this league.

In this league, National Champion Murad Ali, South Asian Champion Qari Adnan, National Junior Player Mohammad Zaid, U19 Umar Jahangir, U15 Champion Fahad Ahmed, U13 Champion Najam Saqib, U16 Champion Taimur Khan, Shoaib Riaz, Abdullah Latif, Zuhair Khan are in this league. Many junior and senior players including Khalil, Tahir Khan, Uzair Khan, Hamza Khan, Afnan Khan are involved.

Administrator Peshawar Sports Complex Syed Jafar Shah, Provincial Badminton Association Secretary Muhammad Amjad, Administrator Hayatabad Sports Complex Shah Faisal, International Badminton players Murad Ali, Qari Adnan, international badminton coaches Nadeem Khan and Hayat Ullah and other important personalities were present.

## Ukraine threatens to boycott Paris Olympics

PARIS (Agencies): Ukraine's sports minister warned on Thursday his country could boycott the 2024 Paris Olympics if Russian and Belarusian athletes are allowed to take part.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) said on Wednesday it was seeking a "pathway" for Russians to take part in the Games despite the invasion of Ukraine. Ukraine's sports minister Vadym Goutzeit said such a move was "unacceptable".

"Our position remains unchanged - as long as the war continues in Ukraine, Russian and Belarusian athletes should not be in international competitions," Goutzeit wrote on Facebook. "If we are not heard, I do not exclude the possibility that we will boycott and refuse to participate in the Olympics."

Russia and its ally Belarus have been sidelined from most Olympic sports since Russian forces invaded

Ukraine last February.

Ignoring calls from Ukraine to ban Russian and Belarusian athletes from next year's summer Olympics, the IOC said Wednesday that a way to allow competitors from those countries to take part as neutrals should be "further explored". The IOC said "no athlete should be prevented from competing just because of their passport".

Following that announcement, the Olympic Council of Asia on Thursday offered athletes from both countries the chance to compete in this year's Asian Games. That is a significant move because they could gain qualifying marks in competition in Asia to allow them to compete in Paris.

The IOC's stance was strongly criticised by Britain and Denmark on Thursday. Britain, which has supplied military and humanitarian support to Ukraine since the invasion

began, said the IOC's move was a "world away from the reality of war".

Culture Secretary Michelle Donelan said: "We condemn any action that allows President Putin to legitimise his illegal war in Ukraine. "This position from the IOC is a world away from the reality of war being felt by the Ukrainian people - and IOC president (Thomas) Bach's own words less than a year ago where he strongly condemned Russia for breaking the Olympic Truce and urged it to 'give peace a chance'".

The head of Denmark's National Olympic Committee said his country was also strongly opposed to Russia returning to the Olympic fold. "The Russian aggression in UKR is escalating," Hans Natort tweeted. "Under these circumstances, it will be unacceptable to open up for RUS and Belarusian international sports participation."

## Djokovic defies controversy to surge into Australian Open final

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Novak Djokovic put aside the controversy surrounding his father to surge into a 10th Australian Open final Friday and close in on a record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam crown.

Only Stefanos Tsitsipas stands in his way after the Serb romped past unseeded American Tommy Paul 7-5, 6-1, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne. Another title on Sunday will move Djokovic alongside Rafael Nadal with 22 Slam wins and see the 35-year-old return to world number one for the first time since last June.

Greek third seed Tsitsipas, who ground past Russian 18th seed Karen Khachanov in four sets in the other semi-final, can also become the top-ranked player should he lift the trophy.

Djokovic played without father Srđjan courtside after he was filmed posing with a man holding a Russian flag featuring Vladimir Putin's face following his son's quarter-final win.

It sparked a backlash from Ukraine and led to calls for Djokovic's father to be banned from the tournament. Djokovic said after his match that the incident had been "misinterpreted", that his family was against war and he hoped to have his father back in his box for Sunday's final.

"It has got to me, of course," he said of the controversy swirling around his father. "You have to find a way just to kind of accept, let it go, just not allow it to consume your day or turn your state of mind into something that you don't want, especially before semi-finals or finals of a Grand Slam."

His ruthless win extended Djokovic's unbeaten streak at the Australian Open to 27 matches to claim sole ownership of the Open-er record at Melbourne Park ahead of Andre Agassi.

- Experience tells - The Serbian fourth seed, a hot favourite, attacked Paul's serve straight away for an early break, then broke again when the 35th-ranked

American fired a forehand long to race 5-1 in front. A run-in with the umpire over using his towel between points seemed to rattle Djokovic and he was broken twice in a row as Paul came surging back to 5-5. Djokovic regrouped to hold serve and break again and take the set in 59 minutes.

After that wobble, it was all business, despite clutching his strapped hamstring several times, romping through the next two sets with minimal resistance in a show of force. "I'm really thankful that I have enough gas in my legs to be able to play at this level on one of the biggest tennis courts in the world," said Djokovic, who is now 11-0 for the season and into a 33rd Grand Slam final.

"I know what's expected of

me, I've been in this situation so many times in my career. Experience helps also," he added of being in yet another final. He has won all nine of his Melbourne finals.

- Tsitsipas rolls on - Djokovic will meet Tsitsipas next after the impressive Greek battled into his first Australian final and only second at a Grand Slam. In the previous one, at Roland Garros in 2021, he fell to Djokovic in five sets after holding a 2-0 lead.

At 24, Tsitsipas is the youngest man to reach the Melbourne final since a 23-year-old Djokovic in 2011. "I dreamed as a kid to maybe one day get to play in this court against the best players in the world," said Tsitsipas, after defeating Khachanov 7-6 (7/2), 6-4, 6-

7 (6/8), 6-3. The Greek, also unbeaten this season with a 10-0 record, added: "I'm extremely happy that I'm in the final now and let's see what happens." Tsitsipas thrived in Melbourne throughout his career after bursting on the scene at the 2019 event as a 20-year-old when he dethroned defending champion Roger Federer in the last 16.

He went on to reach the semi-finals that year and again in 2021 and 2022. He came into his clash with Khachanov brimming with confidence and chasing a first major title. Despite failing to get over the line when serving for the match at 5-4 in the third set, then with two match points in the tiebreak, he kept his cool to secure the win and a date with Djokovic.

## Sania Mirza bows out of Grand Slam tennis

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Indian trailblazer Sania Mirza bowed out of Grand Slam tennis Friday with defeat in the Australian Open mixed-doubles final playing alongside Rohan Bopanna - her first playing partner 22 years ago.

The 36-year-old Mirza, regarded as her country's greatest women's tennis player, returned to Melbourne Park for one last hurrah and made it all the way to the decider.

But she and 42-year-old Bopanna were unable to get over the line, losing 7-6 (7/2), 6-2 to Brazilian pair Luisa Stefani and Rafael Matos. Mirza was in tears in the post-match presentation ceremony.

"Rohan was my first-ever mixed-doubles partner at (aged) 14 and we won the nationals," said Mirza, a six-time Grand Slam champion, three in doubles and three in mixed.

"It was a long time ago, 22 years ago, and I couldn't think of a better person - he's one of my best friends



and best partners - to finish my career here and to play the final. "There's no better place for me, or person for me, to finish my Grand Slam career."

Mirza, who is married to former Pakistan cricket captain Shoaib Malik, has a young son Ishaan and said it was incredible to play in front of him in a major final.

"I never thought that I would be able to play in front of my child in a Grand Slam final, so it's truly special to have my four-year-old and my parents here," she said.

Mirza, known as a feisty

convention-breaker, was the first Indian to win a WTA singles title, in 2005 at her hometown Hyderabad. She reached the fourth round of the US Open the same year and by 2007 was among the women's top 30.

But a wrist injury caused her to concentrate on doubles, forging a partnership with Swiss great Martina Hingis which produced three Grand Slam titles. She is due to retire from all tennis after a tournament next month in Dubai, where she has lived for more than a decade and recently launched a tennis academy.

## India's Baseball team reaches Pakistan

WAGAH (Monitoring Desk): India's national Baseball team has reached Pakistan to partake in the 15th West Asia Baseball Cup after a brief delay in the issuance of the No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Pakistan government. According to the details, the Indian team reached Pakistan via the Wagah border on Friday afternoon and will start their campaign in due course. Earlier, the Indian contingent faced a brief delay in the issuance of the NOC from the Pakistan government, which, however, was resolved on Tuesday (January 24). After being granted the NOC, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in India then wrote a formal request to the Pakistan Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination to seek visas for the players, poised to participate in the event.

## 3rd Allama Iqbal Polo Tournament: two matches decided

LAHORE (APP): Platinum Homes/Master Paints and Diamond Paints emerged as triumphant in the 3rd Allama Iqbal Polo Tournament, sponsored by Lahore Smart City here at the Jinnah Polo Fields on Friday.

Iranian player Amirreza Behboudi helped Platinum Homes/Master Paints edge out FG/Din Polo 5-4 in the first match of the day. Amirreza smashed in four fabulous goals while Agha Musa Ali Khan struck the remaining one for Platinum Homes/Master Paints. Shah Shamyil Alam thrashed in two goals while Saqib Khan Khakwani and Sheikh Muhammad Raffay converted one goal each for FG/Din Polo.

FG/Din polo dominated the match right from the

word go and banged in a brace to gain a 2-0 lead in the first chukker. Platinum Homes/Master Paints played well in the second chukker and converted two goals against one by FG/Din Polo, who were still enjoying a slight 3-2 lead. Platinum Homes maintained their authority in the third chukker by scoring both the goals to gain a 4-3 lead. The fourth and last chukker was evenly poised where both the sides struck one goal each, with Platinum Homes/Master Paints winning the match by a narrow margin of 5-4.

Nico Roberts' heroics guided Diamond Paints to an impressive 11-8? over Master Paints/Newage Cables in the second match of the day. Foreign player Nico Roberts did well with mallet and polo pony and

pumped in five fantastic goals while his teammates played equally well and contributed significant goals in their team's total. Lt Col Omer Minhas (R) hammered three goals while Mir Shoaib Ahmed struck twice and Bilal Hayat Noon once for Diamond Paints.

For Master Paints/Newage Cables, which had a handicap advantage of a half goal, Raja Temur Nadeem slammed in six superb goals while Farooq Amin Sufi converted two. Diamond Paints were off to a flying start and maintained their supremacy till the end. Despite Master Paints/Newage Cables trying to make good comebacks, Diamond Paints finished the match well and won it comfortably by 11-8.

## US envoy praises athletes to represent Pakistan in Special Olympics

KARACHI (APP): United States Consul General in Karachi Nicole Theriot on Friday appreciated the young athletes going to represent Pakistan in the Special Olympic World Games-2023 scheduled from June 17 to 25, 2023 at Berlin, Germany.

She said this while speaking at a dinner hosted to honor the team of special players who would be participating in the Special Olympic World Games in Berlin this year.

The US CG said that the special players were an inspiration for everyone and a shining example for Pakistani society.

"I am really proud of these young athletes, "It is a great experience to spend time with such talented athletes," she observed.

The US CG recalled that the Special Olympic Games originated in the United States. "Today I feel happy and proud to attend the event representing my country here. I am excited for your participation in the upcoming games as the United States strongly advocates for the

rights and equality of persons with disabilities in every respect, including sports."

The dinner was hosted by Chairperson Special Olympic Pakistan, Ronak Lakhani. In promoting the Special Olympics, Chairperson Lakhani and her team have prepared a competitive contingent from Pakistan through their sponsorship efforts.

Addressing the gathering, Ronak Lakhani said that the athletes who win the honors for the country are role models for one and all.

"They are differently abled and by no means are less than the others. I hope that this time too, like in the past, our athletes will win the medals at the Special Olympics and bring dignity and pride to Pakistan by securing medals."

Also present at the event were the many qualified coaches working hard to ensure these special athletes are well prepared for the Special Olympic World Games-2023.

On this occasion, the athletes said that they were making full-

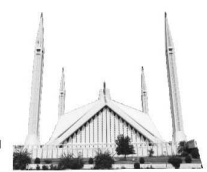
fledged preparations for the mega event in Berlin and hopeful of winning honors for Pakistan.

Expressing good wishes for the Pakistani contingent at the Special Olympic World Games, to be held in June this year, German Consul General Rüdiger Lotz said: "I wish all these players a great time in Berlin and sincerely hope that not only do they perform at their best with their abilities but also learn and gain experience by playing against special players from around the world while enjoying the game and make the victory podium by doing so."

Later, the guests of honor, flanked by the athletes, also enjoyed a musical performance on the occasion.

It is pertinent to mention here that 7,000 Special Olympics athletes supported by more than 3,000 coaches and 20,000 volunteers belonging over 170 countries to participate in 24 sports during the event from June 17 to 25, 2023 at , Berlin, Germany.





## In brief

### Raja commiserate with Patel over brother's demise

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durrani on Friday commiserated with Minister for National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel over the demise of his brother. In separate condolence messages to Abdul Qadir Patel, speaker and deputy speaker expressed their deep sorrow and regret over the sad demise. They both prayed for the deceased's eternal peace and grant of courage to the grieved family members.

### ANF recovers intoxicated tablets

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan during two counter-narcotics operations seized 44,500 intoxicated tablets and over three kg of heroin besides arresting two accused, said an ANF spokesman here on Friday. He informed ANF in an operation near Rawalpindi Pirwadhai Bus Terminal recovered 3100 grams of heroin from a suspicious parcel. In another raid conducted on Harbanspura Road Lahore, ANF recovered 44,500 intoxicated tablets from the possession of two accused residents of Mardan. The spokesman said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

### IRSA releases 45,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 45,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 44,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1495.00 feet and was 97.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,700 cusecs while outflow as 25,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1127.60 feet, which was 77.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 6,500 cusecs and 100 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 40,100, 41,900, 19,700 and 9,400 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 8,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Police arrest seven

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police on the directives of Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi Waseem Riaz Khan conducted raids in different areas and netted seven accused for possessing illegal weapons. According to a police spokesman, Westridge, Bani, Saddar Wah, Dhamial, and Rawat police rounded up seven namely Zohaib Imtiaz, Muhammad Ali, Abdullah, Ahsan, Shehryar, Shabbir and Ali and recovered six 30 bore pistols, a 9mm pistol and ammunition from their possession. The SSP said that strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against the law-breakers and operations against aerial firing and illegal weapon holders would continue.

# Faisal Kundi asks Imran Khan to start election campaign instead of hiding

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi Friday asked Imran Khan to start campaign for the upcoming Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elections instead of hiding himself in Zaman Park.

Addressing a presser along with the Secretary General Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Nayyar Hussain Bukhari, the SAPM said that Imran Khan might be planning to run the election campaign like work from home instead of coming into the field.

Criticizing PTI for their performance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Kundi said that the province which was once peaceful is now suffering from unrest due to the ineffective policies of the PTI government. While the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has no funds to pay salaries of the government employees.

About the recent audio leak, the SAPM said that the PTI has been calling others thieves and dacoits but the recent audio leak had exposed their own corruption for which they should be held accountable.

He said Pakistan

People's Party has always demanded the formation of an independent medical board to prove whether Imran Khan has received bullet injuries or not.

Faisal Kundi said that it happened for the first time in the history of the world that a person is having plaster on his leg when the bullet has not damaged his bones which he satirically termed as a strange tradition of Shaukat Khanum hospital.

Meanwhile, Secretary General Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Nayyar Hussain Bukhari said that the present government would complete its tenure and general elections across the country would be held in time. He said that early elections were not the solution to get rid of the challenges being faced by the country.

He said Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had invited the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for dialogue without any condition. Nayyar Bukhari said that Chairman PTI Imran Khan had isolated Pakistan from the whole world but Bilawal Bhutto had put maximum efforts to restore cordial relations with the world.

He said that PTI was badly failed in delivering on any front during the last four years and today the whole nation was questioning PTI's commitments to the provision of jobs and houses. Nayyar Bukhari said that the fact of the international economic crisis and its impact on Pakistan cannot be denied but the incumbent government was putting maximum effort to address the challenges.

He said: "Two assemblies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab have been dissolved but the National Assembly would complete its constitutional term". Nayyar Bukhari said the leadership and the workers of PPP have rendered huge sacrifices for the strengthening of democracy and the parliamentary system in the country.

"PPP doesn't believe in dictatorship, former Chief Minister Punjab Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi's statement about not dissolving the provincial assemblies is in front of everyone," he added. Faisal Karim Kundi and Nayyar Hussain Bukhari welcomed the members who joined Pakistan People's Party from Kohistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Korean envoy Suh Sangpyo calls on Minister Murtaza Javed Abbasi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Korean Ambassador to Pakistan Suh Sangpyo on Friday called on Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi and discussed matters related to bilateral interests.

While welcoming the envoy, the minister expressed his gratitude for the assistance provided by Korea during the recent devastating flood in Pakistan.

Javed Murtaza Abbasi stressed the need for technology transfer in Pakistan as there was immense potential in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) which needed expansion

and increased investment.

This sector, he said, had an important role in improving the national economy and its full potential should be exploited for the development of the country. The minister said the ports of Karachi and Gwadar were available to provide better access to Korea to the markets of Central Asia.

He praised the quality of Korean products, especially solar panels, and emphasized promoting the existing cooperation in the energy sector. The two sides also discussed ongoing projects of Korean companies in Pakistan and agreed

on their further expansion.

During the meeting, they underlined the need for further promoting the cooperation and ties between the two countries at the parliamentary and government level. The chief executive officer of Star Hydro, a company constructing a dam, was also present in the meeting.

The minister assured that the difficulties being faced in the opening of LCs [Letters of Credit] would be resolved soon. Javed Murtaza Abbasi also highlighted the country's potential in the tourism sector and stressed its development.

## 1255 graduates awarded degrees at 20th Convocation of FJWU

ISLAMABAD (INP): The 20th Convocation of Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU) Rawalpindi was held at the Jinnah Convention Center, Islamabad to commemorate the outstanding academic accomplishments of the graduates of 2022.

Governor Punjab and Chancellor FJWU, Engr. Mohammad Baligh Ur Rehman was the chief guest while Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad was the guest of honor.

The 1255 conferred degrees included 12 Ph.D., 238 MS and M. Phil, 136 Masters and 869 Bachelors while 47 gold and 30 silver medals were also awarded to the students who got distinction in their respective programs.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab congratulated the graduating students and their parents upon the successful completion of their degrees.

He also appreciated the graduating students' years of toil and pursuit of intel-

lectual excellence that had brought them to the gateway of their future dreams.

"You represent the future of Pakistan and I can clearly see that your future is very bright. Your success is our success and the success of the university and everyone involved with this institution. Whichever direction life takes you, whether it's a job career or entrepreneurship, or any other occupation of your choice, your success is the only thing we pray for", he added.

The Governor also advised the students to embrace gratitude as a main character trait of their personality alongside empathy.

"Be thankful and considerate towards those helping you in achieving the scores of milestones of your life irrespective of their positions. In this regard, there is no one more deserving than your parents and teachers who have led you towards a progressive lifestyle by making you a promising citizen of the country," he said.

He also emphasized on the importance of research for the graduated students and instructed the Chairman HEC to help the university release of funds for its new 'Chakri' Campus as swiftly as possible.

Earlier, the Vice Chancellor (VC) FJWU, Dr. Saima Hamid congratulated the graduating students and their parents and wished them a peaceful and prosperous future.

She appreciated the students' hard work, outstanding achievements and their parents' commitment to excellence in education and emphasized the hope that the students would make optimal use of the productive, creative and inventive professional skill sets that the university had imparted them with.

The VC also highlighted that the university currently offers 75 degree programs, under 27 departments – including 12 Associate Degree, 31 Undergraduate Program, 21 MS/MPhil, and 11 Ph.D. Programs.



ISLAMABAD: SAPM Faisal Karim Kundi, Nayyar Hussain Bukhari and Chaudhry Manzoor addressing a press conference at Pakistan Peoples Party office G-6.

### Salik says Shujaat's younger brother targeted him for his selfish politics

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A senior leader of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain Friday said that Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain has been targeted by his younger brother for his selfish politics.

Salik Hussain talked to the media on Friday and said Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain's younger brother has unconstitutionally tried to remove him from the presidency of the party and make himself a puppet president.

Salik Hussain said that Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain kept the political legacy of Chaudhry Zahoore Elahi Shaheed alive and carried it forward and also made sacrifices to keep the family together.

The federal minister said that the people of the constituency know that Chaudhry Zahoore Elahi Shaheed and Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain have always kept their word.

On the other hand, he added that some people have betrayed the reputation of the family, tradition, and the political ideology of Shaheed Zahoore Elahi in their personal desires, ego, greed, and lust for positions.

### ICT admin seals clinics, shops, petrol filling stations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Friday sealed five shops, two illegal clinics, three petrol and LPG filling stations during a crackdown against violators and profiteers in different areas.

On the directives of the Deputy Commissioner ICT, assistant commissioners raided 134 different areas to ensure implementation of the recommended rates for essential items, sealed five shops and arrested two shopkeepers, said a press release issued by the DC office.

During the operation, shopkeepers were fined Rs 12,000 for overcharging while seven professional beggars were also arrested and shifted to the police station.

Meanwhile, 11 kilograms of polythene bags were also confiscated. During the inspection, the teams also sealed two illegal clinics over corrupt practices.

Furthermore, three illegal petrol and one illegal LPG filling stations were also sealed over illegal activities.

## Sanjrani, Achakzai discuss Balochistan development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Friday discussed the status of Balochistan's development projects and other issues of mutual interest with Balochistan Minister for Finance Zamrak Khan Achakzai in a meeting held in the Parliament House.

Speaking on the occasion, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani

Senate Chairman stressed that expediting the development projects was imperative for rapidly changing people's standard of living.

The provincial minister lauded the efforts of the Senate Chairman in solving the financial problems being faced by Balochistan. Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani

said that the upper house will continue to play its full role for the development and prosperity of Balochistan.

Chairman said that solving the problems of the Balochistan people is his first priority and will continue to work for the development and prosperity of the province.

## PEMRA to grant FM-Radio licences for KP's merged districts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) on Friday decided to grant FM-Radio licences for merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), aimed at providing the latest transmission services there.

The decision was taken in a meeting, presided over by PEMRA Chairman Muhammad Saleem Baig, which reviewed the annual performance of the authority's senior officers, a news release said. Senior Director Generals, Director Generals and senior offi-

cers of all regional offices of PEMRA attended the meeting. The meeting also finalized a policy for cable licensing in under-served areas and Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) policy.

Apart from this, the meeting deliberated on various issues while evaluating the performance related to the collection of revenue and a committee for revision of the tariff of cable TV. The PEMRA Chairman got a detailed briefing on day-to-day affairs and recovery and emphasized on implementation of PEMRA laws in letter and spirit.

"Indian transmission

should be strictly prohibited as the content viewed on them is harmful to our religious and social values and for the economy of Pakistan," he said instructing Regional Directors to ensure a 'zero tolerance' policy in that regard.

Saleem Baig urged all the officers to do their best for improving the image and prestige of the authority. The chairman asked the officers to ensure the implementation of PEMRA laws, stressing strong 'communication and consultation' with all stakeholders for the development of the media industry in Pakistan.

## 14 new Corona cases reported in last 24 hours: NIH

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health officials on Friday said that 14 new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours across the country.

As per data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH), the case positivity ratio was 0.32 percent while 10 patients were in critical condition. No death was reported from the virus in the last 24 hours while 4,414 corona tests were conducted.

As many as 416 tests were conducted in Lahore, out of which two cases were confirmed positive, while 306 tests were conducted in Islamabad out of which one was reported positive. One case was reported in Peshawar out of the 247 tests with a ratio of 0.40%.

Meanwhile, Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel said that the government had strengthened the role of Border and Health Services in Pakistan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19. The minister said

that there was a surveillance system at all entry points of the country including airports. He said that there will be rapid tests and screening of passengers at all airports. He said that the situation was completely under control and asked the general public to avoid listening to rumors. He added that the Corona case passivity ratio was just 0.3 to 0.5 in the country while 90 percent of the country's population already got the COVID-19 vaccine.

"An efficient system with a proper management team is fully functional in the country to remain vigilant and is ready to make an emergency plan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19," the minister added. He said that Border and Health Services Pakistan was ensuring the implementation of international health regulations.

He said that in case of any untoward situation, the health system was fully prepared to deal with any sub-variant of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 including BF.7 in the country.

## Bids to smuggle wheat foiled

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police foiled three bids to smuggle 1,732 wheat, flour and fine flour (Maida) bags.

According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Potohar Division police conducted raids in different areas and rounded up three drivers namely Gul Zaib, Jan Muhammad and Muhammad Akram on recovery of 1,732 wheat, flour and fine flour (Maida) bags from their possession.

He informed that the accused were trying to illegally ship wheat flour bags out of the Rawalpindi division.

He said the Food Department Rawalpindi and district police, on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi, were strictly monitoring all the exit points of the district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids.

## IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has issued a power suspension programme for Saturday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work.

According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, G-6/3, Zia Masjid, Tufail Shaheed, T&T, Chatta Bakhtawar, Highway, F-8/3,

FHS, Police Line, Meera Jaffar, F-11/2, Bhara Kahu, Pindi Point, Birut One, Mohra Nagyal, Jhanda, Humayun, Defense Road, Askari XIV, Ranyal, Shah Jeevan, Chongli No. 22, Rawat, Kahota City One, Lahtrar One, Hanif Shaheed, Mohra Nagyal, New Rawat, Pind Jatlan, Jarrar Camp, Jhata Hatial Feeders, Attock Circle, Taxila, Mushtaq, Hussain, Dharek, Pind Padian, Sangjani, Purmiana, Ghari Afghanan, Islampura, Brahma, Ghorghashti, Shadi Khan, Sarka,

Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Adamji Road, Jail Park, Swan Garden One, Mohra Nagyal, Jhanda, Humayun, Defense Road, Askari XIV, Ranyal, Shah Jeevan, Chongli No. 22, Rawat, Kahota City One, Lahtrar One, Hanif Shaheed, Mohra Nagyal, New Rawat, Pind Jatlan, Jarrar Camp, Jhata Hatial Feeders, Attock Circle, Taxila, Mushtaq, Hussain, Dharek, Pind Padian, Sangjani, Purmiana, Ghari Afghanan, Islampura, Brahma, Ghorghashti, Shadi Khan, Sarka,

Kachhari, Dhok Fateh, Dar es Salaam, Mansar, Tin Mela, Hameed, City, Mithial, Qutbal, Jhang, Dhaknir, Dharnal, Galial, Gul Muhammad, Khanda Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Bhawan, Ara Bazar, Mangan, Kallar Kahar, Sarpak, Adhi, Dhudyal Rural, Dhrogi Rajgan, Bhikri, Dandot, Rawal, Ahmedabad, Kachhari, Sughrpur, Kot Shera, Malkwal, Akwal, Bilalabad, Bhadyal, Patwali Feeders, Jhelum Circle, 10:00 AM to 03:00 PM,

Ajmal Shaheed, Sana Allah Shaheed, CMH Jhelum, Mandi Bhalwal, Fatehpur, F-8 Civil Line, Akram Shaheed, F-2 Chip Board, F-10 Kala Base, Burian, Industrial, M. Riaz Shaheed, Gadari, Chatala, Bhadyal, Col. Mohammad Akram, Sandal, Nai Khanqah, Mil Awan, Shah Safir, Kangar Thatathi Feeders, GSO Circle, 09:00 am to 04:00 pm to, G-14/3&4, Nest Road, G-13/4 Extension Feeders, 08:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Pindi Point and surrounding areas.



2 held on charges of robbery

KABUL (Agencies): The police arrested two people in connection with the theft from the 16th district of Kabul city. The police officers of the 16th district of the Kabul Police arrested two people on charges of stealin cars, said the Commander police of Kabul in a statement. These robbers had stolen two cars from the Zaman Khan Qala road area in Kabul, they were arrested minutes after, the cars were handed over to their owners, source added.

Six drug dealers arrested

KABUL (Agencies): The Counter-narcotics police arrested 6 drug dealers people from Khost and Herat provinces. The counter-narcotics police in Laghman, Khost, and Herat provinces cleared 4 acres of land from poppy cultivation and arrested 6 drug dealers, said the Ministry of Interior in a statement. 4 acres of land in Laghman province were cleared for poppy cultivation, 5 drug dealers were arrested in Khost, and another person was arrested in Herat.

Uzbekistan providing less power than agreed: DABS

KABUL (TOLOnews): Da Afghanistan Breshna Sheklat said that Uzbekistan has not remained committed to the contract for electricity exports to Afghanistan, and that it has only provided 100 megawatts of power instead of 250 megawatts. Head of DABS, Hekmatullah Akhundzada, said that this amount of electricity will not solve the problems of power in the country. "Unfortunately, Uzbekistan, despite its promises, has not acted on this agreement and is only exporting 100 megawatts of power to Kabul and this amount doesn't solve our problem," he said.

The Kabul Chamber of Industry and Mines said that 90 percent of their activities have been suspended due to a shortage of power.

"It has been 20 days since Kabul industrial parks are without power. 90 percent of productive sectors have been halted. I hope the technical problems that exist in Uzbekistan will be solved soon between the Islamic Emirate and Uzbekistan," said Sakhi Ahmad Paiman, deputy head of the chamber.

The former head of DABS, Amanullah Ghalib, said that DABS should work on obtaining 500 kilowatts of power from Turkmenistan.

"A 500-kilowatt cable was coming through Pule-Khumri and was supported by the Asian Development Bank. But the projects of the Asian Development Bank are halted. The only solution is that the private sector or DABS invests and completes the project," said Amanullah Ghalib, the former head of DABS.

With the increase of power cuts, the acting Minister of Energy and Water traveled to Turkmenistan and extended the contract for 450 megawatts of power for the year of 2023.

Cancer cases on the rise in Afghanistan

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) announced the establishment of a national cancer treatment center, saying annually 23,000 Afghans contract cancer and 16,000 of them die from it.

Cancer is a disease in which some of the body's cells grow uncontrollably and spread to other parts of the body.

Doctor Sadiq Hashimi, a senior official at the cancer control center, told Pajhwok Afghan News, citing the World Health Organization (WHO)'s 2020 survey, that annually 23,000 people get affected with cancer in Afghanistan and 16,000 of them succumb to the disease.

He said currently three cancer treatment centers existed in Kabul, Herat and Balkh provinces.

The Kabul cancer treatment center has 60 beds, the Herat center has 15 beds and Balkh has 15 beds for cancer patients.

Dr. Hashimi said the MoPH planned to create a center for treatment and diagnosis of cancer in the country in near future with the assistance of International Atomic Energy Organization (IAEA).

He said factors behind the increased cases of cancer included environmental, unhealthy diet, genetics and other climate and weather related factors.

Doctor Sharafat Zaman, MoPH spokesman, said 26,000 cancer patients visited the Jamhoriat Hospital for treatment in 2022.

The patients included about 1000 people who were newly diagnosed with cancer and 25,000 suffered from the disease for years.

The figures of Jamhoriat Hospital show cancer cases increased last year compared to the previous years.

Most of these cases were breast cancer among women while men had mostly throat cancer and the reasons were the use of chemicals, lengthy wars and the use of different weaponry in the country, Zaman said.

Zaman also MoPH has a plan to establish a center for treatment of cancer in order the Afghans are no longer forces to travel abroad for the treatment of such diseases.

Mohammad Jan, 60, a patient from Maidan Wardak province who is hospitalized for treatment, said: "I have been suffering from different diseases since last 16 years, I have diabetes and heart disease, but since four months, I am suffering from stomach cancer".

He was satisfied with services of the hospital and said it was his second time to be hospitalized for vaccination.

Fatima, 70, another patient hospitalized for cancer disease, said she has been in the hospital since last one month.

She said she had visited different private hospitals for e treatment, but it had no good result.

She said: "I can't eat anything, I am in trouble, I have no money, I sold all of my land to treat myself, I did not cure and even my problems increased".

Fatima was also satisfied with services at the Jamhoriat hospital and said all services were free except some medicines which were not available in this hospital.

Hanafi urges prevention of low quality medicine, food production

KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in a meeting with the head of the Afghanistan Food and Drug Administration, stressed the prevention of low-quality medicine and food production in the country.

The head of AFDA, Dr. Abdul Bari Omar shared details about the administration, financial issues, and its functions.

Omar reminded saying that the administration is responsible for the supervision and control of the companies that produce and supply medicines and food-stuffs, and to carry out this responsibility, it needs a wider administration and more employees.

Deputy PM Hanafi hailed the administration



for providing services, said that the officials of this administration should make more efforts in systematization and creating transparency.

Hanafi inspired the officials of AFDA for providing more facilities for the people within their competencies and responsibilities so that the quality of drug

and food can be inspected and separated and the production of low-quality medicine and food can be prevented for the safety of people.

Leaders play important roles ensuring peace, strengthening unity

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Mines and Petroleum Minister, Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar met with the elders of Balkhaeb district of Sar-i-Pul.

The leaders of the Balkhaeb district of Sar-i-Pul in a meeting with Minister Delawar called the relations and harmony between the Islamic Emirate and the people purposeful.

They expressed their satisfaction with the good treatment of the Islamic system in the country and vowed that the people of Balkhaeb will stand by the system of IE and serve their religion, country, and people.

They shared a series of



problems and suggestions with the acting Ministry of Mines and Petroleum and asked for a solution.

Minister Delawar, listening to their problems and suggestions, called the role of leaders very important and

valuable in ensuring peace and strengthening national unity and promised to address people's problems.

Nimroz tribes reconcile ending eight-year-old feud

ZARANJ (Pajhwok): Two families in the Dilaram District of southwestern Nimroz province have reconciled through the mediation of local authorities and elders ending their eight years of enmity.

Dilaram District Chief Mullah Gul Nabi Nafez, who was part of the tribal Jirga for reconciliation, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "The two families are relatives and their feud started from verbal clash on a piece of land and with the passage of time their dispute got complicated."

He said the two families hailed from the Kaj Sitar village and as a result of dispute the family belonged to Valarzar tribe killed one person from the Noorzai tribe.

Later one person from the Valarzar tribe went missing and the opposing side believed that it was kidnapped by the Noorzai tribe.

"These tribes, who have family and kinship ties with each other, did not participate in each other's sorrows and joys for many years and had severed their ties, but today they reconciled due to the efforts of the Delaram local administration," he said.

Mullah Hafeezullah, a tribal elder from Noorzai tribe, said initially the disputed started from a verbal argument between two individuals from the two tribes and they first had a



physical fight and after a while one of their young men was killed by that Larzi tribe and this caused enmity between them

Hafeezullah added: "They suffered the loss of a family member in the enmity but still they decided to reconcile. Some of the elders of the tribe were against it and the tribal jirga reconciliation efforts were not producing result but with the efforts of the village people, the local government and the elders of this Jirga a fine result was achieved."

He said fighting and bloodshed has no outcome in Afghanistan and if it could give any result Afghanistan would have been benefited from the 40 years of war.

"Now we are very happy that after years we hugged each other and now we will

be able to live a life without fear and trouble," he added.

Abdul Sattar an elder from the Walarzar tribe said: "Enmity kept us away from one another for years. We offered sacrifice as well but at the end of the day we had to reconcile."

He said the two families have relationship and family links but due to enmity they afraid of one another all the time.

"We are happy that today we can look at each other's faces with smiles and happiness after years and feel relaxed," he added.

"In the beginning, when a young man was killed and the enmity started, we stayed up all night and moved our families to another village. We were afraid of aggression from the other side and had security measures"

Abdul Sattar said peace

bring stability, security and happiness adding that he was thrilled that after eight years of enmity there is reconciliation between the two sides and they could now live peacefully.

Religious scholar Mawlawi Mohammad Esa, who played vital role in the reconciliation of the two tribes, said the reconciliation will bring stability in the society.

Sediqullah, an elder from the Kaj Satar area, said the reconciliation was a welcome gesture and linked the move with an end to the bloodshed between the two families.

He said the two tribes offered invitation to each other's and celebrated the reconciliation traditionally.

The elders of the two tribes urged other families to resolve their differences and reconcile.

200,000 livestock died due to cold: Ministry



KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock said that over 200,000 livestock have died due to cold weather over the past two weeks.

According to the ministry, many of the animals that died were in the northern provinces of Balkh,

Jawzjan and Panjshir.

"260,000 livestock have been wasted in 20 provinces of Afghanistan. 129,000 livestock are goats and sheep," said Mubahuddin Mustaeen, a spokesman for the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock.

This comes as some

farmers said that the cold weather and lack of grass has caused death among their livestock.

They called on the Islamic Emirate to provide them with assistance in this regard. "We had 60 sheep and we lost 30 of them due to cold and lack of grass," said Mohammad Naeem, a farmer.

"We lost 60 livestock due to cold weather in winter because we didn't have food materials and proper conditions," said Mohammad Sharif, a farmer.

"I had around 60 livestock and 20 of them died due to lack of fodder and the cold," said Abdul Ghani, a farmer.

Saudia freed Afghan prisoners

KABUL (Agencies): The country's Foreign Ministry said amid the general consul of Afghanistan efforts in Jeddah 314 Afghan prisoners were released by Saudi Arabia.

The Afghan prisoners who were released by: Saudi Arabia, will return to the country Afghanistan, said Afghanistan Foreign Ministry in a statement.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Afghan prisoners who were imprisoned were released not long ago with the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ghor 'Chehar Sadee' airport ready for flights



KABUL (Agencies): The Country's Ministry of Transport and Aviation informed saying that the "Chehar Sadee" airport of Ghor is ready for domestic flights.

The airport has been built by the Ministry of

Transportation and Aviation in cooperation with "Pactec" organization, said the Ministry in a statement.

The airport official was inaugurated by local officials of the Ghor and representatives of the Pactec

organization.

The Ministry termed the main purpose of the construction and operation of this airport addressing the urgent and emergency needs of the people of this province.

Issues of fresh banknotes started

KABUL (Agencies): Da Afghanistan Bank informed starting of issuing new banknotes to commercial banks in the country.

"Da Afghanistan Bank stated saying that the bank was obliged to inject new banknotes into the market and collect old ones instead.

Meanwhile, citizens of the country were complain about Mandar's banknotes in the markets.

Offering new banknotes to the market, Da

Afghanistan Bank asked the citizens of the country to take the necessary measures to prevent banknotes from being nullified before the scheduled date and to play their role in protecting this national capital.

According to the statement, the bank offered 100 million new banknotes to the country's commercial banks and collected from these banks in exchange for Mandars banknotes, which include 10, 20, 50, and 100 Afghanis.

Needy families received aid

PAKTIKA (Agencies): Local officials at the Department of Natural Disasters Management in Paktika said that Food aid is distributed to hundreds of needy families in that province.

The head of the department Mawlawi Mutiullah Mansoor said that hundreds of needy families in that province have been assisted with food and non-food items, including wheat, tarpaulin, blankets, and tents.

Iran deports more than 3000 Afghan refugees

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugee and Repatriation of Afghanistan has announced that more than 3,000 Afghan refugees were deported from Iran through Islam Qala and Pule Abrishum borders to the country.

In a statement, the Ministry of Refugee announced that 3123 Afghan migrants have been expelled from Iran on January 24th and 25th respectively. In the recent past in Iran, Afghan nationals have been detained and forcefully deported to Afghanistan.

Taliban officials have confirmed that returnees have entered Afghanistan through Herat and Nimruz provinces, and have called

on Iranian officials to respect human rights and treat Afghan refugees with decency.

Thousands of Afghans fled the country fearing their survival and the dire economic situation that has already choked the county under the ruling regime. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, currently, more than four million Afghans reside in Iran.

Iran is one of the countries accused of violating human rights by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Since the overthrow of the previous regime in August 2021, thousands of Afghans fled the country fearing persecution and

death at the hands of the Taliban.

Iran and Pakistan are the two neighboring countries

of Afghanistan which saw waves of mass migration After the Taliban returned to power.

Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran are the three countries hosting millions of Afghan nationals for years.





# Rockets, air attacks in Gaza follow deadly Israeli raid

GAZA CITY (Agencies): A deadly Israeli raid in the occupied West Bank has provoked grief and anger in Gaza. Rockets have been fired into Israel, and hundreds of Palestinians have taken part in vigils and rallies to condemn what they describe as a “massacre”.

After nine Palestinians were killed in Israel’s raid on Thursday in Jenin, armed groups in Gaza declared a state of high alert, calling the incursion “a new Israeli crime” against the Palestinian people. Following the announcement, two rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel, an attack claimed by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. They were shot down early on Friday by Israel’s Iron Dome air defence system, and Israel carried out air attacks on locations in Gaza that it said are used by armed groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Khader Habib, an Islamic Jihad spokesperson, said in statement that the Palestinian people had been “subjected to unprecedented killings and attacks by the new Israeli government in all parts of the West Bank amid the complete absence of international intervention”. “As long as the Palestinian people are alone in confrontation, we have no options but to resist with all that we have as the only way to defend ourselves,” Habib said.

Israel had not carried out a raid on the scale of its operation in Jenin in years, but it is part of intensified mil-

itary incursions by the Israeli army into the occupied West Bank, which have killed at least 200 Palestinians in the past year. Hisham al-Hato, who took part in a protest march in Gaza, said he was sending his “support and solidarity” to Jenin.

“We are very sad and angry,” al-Hato told Al Jazeera. “The Israeli crimes against our people in the West Bank must stop. Gaza and the West Bank are one heart.” Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem told Al Jazeera that what had happened in Jenin was “a war crime”.

“The occupation’s crimes will not go unpunished nor will it succeed in breaking the will of our Palestinian people,” Qassem said as concern about an escalation in the conflict grew. Reham Owda, a political analyst based in Gaza, told Al Jazeera that a major escalation is unlikely despite Palestinian factions threatening to respond to the raid in Jenin. “I think the factions’ responses are moral responses,” Owda said. “They are still adopting a policy of restraint as they do not want to divert attention from the West Bank to Gaza.”

While Israel carried out a three-day assault on Gaza in August, which killed at least 49 people, most of the focus in the past 12 months has been on the occupied West Bank. Owda says factions might occasionally carry out limited responses to Israeli actions in the West Bank, but she pre-

dicted Egyptian and Qatari mediation would likely contain the situation. Gaza still has not rebuilt from previous wars with Israel, and many residents along with Hamas, which runs the Gaza Strip, want to avoid another conflict.

“The factions want to focus on showing the spirit of popular resistance in the West Bank represented by the military groups that are active in Nabulus and Jenin,” Owda said. “They do not want to bring Gaza back into the [centre of events] as usually happens.” Still, tensions are high. Mass rallies and other events are planned on Friday in Gaza to mourn the deaths in Jenin. Crowds in central Gaza have angrily condemned the killings. Dozens of Palestinians also approached the fence that separates Gaza City from Israel, where they set tyres on fire.

Demonstrator Uday Habib told Al Jazeera that Israel “only understands the language of force”. “It is difficult to remain silent in the face of these crimes, and we in Gaza are calling on the resistance to respond and for the protests to escalate, even if we pay the price again,” Habib said. “Gaza will not abandon Jenin despite the siege [on Gaza] and all the worries we suffer from here,” he said. “It is true that we are afraid of a new war, but the options are narrow for us. The occupation still continues its aggressions. Should we just keep silent?”



ISLAMABAD: Police officials escorting PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry at court after hearing.

## Imran’s statements may land him in jail: Sana

LONDON (Agencies): Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah has said that although Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan’s arrest is not on the cards, the ex-prime minister’s statements are forcing him to think otherwise.

“At this moment, I am not in favour of having Imran arrested. However, when [I hear] the kind of statements that he’s making, I am forced to think that he should be arrested,” Sanaullah told journalists on Friday in London.

“He should be arrested once so that we can witness the kind of storm he claims of wanting to unleash,” the interior minister said, who Khan has blamed for being involved in his Wazirabad assassination bid.

However, the minister has categorically rejected the allegations. Sanaullah also said that the first information report (FIR) — which includes a seditious charge — against PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry was not objectionable.

“The people who are claiming that the case was made for victimisation should read the FIR. They’ll get to know that the election commission had registered,” Sanaullah noted. “The election commission took action against Fawad Chaudhry after he spoke against it,” the interior minister said.

## ‘PML-N does not believe in political victimization’

LONDON (APP): Adviser to the Prime Minister for Political and Public Affairs and Culture Heritage, Engr Amir Muqam has said that Pakistan Muslim League-N did not believe in political victimization of opponents and law would take its own course in Fawad Chaudhry case.

Talking to media persons in London, Amir Muqam said despite of political victimization of PMLN leaders during the Imran Khan government, his party showed great political tolerance and kept distance from all kinds of political victimization. “We want to take all political parties along to take the country out of an existing difficult economic situation”, he added.

To a question, he said the poor performance of PTI, which ruled KP for nearly nine and six months, could be judged from the fact that the Bus Rapid Project (BRT) in Peshawar was constructed on very high cost while PTI’s flagship billion trees project was taken over by the NAB that exposed Imran Khan’s claims of good governance.

He claimed that the official helicopter of the KP government during the PTI tenure was used like a rickshaw by Imran Niazi for personal political gains and used by the KP police for personal security. To a question, he said the process of caretaker setup in KP has been completed after the administration of oath to the Caretaker Chief Minister Azam Khan and his 14 members’ cabinet.

He said Imran Khan’s Wazir Abad firing drama has been exposed before the masses. He said that leveling baseless allegations against state institutions and dragging it into politics by PTI have tarnished the country’s image. To another question, he said that the menace of terrorism would be defeated with unity and national cohesion.

## ‘Economic hitman’ Imran should be in jail: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Friday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan was an “economic hitman” as his government’s wrong policies had ruined the national economy, and caused extreme inflation and depreciation of the rupee.

“Time has come to bring the economic hitman out of his home and send him to the jail for his unforgivable crimes,” the minister said in a news statement while reacting to Imran Khan’s criticism of the coalition government’s economic policies.

She said Imran Khan was a “liar” and “foreign agent”, who had been trying to present himself as

innocent. It was he who had caused extreme inflation by ruining the national economy during his government’s tenure.

“Imran Khan should be ashamed of himself while lecturing others on the economy,” she said while reiterating that he had failed to fulfill the promises of creating 10 million jobs, constructing five million homes, and ending corruption in 90 days of his government. As regards the concerns expressed by Imran Khan on the current state of the economy, she said he should have been more concerned while looting the national exchequer and Toshakhana.

The minister asked Imran Khan why he did not get scared when both his wife Bushra Bibi and

her friend Farah Gogi were minting billions for appointments at official posts in Punjab. “Why did he not get scared when he invested 3 million dollars of the Shaukat Khanum Hospital in a private business?” she questioned. Imran Khan should tell the nation what were the rates of dollar, flour, sugar, petrol, and electricity in 2018, she added. Every lie of the “foreign agent” had been exposed, she remarked.

Ironically, the “foreign agent”, who himself while in his home, was asking the people to come out of their houses, the minister concluded. “The foreign agent knows that he will no longer have the freedom to churn out lie if he comes out of his home.”

## PTI’s incompetence doubles cost of ML1: Dar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar said here on Friday that the cost of Main Line 1 (ML1) had almost doubled owing to incompetence of the previous regime of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, which failed to carry out the project in accordance with set timelines.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of Green Line Train Project here, the minister said the cost of ML1 was project at \$6 billion under \$46 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, however due to failure by the previous regime for not executing on time; it may cost now \$11 billion to \$12 billion. “This is legacy of previous government which this government inherited. They [previous government] should have actually implemented that but they could not,” the minister said.

The minister congratulated Federal Minister for Railways, Khawaja Saad Rafiq for reviving the impressive Green Line Railway service. The minister also highlighted the importance of commercialization of railway track, which he said would not only help Railways to stand on its own feet but would make it profit-earning organization to contribute in

the national economy.

He also underlined the importance for utilizing Railways for freight transport which he said could minimizing the transport cost to a great extent. The minister said that Pakistan had become 24th largest economy in 2016 however owing to PTI inability it stood at 47th number last year. He highlighted the importance of investigating the reasons behind this downfall. He said, Pakistan Muslim League (N) government had turned around economy at a time when it was predicted to default within a period of 6 months back in 2013.

He said, during the past PML(N) tenure, food inflation was just 2 percent; general inflation 4.6 percent whereas GDP was recorded at 6.8 percent with highest foreign reserves adding the Pakistan Stock Exchange was best in South Asia and 5th best performing in the world. He said, at that time all world organizations were looking towards Pakistan, which was predicted to be second choicest investment destination. He however deplored that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf ruined all this progress. The minister said, Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif has been meeting many challenges and expressed the hope that he would pull the country out of quagmire.

Meanwhile, speaking on

the occasion, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal said that railways act as a backbone for the economy, and its development was directly linked with the economic development. He said the PML-N government started ML-1 railway project under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in 2017-18 which was aimed at modernizing the railway sector in Pakistan besides increasing the speed of the trains up to 160 kilometers per hour.

However, he said the successive PTI government did not give importance to this project due to which progress on the project stopped. Ahsan Iqbal said the country’s economy must have to be based on export led growth as the exports need to jump from current \$32 billion per year to over \$100 billion in few years.

He said just as Pakistan is paying price of the global carbon emissions due to which the country had to bear loss of over \$30 billion after disastrous flooding last year, the current government is also paying the price of irrational economic decisions and policies of the previous government. However he resolved to put full force to undo the wrong policies of the previous government and to put the country’s economy again on the path of rapid growth and development.

## Hearing in Imran’s daughter case adjourned

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has accepted the request of Imran Khan’s lawyer and adjourned the hearing of a petition seeking his disqualification for concealing information about his alleged daughter.

A single bench of IHC comprising Chief Justice of IHC Justice Aamer Farooq conducted hearing of the petition wherein he had previously issued a pre-admission notice to the PTI chief and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in the petition of a citizen Muhammad Sajid, asking their counsels to help the court to decide if the petition is maintainable.

At the outset of hearing, Imran’s lawyer Salman Akram Raja prayed to the court to adjourn the case. He said he could not meet his client due to his health issues and doctors had also suggested him to do rest. The court adjourned the case till February 2.

In this matter, the petitioner is seeking disqualification of the PTI chief, an MNA from the NA-95 Mianwali-I constituency, contending that all candidates contesting elections for either national or provincial assemblies are required to furnish an affidavit with respect of their credentials and assets.

He said that one such information is about the children who are dependent on a candidate, and in this connection, Imran had wrongly mentioned two children including “Qasim Khan and Sulaiman Khan” and had omitted the third. He claimed, “The respondent no. 1 [Imran Khan] has deliberately and willfully failed to declare his daughter Tyrian White in the relevant columns of the nomination papers and the affidavit appended therewith, hence he is not sagacious, righteous, honest and a man of good character in terms of Article 62 of the Constitution.”

He also said that “Article 62 of the Constitution, as interpreted by various judgments of the superior courts, prescribes that a candidate shall only qualify to be elected as a member of the National Assembly if he is of good character and is not commonly known as one who violates Islamic Injunctions; and he has adequate knowledge of Islamic teachings and practices; obligatory duties prescribed by Islam as well as abstaining from major sins.”

The petitioner urged the court to summon the former prime minister and inquire about the reasons for the violation of Article 62 of the Constitution, which says, “a person shall not be qualified to be elected or chosen as a member of Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) unless — he is sagacious, righteous, non-profligate, honest and ameen, there being no declaration to the contrary by a court of law”.

## Alvi for linkages of local, int’l varsities to improve edu standards

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has called upon the universities and institutes of higher learnings to create meaningful and practical linkages with local as well as renowned and credible international universities to benchmark their best practices, and developments perpetually taking place in field of education, higher learning and research and development around the world.

The President expressed these views during his visit to Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), Lahore, on Friday. The President also chaired a meeting of the LUMS Advisory Board, and met with leadership of LUMS. Pro-Chancellor LUMS, Mr Abdul Razak Dawood, Rector LUMS, Mr Shahid Hussain, VC LUMS, Dr Arshad Ahmad, members of the Board of Trustees of LUMS, and senior leadership of the university attended the meeting.

During his meeting with the LUMS Advisory Board, the President urged the policy and decision-makers, regulatory bodies, and bureaucracy to overcome their traditional resistance and inertia against innovation and development, and make quick and timely decisions and ensure speedy and timebound implementation to help Pakistan become a modern and progressive country.

Dr Arif Alvi advised the University to continuously scan the international educational horizon to identify the new and emerging technologies developed and employed around the world and link them with their curricula to create quality graduates equipped with markable skills and capable of coping with the challenges of the modern world as well as harness the opportunities available in the country and abroad.

The President said that innovations

and improvements in the ICT sector had caused an explosion of knowledge and abundance of information which was available to everyone with the touch of a button on smart devices which has eliminated the need for memorization and rote learning. He underscored that universities should enable their students to work hard to become proficient in their skills, create new knowledge and skills, and with sound judgement, critical and analytical thinking skills strengthen their niche in the competitive world.

The President urged the university to employ out of the box solutions including combination of brick and mortar, hybrid and online teaching capabilities to increase their capacity and reach to all those FSC-passed students in such a manner that none of the FSC passed inspiring students for higher education were refused admission on any pretext or reason. He emphasized that online and hybrid education was easier, accessible, cheaper, and conveniently scalable and provided convenient and hassle-free mode of teaching to a much larger body of student without constraint of time and space and when this mode was combined with “open access knowledge and information” it became even more productive.

The President asserted that research carried out by the developed countries especially during COVID-19 lockdown has proved that online and hybrid modes of education were successful without compromising the integrity of the education discipline and quality and proficiency of the graduating students. He added that many universities even in USA were increasingly offering online courses which has reached to 50% of total courses with much lesser cost. He advised the universities to impart education to the students by short courses without comprising their quality to make them available for

industries, businesses and services sector which were anxiously looking for trained and proficient human resource.

The President asserted that the IT sector world over was now recruiting employees not only on the basis of their degrees but more so basing upon their skills and ability to deliver the required products or services. He regretted that due to skewed policies of the past, Pakistan lost quality human resources due to brain drain to greener pastures which deprived the country of their intellect, knowledge and expertise which was direly needed for progress and development of the country and called upon the university to devise ways and means to benefit from their services to improve their business and educational processes.

Later, the President was briefed by the LUMS leadership about its strategic priorities, future development plans, issues in Pakistan’s higher education sector, and LUMS’ contributions towards providing quality higher education in Pakistan. It was informed that LUMS possessed a national footprint and over 17,000 students from different areas of the country had graduated from the university so far. It was also informed that LUMS planned to increase the volume of online course content to 25%, and that the university had contributed towards policymaking in the country, especially in the energy sector.

It was stated that the university was actively engaged in collaborations with the government and the industry to focus on the issues of socio-economic development being faced by the country. The President appreciated LUMS for providing quality higher education and fulfilling the country’s needs for educated and skilled professionals, adding that Pakistan needed more iconic higher education institutions.

## Tareen gets relief in money laundering case

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Judicial magistrate of Lahore on Friday ordered to quash money laundering case registered against Jahangir Tareen and his son Ali Tareen.

The orders were passed by the judicial magistrate in light of the report submitted by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). The FIA investigation officer submitted a report in the court of the judicial magistrate of Lahore on the charges of money laundering against Jahangir Tareen and his son Ali Tareen.

The FIA in its report stated that allegations of money laundering were not proved in the inquiry, all the transactions were done in accordance with the Security Exchange Companies of Pakistan Act. The allegations against Jahangir Tareen and Ali Tareen are not true as the accused have provided documentary evidence regarding the transactions of all the amounts. The FIA registered two separate cases against father, son duo over the charges of allegedly committing fraud and money-laundering worth Rs3.14 billion.

The cases against them were registered under PPC Sections 406 (criminal breach of trust), 420 (cheating of public shareholders) and 109 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), read with Sections 3/4 of the Anti-Money Laundering Act.

## One killed in attack on Azerbaijan embassy in Iran

TEHRAN (Agencies): A gunman stormed Azerbaijan’s embassy in Tehran on Friday, killing the mission’s head of security in an attack Iran said was motivated by personal reasons but Baku labeled an act of “terrorism”. Azerbaijan’s foreign ministry said “responsibility” for the shooting, which also wounded two embassy security guards, lies with Iran — with spokesman Ayxan Hacizada telling media in his country a recent anti-Azerbaijani campaign in Iran had “encouraged the attack”.

Hacizada later told Turkey’s state broadcaster TRT Haber that embassy staff were “being evacuated from Iran”. Leaked video footage from the embassy, widely shared on social media and published by Iranian media, shows two men parking a car and entering the building in eastern Tehran, before a speeding car approaches and crashes into the rear of their vehicle.

A man holding what appears to be a semi-automatic rifle is seen emerging from the second car and motioning to a security guard before forcing his way into the embassy. Another unverified video apparently filmed inside the embassy shows two men entering and one of them opening the door in response to the commotion outside, allowing a gunman to barge into the building and open fire. One man appears to be struck in the torso by a bullet and col-

lapses behind an internal door while the assailant is tackled by another guard.

An AFP photo shows what appears to be bullet holes in the front door of the embassy. Following the attack, Azerbaijan’s foreign ministry said the diplomatic mission’s head of security was killed and that two guards were wounded but in a “satisfactory” condition, adding that an investigation had been launched. Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev said on Twitter that the attack was an act of “terrorism” and named the dead security officer as First Lieutenant Orkhan Rizvan.

Tehran’s police chief General Hossein Rahimi said the attacker had been arrested and was an Iranian man married to an Azerbaijani woman. “He claims his wife has been held at the embassy for nine months,” Rahimi said on television. Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said Tehran strongly condemned the attack, adding that the motivations behind it were “personal”.

In a joint statement, Iran’s foreign and interior ministries also insisted that “based on the evidence and preliminary observations the attacker fired with a very personal motive”. Early reports in Iranian media indicated the gunman had entered the embassy with his two young children, but they could not be seen in the videos shared online. Another video posted on social media shows the

body of a man lying in a pool of blood inside the embassy, surrounded by medical and security personnel.

A paramedic is heard saying in Azeri that the person “has no vital signs”. Iran is home to millions of Turkic-speaking, ethnic Azerbaijanis and it has long accused Baku of fomenting separatist sentiments inside its territory. Relations between the two countries have traditionally been sour, with the former Soviet republic a close ally of Iran’s historical rival Turkey.

## Pakistan rejects media reports

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office spokesperson has rejected the media reports regarding Indian proposal concerning the Indus Waters Treaty.

In a statement on Friday, the spokesperson said a Court of Arbitration is holding its first hearing in The Hague on Pakistan’s objections to Kishanganga and Ratle Hydroelectric Projects. The spokesperson said the Court of Arbitration has been set up under the relevant provisions of the Indus Waters Treaty and such media reports should not divert attention from the important proceedings of this Court.