

**KSA grieved over loss**  
ISLAMABAD (INP): Saudi Arabia has expressed profound grief over loss of more than 41 precious lives in a road accident in district Lasbela of Balochistan. In a statement received here on Sunday, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kingdom of Saudi Arabia offered sincere condolence and sympathies of the Kingdom to the bereaved families and government of Pakistan on tragic mishap.

 @thefrontierpost

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

**Public holiday declared**  
ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad administration has announced a public holiday today (Monday) in honor of the visit of the President of UAE. The announcement was made by DC, who stated that a notification regarding the holiday has been issued. However, certain essential services, such as the CDA, SNGPL, IESC and hospital staff, will not be affected by the holiday and will continue to work as usual.

Vol. XXXIX No. 14 Regd. No. 241 RAJAB 07 1444 -- MONDAY, JANUARY 30 2023 PESHAWAR EDITION 12 PAGES Price. 20

# 41 dead as passenger coach falls into ravine in Lasbela

LASBELA (INP): At least 41 people were killed after a passenger coach fell into a ravine in Balochistan's Lasbela on Sunday morning, according to officials. Lasbela Assistant Commissioner Hamza Anjum, while confirming the incident, that the vehicle, with nearly 48 passengers on board, was travelling from Quetta to Karachi. "Due to speeding, the coach crashed into the pillar of a bridge while taking a U-turn near Lasbela. The vehicle subsequently careened into a ravine and then caught fire," he said. Anjum added that three people, including a child and a woman, have been rescued alive. However, one of the injured persons succumbed to his injuries on the way to the hospital. The officer feared that the number of casualties could further increase to 48. He added that the bodies recovered from the wrecked bus were unidentifiable and DNA testing will be done for the identification of the deceased. Ramshackle highways, lax safety measures and reckless driving contribute to Pakistan's dire road safety record. Passenger buses are frequently crammed to capacity and seatbelts are not commonly worn, meaning high death tolls from single-vehicle accidents are common. According to World Health Organisation estimates, more than 27,000 people were killed on Pakistan's roads in 2018. In June last year, at least 22 people were killed, including nine members of a family, when a passenger van fell into a ravine near Qila Saifullah district of northern Balochistan. The van, carrying 23 passengers and en route to Zhob from Loralai, fell into the 200-foot-deep ravine when it reached the Akhtarzai area. The lone survivor — a 13-year-old boy — was taken to hospital in a critical condition, said Hafiz Muhammad Qasim Kakar, the deputy commissioner of Qila Saifullah. **Balochistan CM takes notice of Bela Road accident, seeks report in 24 hours:** Chief Minister Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo took notice of Bela area of Lasbela Road mishap which left 41 dead and four injured and directed concerned official to submit report in 24 hours on Sunday. He also expressed his

sorrow over the losses of precious lives in the incident and the increase in traffic accidents on Quetta-Karachi Highways. He also instructed the Commissioner Kalat Division to review the situation of the incident and to submit report of the accident in 24 hours. The CM also directed Commission Kalat Regional Transport Department to take measure to prevent road mishap which increased on National Highway Karachi-Quetta so that protection of passengers lives would be ensured during traveling. He said that strict action would be taken against over speeding vehicles and those drivers involved in violation of traffic rule saying that implementation of traffic rule was essential for preventing of accident on National Highway. Drivers and transport companies guilty of speeding should be punished and fined for interest of traffic. **President, PM express deep grief over loss of lives** ISLAMABAD (INP): President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed their deep grief and sorrow over loss of lives in a tragic bus accident in Lasbela, Balochistan. The president and the prime minister expressed their condolences to the bereaved families and prayed for the high ranks of the departed souls, President Secretariat and PM Office Media Wings said in separate press releases. They also prayed for the early recovery of the injured people. The president stressed upon taking of practical steps to avert the occurrence of such incidents in the future. The prime minister directed for provision of all available medical facilities to the injured ones. At least 40 people including children and women died when a passenger coach plunged into a ravine near Chanki Stop area of Lasbela on early Sunday morning. A Karachi-bound passenger coach from Quetta carrying over 47 passengers plunged into a gorge and caught fire. As a result, 40 passengers, including women and children were burnt to death on the spot.



ISLAMABAD: Welcoming banners installed at Constitution Avenue during visit of President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan at Federal Capital.

## 11 seminary students drown in Tanda Dam

KOHAT (APP): Eleven children studying in a religious seminary drowned in Tanda Dam near Shahpur while 11 children were rescued, out of which four were in critical condition. An ill-fated boat carrying 25 to 30 students aged seven to 14 was on a day trip from a local seminary when it overturned in the water of the Tanda Dam's lake, police said on Sunday. The teams of Rescue 1122 Kohat, Peshawar, Karak and Hangu reached the spot and started the rescue operation. They rescued 11 children and shifted them to DHQ Hospital Kohat. It was said that a total of seven ambulances, four boats, two recovery vehicles and more than 40 personnel were participating in the rescue operation. The operation to find the bodies of the rest of the students was going on.

## Govt crushed masses by hiking POL prices: Imran

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman and Ex-PM Imran Khan on Sunday said the 'corrupt' and 'incompetent' PDM government has ruined Pakistan's economy. In his tweet, Imran Khan said the government has crushed the masses and salaried class by hiking petroleum prices. Hike in electricity and gas prices and 35 percent unprecedented inflation expected with Rs200 billion mini-budget. It may be noted that Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Sunday announced Rs35/litre hike in the prices of petrol and diesel. In a televised address, Ishaq Dar said that 11 percent increase was witnessed in the prices of petrol products in the international market. Dar further announced that the prices of kerosene oil and light diesel oil have been increased by Rs18 per litre.

## Sedition complaint lodged against Ali Gandapur

DI KHAN (INP): A citizen of Dera Ismail Khan has filed a complaint against former federal minister Ali Amin Gandapur for allegedly spreading hatred against the state through provocative statements on social media. According to media reports the citizen wrote a letter to the assistant director of the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) Cyber-Crime Wing in Dera Ismail Khan. The complaint states that the former federal minister made a "sinister attempt" to "incite" common people against the state and spread chaos through rebellious rhetoric against the government on social media. The complainant demanded that legal action be taken against the former federal minister on the matter.

## PM calls for global unity to fight Islamophobia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday called upon the civilized world to strongly condemn the highly offensive acts of desecration of the Holy Quran. On his Twitter handle, the prime minister said, "The highly offensive desecration of the Holy Quran by a Danish politician is the third such incident in a row that should be strongly condemned by the civilized world."

He further said that the need for global unity to fight Islamophobia couldn't be more urgent than it was now. "We are deeply hurt," the prime minister posted. **PM felicitates newly elected Punjab BC office bearers:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday extended his best wishes for newly elected Vice Chairman, Punjab Bar Council Basharat Ullah Khan and Chairman Executive Committee Tahir Shabir. On his Twitter handle, the prime minister said that Asma Jehangir Group had always stood firm for the rule of law and strengthening of democracy in the country. In a related tweet, he also assured of his government's unflinching support for the rule of law and welfare of legal fraternity.

Council Basharat Ullah Khan and Chairman Executive Committee Tahir Shabir. On his Twitter handle, the prime minister said that Asma Jehangir Group had always stood firm for the rule of law and strengthening of democracy in the country. In a related tweet, he also assured of his government's unflinching support for the rule of law and welfare of legal fraternity.

He further said that the need for global unity to fight Islamophobia couldn't be more urgent than it was now. "We are deeply hurt," the prime minister posted. **PM felicitates newly elected Punjab BC office bearers:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday extended his best wishes for newly elected Vice Chairman, Punjab Bar Council Basharat Ullah Khan and Chairman Executive Committee Tahir Shabir. On his Twitter handle, the prime minister said that Asma Jehangir Group had always stood firm for the rule of law and strengthening of democracy in the country. In a related tweet, he also assured of his government's unflinching support for the rule of law and welfare of legal fraternity.

## Prices of petrol, HSD increase by Rs35 per liter

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Sunday announced that the prices of 'Petrol and High-Speed Diesel (HSD)' have been increased by Rs. 35 per liter in the country. Similarly, the prices of kerosene oil and light diesel have been increased by Rs 18 per liter and these prices will be implemented from today at 11 am on January 29. Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Ishaq Dar said this while announcing the new Petroleum Prices on Pakistan Television News. He said that rumours were circulating on social media and other media for the past few hours that an

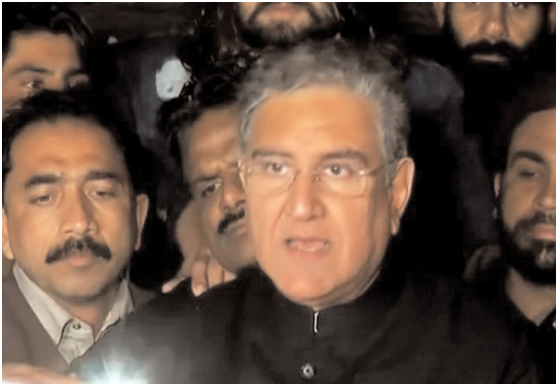
increase of 80 rupees per liter is expected in the price of petrol, which were not true. The Minister said that due to these rumours, an artificial shortage of petrol was created in the market. And thus, keeping in mind the anxiety in the market, the announcement of petroleum prices on the instructions of OGRA was necessary. He said that the government had to take these measures due to the devaluation of the rupee and the 11 percent increase in oil prices in the international market. The minister said that currently there is plenty of petrol in the country and due to these rumours, efforts are being made to create an artificial shortage

of petrol. Ishaq Dar said that this initiative of the government will end the artificial scarcity of petroleum in the country. He said that from today the new price of petrol in the country will be Rs 249.80, high-speed diesel Rs 262.80, kerosene Rs 187 and light diesel Rs 189.83 per liter. He said that the government did not increase the price of oil in the last 4 months despite the fluctuations in the oil prices in the world market. Ishaq Dar said that in the last 4 months, our government has reduced the prices of petrol and high-speed diesel by Rs 20 rupees and the price of kerosene oil and light-speed diesel by Rs 30 rupees.

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Sunday said that Chairman PTI Imran Khan would contest in by-elections on 33 seats of National Assembly. Talking to media men after the party's core committee meeting he said that the party decided that PTI would participate in by-polls for the 33 seats. Shah said that Chairman Imran Khan would be the party's sole candidate on all 33 NA seats and lawmakers earlier elected on those seats would submit paperwork as "covering candidates". The NA seats had fallen vacant earlier this month when NA Speaker Raja

Pervaiz Ashraf accepted the resignations of PTI lawmakers and Awami Muslim League (AML) Chief Sheikh Rashid. The PTI resigned en masse in April last year after the ouster of Imran Khan as the prime minister, but only 11 resignations were accepted in July. Later, as the party tried to stage a comeback to the house, the speaker began accepting their resignations - and in a couple of days, he accepted 113 more, including the 33. In October last year, the Chairman PTI Imran Khan also set a record when he won six NA seats for the PTI in a by-election that was seen as a direct contest between the former ruling party and the current ruling coalition of the PDM parties, which also grabbed two seats. "The PTI will remain on the political ground and seek the help of the masses. When the people got a chance in July last year, despite our opponents being in government, they ensured our mandate and [made] Imran Khan victori-



ties, which also grabbed two seats. "The PTI will remain on the political ground and seek the help of the masses. When the people got a chance in July last year, despite our opponents being in government, they ensured our mandate and [made] Imran Khan victori-

ous," Qureshi said. "The nation will give a clear message on March 16: the nation completely trusts in the leadership of Imran Khan and it stands with the PTI. The people will also voice their reservations against the group that's been imposed on us," he added.

## Bilawal grieves over loss of lives in Lasbela bus crash

KARACHI (APP): The Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Sunday expressed his heartfelt grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives in a tragic accident in Lasbela area of Balochistan. In a condolence message, Bilawal Bhutto expressed sympathy with bereaved families and prayed to Allah Almighty for the high ranks of the departed souls. He said that the entire country was saddened over the tragic accident in which a passenger bus plunged

into a ravine and caught fire on Sunday morning, resulting deaths of at least 40 people including children and women. Bilawal said that an investigation should be carried out to ascertain its facts to avoid any such accident in the future. **Interior Minister expresses grief over loss of lives in Lasbela road mishap:** Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan on Sunday expressed grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives in the tragic bus accident that occurred in the Lasbela area of Balochistan.

In a condolence message, he sympathized with members of bereaved families and prayed for early recovery of the injured. "We are standing with the bereaved families in the time of grief and sorrow," he said, praying to Allah Almighty to rest the departed souls in eternal peace and grant courage to bereaved families to bear the irreparable loss with equanimity. **Jamali expresses grief over loss of lives in Lasbela accident:** Acting Governor of Balochistan Mir Jan Muhammad Jamali expressed deep grief and

sorrow over the loss of human lives as a result of a traffic accident near Bela area of Lasbela district on Sunday. In one of his statements, the Acting Governor directed the concerned authorities to provide all medical facilities to the injured immediately. Expressing his condolences with the bereaved families, he said that in this hour of grief, we all share the grief of the families of the deceased. He prayed for forgiveness for those who lost their lives and for the speedy recovery of the injured.

## Iran says it repelled drone attack

TEHRAN (INP): Iran repelled a drone attack on a military site in central Isfahan province, the defence ministry said early Sunday according to the IRNA news agency. "An unsuccessful attack was carried out using (drones) ... on one of the workshop complexes of the ministry of defence," it said, adding that the strike late Saturday night caused only minor damage to the roof of a building but no casualties. The announcement of the attack comes at a tense

time in Iran, which has been rocked by protests over the death of Mahsa Amini in September, tensions over its nuclear programme and accusations by some countries that Tehran has been supplying drones to Russia for the war in Ukraine. The ministry said one of the drones was destroyed by the site's anti-aircraft defence system, while the other two exploded. "The attack, which occurred around 11:30 pm on Saturday, did not cause any disruption to the operation

of the complex," it said. A video widely shared on social media, the authenticity of which AFP could not verify, shows a loud explosion at the site and images of emergency vehicles then heading towards the area. The deputy governor of Isfahan province, Mohammad Reza Jan-Nesari, also said on television there had been "no casualties", adding that "the cause of the incident is under investigation." Authorities did not elaborate on the activities at the

targeted site, north of the city of Isfahan. Iran has several known nuclear research sites in the region, including a uranium conversion plant. In April 2021, Tehran announced that it had started producing 60 percent enriched uranium at the Natanz site in Isfahan province. Negotiations to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, known by its acronym JCPOA, between Iran, the European Union and six major powers, stalled after the United States exited in 2018.

## ‘IK’s allegations against Zardari baseless, false’

SIALKOT (APP): Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that Imran Khan levelled baseless and false allegations against former president Asif Ali Zardari that he wanted to get him killed. Addressing a press conference at his residence here on Sunday, he said that there was fear of bloodshed in politics due to baseless accusations of Imran Khan against Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Zardari. He said if anything bad happens, Imran Khan would be responsible for it. Kh Asif said PPP was the party which offered countless sacrifices in the war against terrorism, and even Banazir Bhutto was martyred while fighting the war on terror. He said the history was witness to the fact that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leaders had given their blood for peace and democracy in the country, weather it was the execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto or the martyrdom of Benazir Bhutto. He said despite execution and killings, the PPP did not resort to violence in the past. "Today, the party has its government in one province, it is any ally in the federal government, and a major component of

the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)," the federal minister said. He said that by accusing Asif Zardari, Imran Khan had taken another stance, which might cause chaos in the country. Kh Asif said Imran Khan's statement might be life-threatening for the PPP leadership. He said Imran Khan was responsible for country's economic disaster, adding that all the cards Imran Khan had played in politics had failed. He said that Imran Khan used to blame the USA for bringing down his government, but now he was accusing caretaker chief minister Mohsin Naqvi of it. Kh Asif said there was a clear contradiction in Imran Khan's words and actions. The minister said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had resigned from the assembly and Imran Khan said that he did not want to sit with thieves and dacoits. After that, sometimes he said to withdraw resignations from assembly and sometimes he said that he will not sit in assembly. He said that when the PTI's resignations started being accepted, Imran Khan said "we are coming back to the assembly". He said: "I am against political victimisation, but

everyone knows that during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) regime, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leadership including he himself and the PPP leaders were in jail. He said during the four-year rule of PTI, false cases were registered against the PMLN leaders. Kh Asif said that no one targeted the PTI for political reasons. They are threatening the courts, abusing institutions and abusing the army chief and if they would threaten the national institutions, the law would take its own course. He said Imran Khan was leading the country towards bloodshed and chaos. Kh Asif said the PTI had an assembly platform which they rejected and now they were asking the institutions to facilitate negotiations. They should do politics on their own and stop calling the institutions, because no one would listen to them now. In response to a question, he said the entire PDM leadership, including Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari, were arrested in false cases, but Imran Khan was facing genuine cases. "Therefore, in my opinion, legal action must be taken against those who looted the country's wealth," he added.



### 351 kite-flyers, sellers, manufacturers held in Lahore

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore police arrested 351 people including kite-flyers, sellers and manufacturers, and registered cases against them during the first month of the current year.

According to a spokesperson for the Lahore police, a campaign against violations of the Kite Flying Act continued throughout the month. Police recovered more than 3,500 kites, more than 500 string rolls from the accused along with pellets and merchandise during the crackdown.

The City division police arrested 115 accused, Cantt division 53, Civil Lines division 23, Sadar division 22, Iqbal Town 65 and Modal Town division police arrested 73 accused.

Capital City Police Officer Additional IG Bilal Siddique Kamyana issued directions to the police officers and officials to ensure implementation on the Kite Flying Act in their respective areas. He said drone technology should also be used to capture kite flyers in narrow streets and thickly populated areas of the city. Parents should play their role to discourage their children involved in the dangerous activity of kite flying.

### Rangers arrests two street criminals

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Rangers Sindh arrested two accused, allegedly involved in street crimes and robberies from Orangi Town area of megalopolis.

According to a spokesman for Rangers on Sunday, the accused identified as Wajid Ali and Bilal were escaping after snatching a mobile phone from a citizen and were arrested upon indication of a citizen after a chase by the personnel on patrolling.

During the initial investigation, the accused confessed to snatching more than 150 mobile phones, cash of more than Rs. 0.1 million and stealing a motorcycle on over 100 robberies in different areas of the city. They also confessed to committing a robbery in SITE Town and a video of the incident also made rounds over social media, in which they could be easily identified.

Raids were being carried out to apprehend other accomplices of the accused. The arrested accused had been handed over to the police for further legal proceedings.

### IRSA releases 44,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 44,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 44,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1494.32 feet and was 96.32 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,400 cusecs while outflow as 25,000 cusecs.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1128.65 feet, which was 78.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 7,200 cusecs and 100 cusecs respectively.

## ‘Laborer deserve livelihood with dignity, state responsible to fulfill their needs’

KARACHI (INP): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi Ameer Engr Hafiz Naeemur Rehman has said that each and every laborer deserves enough livelihood with dignity as the state is responsible for provision of standard education, health facilities and job opportunities for all.

These views were expressed him here on Sunday while addressing a reception held in his honor, in the backdrop of the party’s splendid victory in the local bodies polls, by the National Labor Federation (NLF) — a representative body of the working class in Pakistan. Hafiz Naeemur Rehman held the ruling class elite responsible for imposing slavery on 220 million people in the country and assured the laborers of full support by the mayor’s office in Karachi, if the JI forms the local government.

Holding feudal rulers of Sindh responsible for miseries of the industrial sector in Karachi and other urban areas of the province, he said that the laborers and industrialists will have to come on the same page for a joint struggle against those responsible for economic bloodbath in the industrial sector. The JI Karachi chief also urged the laborers to remain united against the section of the elite political class responsible for usurping rights of the common men. He said that the tiny minority in the country has violated the rights of every class in the society. He urged the NLP to act as an umbrella for the working class for a joint comprehensive struggle against the ruling elite responsible for the miseries of 98 percent of populace

in the country.

He further said that the JI has always supported the hard workers, providing lifeline to the trade and industry sector of the country and will continue to do so in order to get the labor class its all due rights. He credited the laborers for running the economic nerve of the country and paid a rich tribute to them. Talking about the recent developments in the political arena of Karachi, Hafiz Naeem said that Karachi and Karachiites expressed their trust in the JI and its leadership, whereas the Pakistan People Party was employing nefarious tactics to steal the mandate of Karachiites as always. However, he said, the JI will fight for its mandate and several positive developments will come to surface in the days to come as the Election Commission of Pakistan is going to declare its decision over the issue of form discrepancies in the results pronounced by returning officers (ROs) and district returning officers (DROs) and the form 11.

He further said that the JI has the capacity to take all political parties on board for the betterment of the city and a bright future of the megalopolis. Engr Naeemur Rehman said that the JI was contacting all political quarters in Karachi to develop a consensus for the development and progress of the city of lights. The JI leader also made it clear that the JI will expose them with full force if the PPP or any other quarter opted to hold an auction in order to purchase consciences of elected representatives in the local government elections.

### Dolphin, PRU arrest 59 POs, 244 criminals

LAHORE (APP): The Dolphin Squad and Police Response Unit (PRU) of the Lahore police arrested 59 proclaimed offenders (POs), 244 hardened criminals and 45 court absconders during the last week, a spokesperson said here on Sunday.

The two mobile wings of the police responded to 1,791 calls, received on the helpline 15. During the stop-and-search operations, 93 motorcycles and 283,000 persons were checked. The police teams arrested 51 persons allegedly involved in theft and robbery incidents, and recovered 13 motorcycles, 14 mobile-

### Customs seize huge quantity of liquor

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Customs authorities on Sunday seized a huge quantity of foreign brand liquor during a raid conducted at a house located in Gulshan-e-Maymar area of the megalopolis and arrested two accused.

According to the agency’s spokesman, the Collectorate of Customs Enforcement Karachi’s anti-smuggling squad (ASO) acting on a tip-off raided a house in Gulshan-e-Maymar area and confiscated foreign liquor worth Rs15 million. Two accused were arrested and a case was also registered under the Customs Act. Further investigations were underway.

## Residents awaiting action against encroachments

RAWALPINDI (APP): The inaction by the concerned departments of the city government against the illegal encroachments is contrary to the tall claims of the Punjab Government about ensuring smooth traffic flow as the setting up of illicit stalls and hand-carts seems everywhere.

Under the Punjab Local Government rules, no encroachment could be established on the state land, and the Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi is responsible for removing all encroachments from the city areas.

According to a survey, the encroachers had left no place in the city bazaars where customers could visit markets. “Illegal car parking is regular, even in the presence of traffic cops, creating massive traffic jams and causing accidents while proscribed motorcycles parking around all city shopping centres including the Moti Bazar, Raja Bazar, Circular road China market, bara Bazar, Saddar,

Tench Bhatta and other areas of the city and cantonment had made the situation so bad that even a pedestrian or women with children could not move.

A cart vendor, Jumma Khan of the Raja Bazaar area, told APP that ‘Monthly’ was given regularly to set up illegal encroachments to shut the concerned officials’ mouths, close their eyes and for turning a deaf ear to the issue. He added that no one could dare to establish illegal stalls without the authority’s backing.

When contacted, no official of Municipal Administration was available to comment on the issue; however, an official, on condition of not being named, admitted that ‘Monthly’ was taken and was provided to higher officials for not taking action against encroachments.

Meanwhile, President Traders Welfare Association, Punjab, Sharjeel Mir, said that if the increasing encroachments

problem does not resolve, traders will be left with no option but to quit businesses.

Mir urged the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner to look into the long-standing issue and rectify it before it worsens.

President Moti Bazar Chaudhry Muhammad Iqbal asked the metropolitan corporation and traffic police to play their due role in removing the encroachment from the city’s busiest roads and demanded the government devise a plan to shift wholesale markets from the city to the proposed ring road to ease traffic congestion.

He said the vegetable vendors had occupied half the road by placing vegetables in front of their shops in the Bansa Bazar and Raja Bazar areas, hindering traffic flow. “It is the need of the hour to construct parking plazas in city markets at the earliest, and strict action must be taken against the encroachers,” he demanded.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunhwa Haji Ghulam Ali presiding over a meeting of developmental projects at Governor's House.

## Govt committed to hold free, fair elections: Minister

LAHORE (APP): The Caretaker Provincial Minister for Communication and Works, Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Bilal Afzal has decided not to take government incentives in view of the economic situation facing the country.

In this regard, he will not avail salary, official vehicle, fuel, protocol and other benefits, in order to set an example and to ease the

national exchequer.

Bilal Afzal reiterated his determination to satisfactorily discharge the responsibility given by caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, said a hand-out issued here on Sunday.

The minister said that the caretaker government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, was determined to conduct free and fair elections within the

stipulated period. Bilal Afzal further said that in the light of Mr. Mohsin Naqvi’s leadership and instructions, every effort would be made to complete the ongoing development projects in his departments in a timely manner. Apart from this, issues faced by the excise department for the past several months would also be solved on a priority basis, he stated.

### Police arrest six ‘robbers’ in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): Police successfully arrested six accused robbers in a search operation including a mobile software engineer in Karachi.

According to police officials, Bilal Colony and Sir Syed police in a joint operation arrested six alleged robbers including an expert mobile phone software engineer. In a statement, the police said the arrested software engineer – identified as Atta – is an expert in changing the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) of snatched mobile phones.

The police officials claimed that the other arrested accused Sattar and Deedar are main suspects of the white corolla robber gang. The police added that the arrested accused were most active in District Central.

The accused had recently looted seven million rupees in the Sachal area a few days ago. Meanwhile, the raiding team also recovered pistols, 15 stolen mobile phones, one laptop, and a computer from the possession of the arrested muggers. Moreover, the accused have been transferred to the concerned police station for further investigation.

### 612 accused arrested

KARACHI (APP): Karachi Police in its drive against criminals arrested as many as 612 alleged accused last week from different parts of the megalopolis.

About 36 accused were arrested in injured condition in 22 encounters while an accused was killed and several other accused were arrested.

## Almarah Foundation establishes educ institute for deserving children

LAHORE (APP): Almarah Foundation, a non-governmental organization on Sunday established another educational institution of international standard for deserving children in the provincial capital.

The education institute for deserving children was established in Rajput Town, a private housing society, for the best education and training of young children.

The institution’s building was inaugurated by social worker Abrarul Haq, National Highways and Motorways Police (NH&MP) DIG Mehboob Aslam, American Honorary Consul Shahid Ahmed Khan and Chairperson Almarah Trust Sophia Waraich at a ceremony which was

attended by a large number of local dignitaries. On the occasion, American Honorary Consul Shahid Ahmed Khan appreciated the progress of Almarah Foundation for the welfare and uplift of deserving children and said that it was a challenging task to look after the poor children and orphans, however, the Almarah Foundation had effectively took the task to serve such like children.

In his address, Abrarul Haq said that despite the paucity of time, he felt it necessary to participate in the event and support this noble cause.

DIG Mehboob Aslam said the mission of Almarah Foundation had been carrying out for the last twenty seven years

was commendable and urged the participants to participate at maximum level in this cause to serve humanity.

Addressing on the occasion, Almarah Foundation chairperson Sophia Waraich said that the children entering the school would get the same quality of education as accessible to children of upper class segment.

She said that Almarah Foundation was aimed to serve humanity especially vulnerable and orphans without any kind of discrimination to contribute in their well-being of health, education, financial sustainability, livelihood, shelter, by means of resource mobilization and developing partnership with NGOs.

## Three Jewels fading from Lahore’s architectural crown

LAHORE (APP): Once a center stage for Mughal emperors and the Sikh dynasty after Delhi, Lahore enjoyed unmatched status due to its peculiar grand and awe-inspiring cultural heritage revealing centuries-old civilizations.

Illed with some four centuries of majestic, far more than any other single city in Pakistan, Lahore has been boasting of the standards set by Mughal rulers through great edifices constructed to manifest their dignity and relics.

After Mughals (1526–1799); the Sikh (1799–1849) and the British rulers (1849–1947) continued adding to the beauty of this city by constructing serene tombs, mosques, gardens and other buildings that attract millions of tourists each year.

But as the time took its course and many among of the grand pieces of architecture either faded away or totally disappeared from the map of this historic city with a few fast losing their beauty.

Tombs of Empress Nur Jahan, Nadira Begum and Khan-e-Jahan Bahadur Kokaltash are among those few surviving against changing weathers and climatic impacts needing urgent attention of authorities.

The Tomb of Nur Jahan, a 17th-century mausoleum, is built nearby the tomb of Emperor Jahangir, Asif Khan and Akbari Sarai. The red sandstone mausoleum forms part of an ensemble of monuments in Lahore’s Shahdara Bagh.

Nur Jahan’s tomb was separated from other monuments by open fields which were later interrupted by construction of the Lahore-Peshawar Railway Line during the British era, damaging its beauty.

As the time passed, floors and walls of the tomb incurred damage with geometric and floral patterns lining the monument’s domes eroding and edges of marble flooring chipping off due to improper care of this edifice.

Nafees Omer, an artisan working on the site revealed that bringing this architecture to original form was a gigantic task as compared to an easy task of constructing something afresh. “The tomb stands in the center of a Persian-style Chaharbagh. The original landscape and premises that included roses, tulips, and jasmine gardens, no longer survive,” Nafees said.

Another edifice is the tomb of Nadira Begum, wife of Dara Shikoh who served as the governor of Lahore during the 1640s. In 1659, Dara Shikoh lost a war against his brother Aurangzeb and tried to flee to Iran along with his wife. But, Nadira died of exhaustion and dysentery during journey and was buried in Lahore near the shrine of Hazrat Mian Mir, whom they both considered their “spiritual guide.”

A marvelous tomb was built in her memory that today stands in a dilapidated condition and is believed to be robbed of all semi-precious stones and costly marble during Ranjit Singh’s regime.

“The tomb, later on, fell prey to contemporary deterioration and vandalism, evident from gaudy graffiti on the mausoleum, with the ugly look of wall chalking,” said Mohsin Raza, a resident of Mian Mir locality.

Comparatively unlike other Mughal tombs, this tomb was neither surrounded by gardens nor it had a dome and was built in a sunken water tank. “Today it is in an overall dilapidated condition and is direly needed to be repaired besides refurbishing old missing calligraphy work,” Mohsin said. Then there is tomb of Khan-e-Jahan Bahadur Kokaltash. In contrast to many other buildings of that period, this octagonal tomb was composed of cut brickwork without any use of red sandstone.

It also appears miserable due to countless holes in facade and dome and the marble work that was stripped away with the passage of

time. The traces of tomb’s original elegance are still witnessed in beautifully carved stucco muqarnas (stalactite squinches), embellishing tops of the outer alcoves as its overall design is similar to Ali Mardan Khan’s tomb located a few kilometers to the North.

The dome of this monument was later repaired by the archaeology department, supporting it by a modern design brick pillar. But, muqarnas at the tops of alcoves are still damaged and need urgent restoration and renovation.

Commenting on the situation, Director General Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) Kamran Lashari informed that the Authority had been diligently working for years on numerous conservation projects for preserving and reviving the glory of Mughal-era buildings.

“Over the years, we have been working on various architectural projects and gone a long way in restoring the heritage in this historic city,” Lashari said.

“Lahore has World Heritage sites comprising around 2,000 wonderful buildings. These buildings display a wide range of architectural features that reflect Lahore’s centuries-old heritage,” he added.

Lahore, being the largest and an important city in Punjab province had witnessed many eras, dynasties and rulers. Each dynasty or ruler left behind rich relics of culture and traditions. The Tombs of Nur Jahan, Nadira Begum and Khan-e-Jahan Bahadur Kokaltash are the wonderful jewels in the crown of this centuries-old city. But, their depletion pains historians, art lovers and tourists.

Although the Punjab government has allocated Rs 600 million (\$5.5 million) for fiscal 2022-23 for repairing and conserving archeological sites across the province including Lahore city, yet spending a bit more and paying proper attention could open avenues of earning more and more revenue.



KARACHI: Vintage Care displaying during a car show organized by vintage and Classic Car Club of Pakistan. — INP Photo



# Secretary agrees with cost of power plant restoration

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Energy & Power, Nisar Ahmad Khan has agreed with the estimated cost for restoration of the flood-affected power plant of 36.6 megawatt Daral Khawar Hydropower Project.

The Secretary Energy & Power Nisar Ahmad Khan and PEDO Chief Executive Engineer Naem Khan along with the team of expert engineers working on the project paid an emergency visit to Daral Khwar powerhouse Swat despite severe cold and heavy snow-fall, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

During the briefing, the Secretary Energy and Power

was told that the Daral Khwar power plant under the supervision of PEDO was successfully completed by a team of Chinese and local engineers in 2021. The project is earning Rs.1.30 billion annually to the province, but the power plant has been severely damaged due to the recent catastrophic floods.

Secretary Energy Nisar Ahmad Khan inspected the spillway, sand trap, power channel, switch yard and other parts of the flood-affected powerhouse thoroughly and issued necessary instructions to the CEO PEDO Naem Khan regarding the repair of the power house.

He also praised the Chief Engineers of PEDO and

their team who participated in the maintenance and safety works by staying at the project site for 1 month continuously for the immediate protection of the destroyed power plant.

Later, the Secretary Energy during a high-level meeting rejected the report issued by the inspection team that reviewed the costs of the damages in Daral Khwar power plant and issued orders to invalidate the inspection team.

He said that the said team consisted of non-technical persons who wrongly denied expenditure by misunderstanding certain matters on the basis of ignorance. He issued instructions to reconstitute the inspection team of the institution.

The Secretary also expressed satisfaction over the details of costs incurred for the restoration of the power house in PC-1 by the PEDO engineers and said that the site of the damaged power house has been thoroughly inspected along with the PEDO Chief, therefore the details of the expenses have been declared satisfactory.

He directed that PC-1 immediately submit to the Planning & Development department to start the restoration work on the destroyed power plant on an emergency basis after approval so that the production of electricity can be resumed which is very necessary for the interest of the province.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Zubair Ali listening problems of special persons at his office.

## Huge quantity of drugs seized near Peshawar

PESHAWAR (PPI): The National Highway and Motorway Police recovered a huge quantity of drugs on the Motorway M-1 near Peshawar on Sunday.

On the basis of intelligence, a suspected vehicle was chased by the police, but the driver fled from the scene. A woman and a five-year-old girl in the car were arrested, said a press statement.

During the search of the vehicle, the police found 12 kg of opium, 40 kg and 800 grams of hashish.

After completing the initial action, the Motorway Police called the relevant authorities for further legal proceedings along with the continued hunt for the absconding driver.

A spokesperson from the National Highways and Motorway Police stated that the operation was a significant step in the fight against drugs and added that such actions would be continued in future.

## Serving people first priority: Zubair Ali

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali has said that serving his people is the first priority of his government and no stone will be left turned to achieve this goal.

This he said while talking to the media on Sunday during his visit to various markets where he interacted with the business community and people from different walks of life.

The Mayor said for

keeping himself updated and solving the problems he conducted around 40 open courts in different areas of the city.

The open courts are proved helpful in providing facilities to the public and it will be held in the rest of the areas.

Peshawar will be cleared of encroachments, he said, adding, "We invited all the business community and presidents of the markets to

the city council hall in which they were briefed in detail about the encroachment, on which they unanimously assured to cooperation in enforcement."

The business community and presidents of the markets had given an assurance on which he asked for some time, but now a regular strategy will be decided and the entire Peshawar will be cleared of encroachments.

## KP govt implementing energy saving decision of federal govt

PESHAWAR (INP): In

light of the Federal government decision regarding energy saving, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to implement the same steps by issuing directives to traders and markets owner to close business well

before 8.30 pm.

In this connection, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker government has started implementing the federal government decision on energy saving and in the light of the said decision, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government

ordered to close all the markets in the province by 8:30 pm.

The wedding halls and restaurants will also be closed by 10.00 pm. The administrative officers of all the districts requested businessmen to cooperate accordingly.

## Recovery of arrears directed

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Executive Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) Arif Mahmood Sadozai has directed all the company officers to improve in recovery from defaulters to increase the

performance of department.

According to a press release issued here on Sunday, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of CEO Sadozai which was attended by Chief Engineer Samiullah

Bangash, Chief Commercial Officer Tahir Moeen, Chief Operation Officer Muhammad Zubair Kundi, Chief Engineer Muhammad Arif and other concerned officers attended the meeting.

The CEO reviewed all the steps taken by the recovery officers and also directed the concerned officers to improve recovery from defaulters and said that no leniency would be tolerated in this regard.

## 8 petrol pumps' managers arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): District administration Peshawar has arrested the managers of eight filling stations for intentional sale suspension of petrol and diesel on Sunday.

Deputy Commissioner Peshawar has taken stern notice of the complaints of intentional suspension of the sale of petrol and diesel by some petrol pumps in the provincial metropolis and has put officers of the district administration alert even on the weekly off.

On the directives of the DC, the officers of district administration are inspecting filling stations across the district and opening sale of the petrol and diesel.

He has directed the officers to continue the consecutive inspection of petrol pumps and initiate legal proceedings against those who have either stopped the sale of petrol and diesel intentionally or overcharging the consumers.

## TEVTA announces 400 scholarships for religious seminaries' students

PESHAWAR (APP): Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) Sunday announced 400 scholarships of six-month training course with stipend for students of religious seminaries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

A press release issued here said the interested candidates can apply for these scholarships by February 16 through the official website [www.kptepta.gov.pk](http://www.kptepta.gov.pk). The age limit for attending

the training courses was 18 to 35.

The six-month training courses for the students of religious seminaries are; general electrician, computer operator, solar pv technician, mobile phone repairing, tailoring, and embroidery.

These courses would be held at Govt Advance Technical Training Center, Hayatabad, Govt Technical Teachers Training College, Hayatabad, Govt Technical and Vocational

Center for Boys, Gulbahar, Govt Technical and Vocational Center for Girls, Gulbahar, Govt College of Technology, Peshawar, and Govt Technical and Vocational Center for Girls, Hayatabad.

The selected candidates would provide free-of-charge training, monthly stipend and transportation facility. At the end they would also be awarded with certificates and essential equipment.

## PMDC holds Open Day

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Model Degree College (PMDC) for Boys Dalazak Road, Peshawar here on Sunday arranged an Open Day for the students of Peshawar Model School for Boys-I and Peshawar Model School for Boys-IV.

On the Open Day, the students were given a full campus tour where they visited science laboratories, examination section, college grounds, hostel and digital

library of the campus.

The students also played different games, enjoyed quad bike ride and many more adventure activities and entertainment.

The aim of this activity was to make the students acquainted with college life and to explore the well-established education system of Peshawar Model Degree Colleges.

# Post withdrawal Afghanistan: Vital to understand current situation of Afghanistan and way forward to have better Pak-Afghan relations

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: After the withdrawal of the US and the NATO forces from Afghanistan and the Taliban takeover of power on August 15, 2021, contemporary Afghanistan is passing through the worst humanitarian crisis. The situation is alarming not only for Afghanistan but for all the regional states specially Pakistan which is a host country to millions Afghan refugees and experiencing another influx of new Afghan refugees including women, children, and students.

Furthermore, the alarming economic situation particularly caused by the US sanctions impacted economic activity leading to extreme poverty and posing many political, security, social, and cultural challenges with serious implications for both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Considering the context, the main idea of the event was to evaluate the current scenario in the presence of Representative of Afghanistan, the Area Experts and the Students, both Afghan and Pakistani, to suggest the way forward and potential policy options.

Moreover, the motive was to deliberate on the themes of security-based paradigm, cross border movement, National security, People to people interaction, Policy Incoherence towards Afghanistan and the emerging questions such as: What are the main features of Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan after the recent changes in that country? How a mechanism can be developed for national security advisors of Pakistan and Afghanistan and from neighbors of Afghanistan to meet on a regular basis?

How can the government of Afghanistan help the government of Pakistan in reducing growing terrorist attacks that have intensified after the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan? Is a shift from a security paradigm to trade and regional labour market paradigm possible? What preconditions needs to be in place for this paradigm shift? How can the two countries rationalize visa regimes such that students, patients, and traders can cross over easily? How successful has been the border management initiatives taken in the past?

How to mitigate negative perceptions among the people of the two countries about each other? What can the governments do to address these negative tendencies? What is Way forward for Pakistan and Afghanistan mutual cooperation in current circumstances? What are the key bottlenecks to expansion of trade and investment between Afghanistan and Pakistan (particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)? How can Pakistan make its foreign policy towards

Afghanistan inclusive by taking local stakeholders from KP and Baluchistan onboard?

How can Pakistan's strategy of repatriation as the ultimate solution be modified towards a policy of reform in refugee management in the country? Welcome Address by Prof. Shabir Ahmad Khan, Director, Area Study Centre (Russia, China and Central Asia) University of Peshawar Proceeding of the conference started with the welcome address by Prof. Dr. Shabir Ahmad Khan, Director, Area Study centre (Russia, China and Central Asia), University of Peshawar. He captioned the days gathering as "vital to understand the current situation of Afghanistan and the way forward to have better Pak-Afghan relations". He emphasized on the importance of today's topic regarding the tribulations in Afghanistan in the context of national interest of Pakistan and its importance for the region and the entire world as well. Dr. Shabir said that after the withdrawal, the political and economic fabric in Afghanistan is disturbed and there are three dimensions to it.

These are (1) Afghanistan's domestic including governance, economic and security (2) regional problems including ethnic and political ties with other states and (3) global issues including sanctions and legitimacy. Furthermore, he added that diversion of world attention due to Russian-Ukraine war is another fundamental problem and at the same time the non-recognition and importantly discrediting the constructive efforts of Pakistan is hampering the relationship. The speaker suggested to: To develop a regional mechanism for a strategic regional alignment it is imperative particularly for the immediate neighbors of Afghanistan to develop a platform for regular consultations of national security advisors where China and Pakistan may play the role of front liners. Afghanistan must play the role of gateway to Central and South Asia rather than a shatter belt. Even despite non-recognition of the Afghan interim government the movement of trade convey and regional trade may be encouraged and enhanced. Better management of porous Pak-Afghan border is in the interest of both countries and at the same time the hateful statement must be discouraged from both sides of the borders. Least weaponization of the border crossings. People of Afghanistan must take part and lead in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The complete research work is reproduced here as: "The sufferings of Afghans brothers and sisters continue despite of foreign troop's withdrawal. The social, political and economic



fabric of Afghan society has been devastated by the external military interventions and domestic fragmentation. International sanctions and nonrecognition are adversely affecting all sectors of life. There are three dimensions to the Afghan imbroglio i.e. Afghanistan's domestic, regional and global. Internally the economic and governance related issues, presence of various terrorist organizations and legitimacy linked problems exacerbating the challenges. The regional countries particularly the neighbors of Afghanistan have ethnic, linguistic and political ties with the country, they have to support and help Afghanistan to move in a right direction. Respect and interests are mutual concepts. Afghanistan and its neighbours have to respect and accommodate each-others interests for shared prosperity and security. Nurturing proxies will lead towards common destruction. The major powers have conflicting interests in Afghanistan and in the region. The covert support of global power brokers to militias and terrorist groups poses greater threat to Afghanistan and the region as well.

Afghanistan and the region have to sink or swim together. Countries of the region have to address the security and economic issues from a regional perspective. A regional mechanism need to be developed to help Afghanistan and the entire region. For a strategic regional alignment, it is imperative particularly for the immediate neighbors of Afghanistan to develop a platform for regular consultations of national security advisors. China and Pakistan may take the lead in this regard. The entire region Central and South Asia depends on smooth relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Historically the areas of current day Pakistan and Afghanistan served as the main artery of trade and logistics in all directions.

various regions but their trade is almost \$600 billion, China and India are fighting each other but their bilateral trade is around \$80 billion. Pakistan and Afghanistan are the closest allies and the two wars of resistance by Afghans turned into a success with the full support (overt or covert) from within Pakistan. The republican government established a museum in Herat to celebrate the Afghan Jihad but no credit has been given to Pakistan. Against the recent US/NATO war in Afghanistan, the Afghans found every kind of support from within Pakistan due to religious, ethnic, linguistic and economic bonds. The Afghan refugees have spent their time in Pakistan in a peaceful manner. According to the Commissionarate for Afghan Refugees, less than 1% of the Afghans are involved in criminal activities as per the FIRs registered in Pakistan.

The Afghans for decades have been receiving their education and getting livelihood peacefully in Pakistan and therefore they will remain loyal to Pakistan. It is believed that when the pull factors in Afghanistan will develop, Afghans will definitely prefer to live in and serve their own country. No one will reconstruct Afghanistan; the Afghans themselves have to reconstruct their country. Going back to the history of the Muslim subcontinent, the Muslim rulers of South Asia ruled up to Kabul for centuries. Pakistan territory remained under the Durrani Empire for merely half a century, while areas up to Kabul remained under South Asian Muslim rulers for more than two centuries. It is time to bury narratives of the past and move together towards a bright and secure future in the interests of the masses. The borders all over the world are jointly managed by the respective countries for mutual security. Throughout the history border fences and walls have been built for security and sovereignty purposes.

According to one source there were only 15 border walls at the end of the cold war while in 2020 number of such walls have increased to 77. An unhindered porous border provides easy access to anti-state actors, militants, drug traffickers and criminal elements. A logical apprehension persisted domestically and internationally that porous Pak-Afghan border negatively affecting the peace on both sides. Therefore, border management has been a key component of Pakistan's counter terrorism strategy for which fencing of the Pak-Afghan border started. There is a need to have a joint mechanism between Pakistan and Afghanistan for border management for enhanced security. It is imperative that the senior leaders on

either side avoid hate filled statements which became a norm in the republican era (post 9/11). While the republican governments (Karzai and Ghani) failed due to incompetence, corruption and indiscriminate bombings of wedding and funeral ceremonies, they succeeded in nurturing hatred and blaming Pakistan for their failure.

In the end, suggest such kind of cooperation and connectivity between Pakistan and Afghanistan that resemble a kind of confederation between the two countries. It is important to deliberate upon various issues pertaining to Afghanistan, Pak-Afghan ties and the region at large. This is the purpose of today's Conference. I hope and pray for fruitful deliberations on various aspects of the subject. The report will be published and shared with relevant quarters" Dr. Shabir Ahmed Khan, concluded his welcome address and welcomed the next Speaker, Prof. Dr. Azmat Hayat Khan, Former Vice chancellor university of Peshawar to share is views on "What are the main features of Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan after the recent changes in that country? How a mechanism can be developed for national security advisors of Pakistan and Afghanistan and from neighbors of Afghanistan to meet on a regular basis?"

Prof. Dr. Azmat Hayat Khan, Former Vice Chancellor University He appreciated the Area Study Centre (Russia, China and Central Asia) for organizing such an important event and also complemented the Centre for its contributions in the form of information and research work on the region of Central Asia including Afghanistan. The speaker also thanked for invitation and both, speakers and students, for their presence. Dr. Azmat hayat highlighted that Pakistan has no Afghan Policy and was mostly reactionary during all these 45 years of war in Afghanistan Pakistan has suffered a lot. It is equally true that other countries of the region do not have such interests in Afghanistan as Pakistan has, the security of Pakistan is linked to Afghanistan situation whereas at same time the Economic Viability of Afghanistan is heavily dependent on Pakistan.

The Pakistan and Afghanistan together offer a huge market more 250+ Million consumers and especially the people of KP and Baluchistan heavily depends Afghanistan for trade. He concluded that Pakistan also plays an important role and serves as Economic life line for Afghanistan. So it is important for both states to cooperate and develop better relationship in terms of Security and Economy.





## In brief

### Two killed in road mishap

SARGODHA (INP): At least two persons were killed as a motorcycle collided with a speeding dumper here in Khushaab Sargodha road under the jurisdiction of Sadar khushaab on Sunday. Police said that Yasean (43) r/o Khushaab and Ameen (52) r/o khushaab city were heading to Sargodha on Motorcycle. On reaching near pull islam, their bike hit a speeding dumper and they died on the spot. Further investigation was underway.

### Two labourers die

CHAKWAL (INP): At least two labourer died while three others survived with injuries when a coalmine caved in here on Sunday. Rescue sources said that a coalmine stated to 700 to 800 deep, situated in Matan Kalan area of Chakwal caved in when labourers were engaged in routine work. Two labourers died in the incident while three others were injured and rescued. The injured were shifted to hospital for treatment.

### Man kills sister

FAISALABAD (APP): An infuriated man strangled to death his sister over domestic dispute in the area of Garh police station on Sunday. Police spokesman said that 25-year-old Noor Bhari wife of Riaz exchanged harsh words with her brother Muhammad Amin over a domestic dispute in Mauza Hakim Kot which enraged her brother. Over this issue, the man reportedly strangled throat of his sister and killed her on the spot. The police took body into their custody and started investigation for arrest of the accused who managed to fled the scene after the murder, police said.

### Preparation of polls reviewed

NAROWAL (INP): Assistant Commissioner Narowal Zohaib Ahmed Anjum and District Election Commissioner (DEC) Muhammad Jameel on Sunday chaired a meeting regarding the preparation of elections. Facilities like water, electricity, washrooms and ramps for the easy transportation of disabled persons in polling stations were reviewed. Lists of officers and personnel of all departments were requested for election duty and ensuring foolproof security of election process.

### Child burnt to death

FAISALABAD (INP): A four-month-old child who had sustained burn injuries during a fire incident in a cottage in Faisalabad's Samundri area succumbed to his wounds on Sunday. Four-month-old Rehan was shifted to Allied Hospital Faisalabad where he could not survive and breathed his last. The mother had left the child while he was sleeping to visit neighbours. The fire burning in the stove spread all over the cottage. The residents, managed to put out the fire on self-help basis. The Rescue sources said that the incident took place in the jurisdiction of Muridwala Police Station in 193-GB at about 5:00 pm.

### 15 criminals arrested

SARGODHA (APP): Police claimed to have 15 criminals including four proclaimed offenders and recovered illegal weapons and narcotics from their possession. Police said here on Sunday that a police raiding team arrested 15 outlaws and recovered 12 pistols, 09 guns, 459 litres liquor and 1,085 kg hashish from them.

# PML-N workers ready for elections at any time: Muqam



F.P. Report

SWAT: Adviser to Prime Minister Engineer Amir Muqam said that Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)

workers are ready for elections at any time.

He said that Nawaz Sharif will return to Pakistan soon and become the Prime Minister for the fourth time and bring the country out of the current depressions.

The advisor said that the purpose of his politics is to serve and will he will stick to it till his last day.

He further said that work has been started on Sui Gas projects costing billions of rupees.

He said that it was heartening to see work on Alamganj and Dukorak bridges today after 4 years.

He added that there is a complete recognition of inflation, we came forward not for power but to save the country from bankruptcy.

The advisor said that if there was Imran's government today, the country would have gone bankrupt. He said that Muhammad Ali Shah has most responsibility to serve the people day and night and take up politics as a service.

He expressed these views while addressing the party leaders and workers who had come to welcome Muhammad Ali Shah in Sangota on Sunday.

## 8 people sustained hurt in gas leakage explosion

ABBOTTABAD (APP): At least 8 people including women and children were critically injured in Mirpur Maira due to a gas leakage and explosion incident, the injured were brought to Ayub Teaching Hospital.

The Rescue 1122 teams reached the spot and extinguished the fire which erupted due to an explosion and recovered eight injured from the house and shifted them to ATH. Hospital

Director Dr. Ashfaq Ahmed issued instructions to the DMS Dr. Rehman Durrani on duty to provide all medical facilities and take special care of the patients injured in the blast.

Ayub Teaching Hospital's burn unit staff and on-call surgical unit staff were called to the emergency for a quick response and the best treatment.

Hospital Emergency supervisor Rahimullah

along with Nursing Staff and Pharmacist In-Charge Adil Khan, Sr. Ph. Tech Imtiaz arranged all the necessary medicines and surgical disposables for the injured at ATH.

After first aid and stabilization of patients, injured patients were referred to the burn unit and surgical unit. Four out of 8 patients who were brought to ATH were declared critical, while others are stable.

## Protest against brutal murder of woman held

CHITRAL (APP): A protest meeting was held in Chitral under the auspices of Tehreek Tahafuz Chitrali in connection with the brutal murder of a Chitrali woman in lower Dir in Police Station Rabat jurisdiction.

The meeting was presided over by Alhaj Eidul Hussain. Addressing the meeting, the speakers said that Yasmin Bibi, a daughter from Chitral, who was married to Shah Zareen in Lower Dir, an Afghan Refugee Khan Bahadur, son of Nawab Khan, living at Rabat. The protesters

took the body of the woman, placed it on the road, recorded their protest and raised their voice against this cruelty.

They said that the Rabat Police Station filed a report under section 324 against the accused Khan Bahadur.

The injured Yasmeen died on the way to hospital, they said. According to reports, the Rabat Police have arrested the accused Khan Bahadur.

The former President of the Trade Union, Shabir Ahmed, Sharif Hussain,

Naeem Anjum, President of Tehreek Tahafuz Chitral, Al Haj Eidul Hussain, President of Awami National Party Chitral, Sifat Zareen, leader of Muslim League-N, Maulana Israruddin Al Hilal, Noor Ahmad, members of civil society also expressed their views.

They appreciated Rabat Police for arresting the accused and appealed the Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court to ensure severe punishment for this brutal murderer so as to serve as an example to others.

## Spring plantation drive 2023 launched

SHANKIYARI (APP): Lower Siran Forest Division Shankiyari Sunday formally inaugurated Spring plantation drive 2023. Conservator Muhammad Yousuf Khan planted a sapling on the occasion.

While addressing the inaugural ceremony, Conservator Lower Siran Forest Division Shankiyari Muhammad Yousuf said that Pakistan is one of the worst hit countries by the climatic changes and we need to plant more trees to fight back against this

calamity.

He further said that every year forest department launches a massive plantation drive to increase our green gold reservoirs, and we cannot achieve the targets without the support and cooperation of the masses.

The conservator said that in this regard people should come and join hands with the forest department, we are providing saplings to the people free of cost and our teams also give their expert opin-

ion to the farmers and land owners who are interested to plant trees.

Yousuf Khan said that during the past few years in KP province, we have planted billions of trees on baron lands hills and turned these areas into jungles, this year's plantation drive is also a continuation of the previous achievements.

At the end of the ceremony, a large number of saplings were also distributed amongst the people those have participated in the inauguration.

## 12 deaths reported in dumpers related accidents

SARGODHA (APP): Twelve people were hit to death by dumpers in various parts of the district during the last four weeks.

District Police Officer (DPO), Muhammad Tariq Aziz told APP here on Sunday that a survey revealed that dumper trucks were being altered, modified, and in some cases even manufactured in and

around the city.

Local mechanics are modifying/altering the loader-trucks without adopting prescribed procedures and using proper machinery, in violation of rules and regulations. He said the loader trucks were being manufactured with simple iron sheets and iron girders in different areas of the city including Pull-111,

Azam Market, General Bus Stand, Kabari Bazaar, 46 Adda, Jhal-Chakian and other places.

"No inspection of locally made dumper-trucks is ever carried out by any department, while the traffic police challan big vehicles only when they enter the city," a truck driver said. However, he added, fitness certificate was also available for these trucks. He admitted that a large number of trucks were plying on roads without fitness certificates. The truck owners receive certificates by presenting simple truck for inspection and later on modifications were carried out on them, he added.

The DPO said vehicles' inspection was necessary and strict compliance in load management was being ensured. He said that vehicle inspection department was also making efforts to handle the situation effectively, adding that entry of heavy traffic was restricted in densely populated areas of the city.

Owing to strict actions against dumper drivers, dumper related accidents had reduced a lot, he added.



KOHAT: Commissioner Mehmood Aslam Wazir inquire an injured boy rescued from Tanda Dam's lake at DHQ hospital.

## ADC directs to seal pumps creating artificial POL shortage

DIR LOWER (APP): Additional Deputy Commissioner, Abdul Wali Khan here on Sunday directed all sub-divisions to seal the petrol pumps found guilty of creating artificial shortage of petroleum products.

He issued these directives during his inspections to different petrol pumps situated in Timergara and Talash tehsils to ensure smooth supply of petrol to people. He anguished over the unavailability of petrol at two petrol pumps and imposed heavy fines.

Abdul Wali Khan warned all the petrol pump owners to avoid creating artificial scarcity of petrol for their personal interest; otherwise they would face strict legal action. He was accompanied by assistant commissioners and other concerned staff.

## 4 fertilizer dealers arrested, shop sealed

BUREWALA (APP): District administration has arrested four fertilizer dealers and imposed fine on marriage hall owners over different violations during a crackdown launched here on Sunday.

In line with special directives of Deputy Commissioner Vehari Safdar Hussain Virk, the Assistant Commissioner Burewala Adil Omer launched a crackdown against fertilizer dealers and marriage halls. The officers found four fertilizer dealers involved in selling fertilizer on high rates.

The officer arrested the dealers and sealed one dealer shop over violations, besides registration of FIR against them.

The officer also imposed fine of Rs 175,000 on the dealers.

The assistant commissioner imposed fine of Rs 50,000 on a marriage hall and arrested the owner over violations.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that strict action was being taken against the fertilizer dealers over profiteering adding that zero tolerance policy was being followed against the people involved in hoarding and profiteering.

## Shop robbed at gun point

KHANEWAL (APP): Three unidentified armed robbers looted cash at gunpoint from a shoe shop on Sunday.

According to police sources, three unidentified armed robbers entered into the Service Shoes Shop situated at the main Bazaar Jamia Masjid road. They held hostage the staff at gunpoint and looted cash Rs 300,000 from the shop.

The outlaws also locked the guard of the shop in the shop and fled away.

The case has been registered against the criminals with the concerned police stations, however, the local traders staged a protest demonstration against the rising incidents of robbery and dacoity in the city.

## Talks continue to find honourable livelihoods abroad workers: Turi

KURRAM (APP): Federal Minister for Labour, Human Resources and Overseas Pakistanis, Sajid Hussain Turi has said that 664000 workers have already been sent to different countries for employment and one million more are in the pipeline.

Addressing a function at the Governor Cottage Parachinar, district Kurram, the minister said that successful negotiations with different countries continue to find honourable livelihoods for skilled workers.

Deputy Commissioner Kurram, Wasil Khan Khat-tak and District Police Officer, Abdul Samad Khan, noted tribal elders from

across the district were present on the occasion.

Tehsil Chairman, Allama Muzamil Hussain, Maulana Shah Nawaz, Maulana Munir Hussain and others also addressed the function.

The federal minister said that negotiations for the resolution of the problems of the deported workers from the United Arab Emirates are also being held.

He added that besides the construction of a best quality road for access to the Central Asian States, a railway track is also being laid adding that for this purpose, a business hub would also be constructed at Tal, district Hangu.

Sajid Hussain Turi said that NADRA offices are also being established at Bagun, Alizai and Doggar while another Centre is established at Sameer and Upper Kurram of the district.

He said that besides cash assistance, students would also be provided scholarships under Benazir Income Support Programme.

He also stressed to take interest in the national census, saying basic amenities to the people would be provided to them on the basis of it.

The federal minister further said that four new hospitals would also be established in the tribal district Kurram.

## Dept asked to ensure public issues on priority

D.I.KHAN (APP): The district administration has directed the Public Health Engineering department to ensure the resolution of longstanding public issues on priority and complete the ongoing development schemes within the stipulated timeframe.

Following the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Qaiser Khan, Assistant Commissioner Dera Farhan Ahmed visited different development schemes of

Public Health Engineering Department in the city including Solar Energy and Water Supply.

During the visit, the officials concerned informed the AC about the progress of work on these ongoing schemes and said that pace of work had been expedited in line with directives of the district administration to meet the stipulated time-frame.

The assistant commissioner said that no negligence would be tolerated

and action would be taken against those compromising quality of work.

He said that an effective monitoring mechanism should be in place by conducting regular inspections on site to ensure quality work and that development projects were completed within the stipulated timeline.

He asked the Public Health Engineering officers to resolve the long-standing problems being faced by the citizens.

## Rain, snow may occur in Quetta amd other areas

QUETTA (PPI): Pakistan Meteorological Department, Regional Center, Quetta on Sunday forecast that during the next 24 hours, rain and snow may occur in Quetta, Mastung, Kalat, Surab, Ziarat, Killa Abdullah, Killa Saifullah, Harnai, Zhob and its surrounding areas, while cloudy to rainy weather is expected (snow over hills) in Sherani, Musakhail, Barkhan, Bolan, Kohlu and Loralai districts.

However, cloudy weather with windy and cold situation is expected in rest parts of the province during the same period.

Weather forecast for next 48 hours Cold weather is expected in most parts of the province, while very cold conditions in central and northern parts of the province during the next 48 hours.

Weather prevailed during the last 24 hours: rain occurred in Quetta, Mastung, Dalbandin,

Jiwani, Kalat, Panjgur, Chaman, Pishin and Ziarat, while snowfall recorded in Quetta, Kalat and Ziarat during the last 24 hours.

Maximum temperature recorded on Sunday, Barkhan 19.5, Dalbandin 12.5, Gwadar 24, Jiwani 18, Kalat 11, Khuzdar 13, Lasbela 26.5, Nokkundi 15, Pasni 24, Quetta 09, Samungli 10, Sibi 23, Turbat 22, Ormara 24, Zhob 13.5, Uthal 24 and Usta Muhammad 21.5.

## Managements asked to ensure closing plan

D.I.KHAN (APP): The district administration taking steps to ensure implementation of the national energy-saving plan announced by the federal government while the wedding halls had been directed to ensure the closure of their programmes by 10:00 p.m.

Following the directions

of Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Qaiser Khan, Assistant Commissioner Dera Farhan Ahmed along with AC Paharpur Muhammad Aneeq Anwar visited various Marriage Halls situated at Daraban road and Grid road.

They asked the managements and owners of the

Marriage Halls to comply with the government orders of closing the programmes till 10:00 p.m.

They said the representatives of district administration would pay daily visits to the wedding halls in this regard and legal action would be taken in case of violation.

## Motorcyclist killed in accident

FAISALABAD (APP): A motorcyclist was killed in a road accident, in the limits of Batala Colony police station.

Rescue-1122 spokesman said on Sunday the accident took place at Satiana Road near Saleemi Chowk where a rashly driven motorcycle crashed into an electricity pole. As a result, 42-year-old Shahid Fazal, resident of Kot Khan Muhammad Faisalabad received serious injuries and died on the spot.

Rescuers shifted the body to mortuary

of DHQ hospital for postmortem.

**Couple injured in fire incident**

A elderly couple received serious burn injuries in a fire incident at T&T Colony Satiana Road on Sunday.

Rescue-1122 spokesman said that DVR system caught fire due to short-circuiting in a house in T&T Colony Satiana Road. The fire engulfed the entire surroundings, due to which, Anwar Boota (70) and his wife Safia Bibi (70) suffered serious burn injuries.





# Lima records first protest death after Peru lawmakers reject snap elections

LIMA (AFP/APP): Demonstrations in Lima turned fatal on Saturday as one protester died in clashes with police near Congress after lawmakers rejected a request by Peru's embattled president to bring elections forward.

Hooded protesters wielding shields, stones and pieces of cement pried from public buildings fought with police in the fog of tear gas as Lima became the scene of scuffles and the city's first death from the protests was recorded.

The South American country has been embroiled in a political crisis with near-daily protests since December 7, when former president Pedro Castillo was arrested after attempting to dissolve Congress and rule by decree.

In seven weeks of demonstrations, 48 people including one police officer have been killed in clashes between security forces and protesters, according to the Ombudsman's Office of Peru. The latest violence comes after President Dina Boluarte had urged lawmakers to find a way out of a deepening political crisis by agreeing to hold elections earlier.

In the early hours of Saturday, lawmakers had rejected her request to move the polls forward to December, even as anti-Boluarte protests raging across the country have left dozens dead. "Not one more dead, Dina murderer," marchers had chanted in what began as a peaceful and festive procession with Andean musical groups and artists, until hooded individuals arrived.

The ombudsman's office reported

the latest fatality on Twitter, saying that "we regret the death of Victor Santisteban Yacsa Vilca in the violent demonstrations today," without specifying how the death had occurred.

Earlier in the week, Boluarte told reporters that she believed the groups behind the violence in the country sought "a death in Lima."

"They say that a death in Lima is worth a hundred in the provinces," she said Tuesday.

Demanding that Boluarte resign and call fresh elections, Castillo supporters have blocked highways, causing shortages of food, fuel and other basic supplies. The government said it will soon deploy police and soldiers to clear the roadblocks.

Boluarte on Saturday urged politicians to "put down their partisan interests and place the interests of Peru above them."

"We regret that the Congress of the Republic has been unable to define the date of general elections where Peruvians can freely and democratically elect the new authorities," she said on Twitter.

Lawmakers had agreed last month to bring forward elections from 2026 to April 2024.

But in the face of relentless protests, Boluarte on Friday urged Congress to move the vote up further, to December.

However, at a plenary session that ended early Saturday, Congress rejected the proposal, with 45 votes in favor, 65 against and two abstentions.

Demonstrators are calling for immediate elections, as well as

Boluarte's removal, the dissolution of Congress and a new constitution.

"Nobody has any interest in clinging to power," Boluarte insisted on Friday. "If I am here it is because I fulfilled my constitutional responsibility."

As Castillo's vice president, Boluarte was constitutionally mandated to replace him after he was impeached by Congress and arrested.

The US State Department on Friday urged dialogue and restraint by all parties.

Apart from those who have died in protests, an additional 10 civilians, including two babies, died when they were unable to get medical treatment or medicine due to roadblocks, the ombudsman's office said.

In southern regions, roadblocks have resulted in widespread shortages.

Some of the worst violence and highest death tolls have come when protesters tried to storm airports in the south.

Southern regions with large Indigenous populations have been the epicenter of the protest movement that has affected Peru's vital tourism industry.

As well as blocking dozens of roads and forcing the temporary closure of several airports, protesters have placed rocks on the train tracks that act as the only transport access to Machu Picchu, the former Inca citadel and jewel of Peruvian tourism.

Hundreds of tourists were stranded at the archeological ruins, with many eventually evacuated by helicopter.

# Evangelical churches thrive in traditionally Catholic DR Congo

KINSHASA (AFP/APP): In the DR Congo's boisterous capital Kinshasa, a road close to the city centre is lined with traders hawking unusual merchandise: church pulpits.

The typical buyers are evangelical preachers, whose numbers have mushroomed over the years in the traditionally Catholic country which Pope Francis is set to visit on Tuesday. "Pastors come here," said vendor Frederic Kimbaya. "It's good business." Catholicism has long been the dominant religion in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a vast nation the size of continental western Europe that gained independence from Belgium in 1960.

But since the 1990s, evangelical churches, also called revivalist churches, have exploded in popularity, appealing particularly to the poor.

Despite huge mineral wealth, the DRC is one of most impoverished countries on the planet. About two-thirds of the population of around 100 million lives on under \$2.15 a day, according to the World Bank.

The turn from Catholicism also traces its roots to former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, who ruled between 1965 and 1997, said Gauthier Muzenge Mwanza, a sociologist at the University of Kinshasa.

Mobutu encouraged evangelical pastors in order to weaken the power of the Catholic Church, an independent force that often rallied opposition

against him, said Mwanza.

"Anyone could start a church," he said, explaining that no legal restrictions were placed on starting religious establishments.

According to estimates, about 40 percent of the country is Catholic, 35 percent Protestants of various denominations, nine percent Muslims and 10 percent Kimbanguists -- a Christian movement born in the Belgian Congo.

Official Vatican statistics put the proportion of Catholics in the DRC at 49 percent of the population.

Today, many Congolese evangelical leaders style themselves as archbishops and prophets, or even apostles. They are often well spoken and immaculately dressed. Some own television channels.

Most also promise their flock a better life, or money or love, according to Mwanza. All that is required of the faithful is prayer, dance -- and cash donations to the preacher.

Despite the popularity, some former Catholics who joined the evangelicals are beginning to return to the mother church as the promised miracles fail to show up, said political scientist Christian Ndombo Moleka.

More people are questioning their moral conduct, politics and "relationship with money," he said.

Evangelical churches nevertheless remain ubiquitous in Kinshasa, a megacity of an estimated 15 million

people. Ascertaining their precise number is difficult. But last year, a Congolese MP pushed to close 10,000 churches deemed to be corrupt. Emie Kutino, a snappily dressed evangelical preacher, pushed back against the image that revivalist churches are all on the take.

There are "wolves" who exploit people's misery among evangelicals and Catholics alike, she said.

"There are also real ones, who do a great job," added Kutino, who has a degree in theology, on a Sunday before a service in her church.

Kutino's husband Fernando is the founder of Kinshasa's "Army of Victory," which is one of the oldest revivalist churches in the city.

He was imprisoned between 2006-2014 due to an arms-possession charge, and is now living in France after suffering a stroke.

Kutino said the charge had been "fabricated" for political reasons, as her husband had criticised the government of the time.

"If it wasn't for the presence of the churches, this nation would fall apart," she said, pointing to the ravages of the long-running conflict in eastern DRC.

"But we pray, and in church we can offer something to the widow and the orphan," she added. Although not a Catholic, Kutino said the Pope's visit on January 31 would be a "blessing" that may encourage peace.

# French PM says no dice on pension age as strikes loom

PARIS (AFP/APP): France's prime minister on Sunday ruled out backing on a plan to raise the retirement age as unions prepared for another day of mass protests against the contested reform.

An increase in the minimum retirement age to 64 from the current 62 is part of a flagship reform package pushed by President Emmanuel Macron to ensure the future financing of France's pensions system.

After union protests against the change brought out over a million people into the streets on January 19, the government signalled there was wiggle room on some measures, including the number of contributing years needed to qualify for a full pension, special deals for people who started working very young, and provisions for mothers who interrupted their careers to look after their children. But the headline age limit of 64 was not up for discussion, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne said Sunday. "This is now non-negotiable," she told the FranceInfo broadcaster.

While unions have welcomed the government's readiness for negotiation on parts of the plan, they say the pro-

posed 64-year rule has to go. Calling the reform "unfair" France's eight major unions, in a rare show of unity, said they hoped to "mobilise even more massively" on Tuesday, their next scheduled protest day, than at the showing earlier this month. "It's looking like there will be even more people", said Celine Verzeletti, member of the hardleft union CGT's confederation leadership. Pointing to opinion polls, Laurent Berger, head of the moderate CFDT union, said that "the people disagree strongly with the project, and that view is gaining ground". It would be "a mistake" for the government to ignore the mobilisation, he warned.

Unions and the government both see Tuesday's protests as a major test.

Some 200 protests are being organised countrywide, with a big march planned for Paris, culminating in a demonstration outside the National Assembly where parliamentary commissions are to start examining the draft law on Monday.

The leftwing opposition has submitted more than 7,000 amendments to the draft in a bid to slow its path through parliament.

Macron's allies are short of an absolute majority in parliament and will need votes from conservatives to approve the pensions plan.

The government has the option of forcing the bill through without a vote under special constitutional powers, but at the risk of triggering a vote of no confidence, and possibly new parliamentary elections.

In addition to protest marches, unions have called for widespread strike action for Tuesday, with railway services and public transport expected to be heavily affected.

Stoppages are also expected in schools and administrations, with some local authorities having already announced closures of public spaces such as sports stadiums.

Some unions have called for further strike action in February, including at commercial ports, refineries and power stations.

Some observers said the unions are playing for high stakes, and any slackening of support Tuesday could be fatal for their momentum.

"They have placed the bar high," said Dominique Andolfatto, a professor for political science. "They can't afford any missteps."

# 'Drought' has New Yorkers asking: 'Where's the snow?'

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): The idea of New York in wintertime conjures up images of Manhattan's Times Square and Central Park shrouded in snow. Not this year.

The city is forecast Sunday to surpass a 50-year record for the latest first snowfall of the season.

It is also close to recording its highest number of consecutive days without any measurable flakes.

The snowless streak has New Yorkers puzzled, some questioning their love-hate relationship with the white stuff. "It's really sad," said retired teacher Anne Hansen. "Basically, we don't like to see the snow. But now we're sorely missing it," she told AFP.

The Big Apple usually gets its first dusting around mid-December. Last season it arrived on Christmas Eve. A heavy load often results in "snow days," beloved by children and office workers who gets days off school and work.

Kids grab their sleds and head to the nearest grassy slope. Adults cross-country ski around the main parks.

"You stay home, you



drink hot cocoa; it's beautiful and the dog loves it," filmmaker Renata Romain told AFP.

Joy turns to despair fairly quickly though, as the snow turns yellowy-brown, trash piles up on the sidewalk and trips to the laundrette become hazardous.

"The snow is pretty to look at the first day, but afterwards it's dirty and I don't like it. It's slushy. It's nasty," added Romain.

Meteorologists define snowfall in NYC as snow that measures at least 0.1 inches in Central Park. Some flakes fell last Wednesday but not

enough to count. The longest residents have had to wait for measurable snow is January 29, a record set in 1973, according to the National Weather Service (NWS).

No snow Sunday will mean the longest wait since records began in 1869.

New York is also approaching its longest streak of consecutive days without snow. The current record is 332, which ended on December 15, 2020.

Sunday would be day 326. Accuweather has called the period a "snow drought." "It's very unusual," NWS meteorologist Nelson Vaz told AFP, saying the global La Nina weather pattern was responsible for keeping colder fronts further north and west.

Up to 40 inches (one meter) of snow fell in Buffalo, New York state, near the Canadian border, in December, killing at least 39 people.

But a few hundred miles southeast, in NYC and surrounding Atlantic coastal areas, the precipitation has meant lots of rain amid mild temperatures.

Only 1932 had a warmer first 25 days of January in New York than 2023, according to Weather.com.

Scientists say climate change is causing winters to be warmer and shorter.

"It's disconcerting," Hansen said of recent balmy days that have felt more like fall.

New York has never gone a whole cold season without measurable snow.

And with February usually its snowiest month, a white blanket could soon envelope the Big Apple yet.

"That's what makes New York, New York, right?" said Romain.

# Ivory Coast leprosy sufferers fight social exclusion

DUQUESNECREMONE (AFP/APP): "A week before my mother died, her house was broken into and burned down," said Mathieu Okoma Agoa, from a village in Ivory Coast.

"After her funeral, women danced in the village because, according to them, the evil was gone," he said. Okoma Agoa's mother suffered from leprosy, a disease that made her a social outcast long before she died. And the experience left its mark on him, too. "I am scarred for life," he said.

He is not the only one. Camille Kouassi Assi, the village chief, told how his parents were also ostracised because of their leprosy, right up until the end of their lives. Recalling their ordeal, his voice trembled, his eyes welling up with tears.

Both men spoke to AFP in the run-up to World Leprosy Day on Sunday. They live in the southern Ivorian village of Duquesne-Cremone, which since the 1960s has been a refuge for leprosy patients and their relatives fleeing social exclusion.

Around 100 kilometres (60 miles) from the economic hub Abidjan, Duquesne-Cremone is named after a French priest and the Italian city whose inhabitants financed its creation. At first glance it is

like any other Ivorian village. But this community of 2,800 inhabitants, isolated at the end of a long track that cuts through an immense forest, is sheltered from the gaze of outsiders.

And it still has 54 patients.

"We feel at home here," Kouassi Assi, a father of four and mathematics teacher, told AFP in the small courtyard of his home.

Further along the same road, Gisele Abena, 29, was being treated at the Raoul Follereau Institute, a hospital belonging to a French group of the same name.

The medical centre has been fighting leprosy and Buruli ulcer, a skin infection, for almost a century.

Abena emerges from one of the pastel-coloured buildings grouped together on 42 hectares, whose open windows let in the tropical heat.

She is in a wheelchair, as leprosy has eaten away at her feet.

"I feel good here," said the mother of two. "There are a lot of us and I have made friends."

Originally from Bondoukou in the north-east, she has no desire to return there and experience again the stigma local people imposed upon her.

"The leprosy microbe socially excludes patients," said Professor Bamba

Vagamon, director general of the Raoul Follereau Institute.

"It distorts the face, distinctive features. The patient no longer recognises himself, nor do those who know him," he explained.

"It is as if he no longer really exists. I find this all the more horrible since the patient retains all his mental faculties," he said.

"Between 70 and 80 percent of patients have a depressive symptom," he added.

Ivory Coast has 12 of the 20 neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) listed by the World Health Organization (WHO), including leprosy.

In 2022, 514 new cases were recorded in the country, but because antibiotic-based treatments are long and recovery difficult to establish, it is it is hard to say exactly how many patients there are.

If life in Duquesne-Cremone is a welcome haven from what the patients have experienced elsewhere, the staff nevertheless want them, eventually, to return to their families -- even if they are often reluctant to have them back because they are so poorly informed about the disease.

"Until 2015, even medical universities in Ivory Coast did not offer education on leprosy," explained

Vagamon. He only managed to change that eight years ago.

Leprosy is transmitted through prolonged contact. The microbe multiplies very slowly, making the incubation period up to five years. The first symptoms cause spots to appear, then gradually eat away at desensitised limbs.

"There is no test that can detect a case of leprosy before the appearance of physical symptoms," added Vagamon.

His institute will soon become a research centre specialising in NTDs, with a view to developing a means of screening.

Vagamon is confident the "zero leprosy by 2030" objective set by the Ivorian health ministry in 2022 is achievable, in particular thanks to raising awareness among children in schools.

Representing 10 percent of leprosy cases, children in rural areas are regularly affected by various skin diseases.

"They often come to class tired and have trouble concentrating because they scratch a lot," explained Pierre Bazie, deputy headmaster in the village school in Djougbo.

They are being targeted by state-organised screenings financed by the Raoul Follereau Institute, so they understand the dangers of the disease.

# Tunisians vote in second round of poll for defanged parliament

TUNIS (AFP/APP): Polling began in the second round of elections for Tunisia's parliament on Sunday, but as the divided nation grapples with economic woes, all eyes will be on turnout.

A total of 262 candidates are competing for 131 seats in the new legislature, a body largely stripped of its powers following President Kais Saied's dramatic power grab in the birthplace of the Arab Spring uprisings.

On July 25, 2021, Saied sacked the government and froze parliament before dissolving it and pushing through a new constitution granting him almost unlimited powers, sweeping away the system that had emerged from the 2011 revolt. The latest polls, whose first round in December saw just 11.2 percent of registered voters take part, are seen as the final pillar of Saied's transformation of politics.

The new legislature will have almost no power to hold the president to account. "I don't plan to vote," said Ridha, a carpenter in the capital Tunis who declined to provide his surname. "I can't trust anyone anymore."

Analysts predict few of Tunisia's 7.8 million eligible voters will cast their ballots in the second round, as major parties including Saied's arch-rivals, the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha, call for a boycott. Youssef Cherif, director of Columbia Global Centers in Tunis, said "this parliament will have very little legitimacy, and the president, who is all-powerful thanks to the 2022 constitution, will be able to control it as he sees fit."

# China resumes issuing visas for Japanese citizens

TOKYO (AFP/APP): The Chinese embassy in Tokyo announced Sunday that it would resume issuing visas to Japanese citizens.

The move ends a retaliatory step against Japan's decision to require Covid testing for travellers arriving from mainland China, where the number of infections was surging. "Starting today, the Embassy and the Offices of Consulates-General of the People's Republic of China will resume issuing ordinary visas for Japanese citizens," a short online notice issued by the embassy said without elaborating.

China stopped issuing visas to Japanese nationals from January 10 after Tokyo started requiring people arriving from the mainland to test before travel and upon landing.

China also suspended issuing visas to South Koreans for similar reasons earlier this month. The Chinese embassy in South Korea had not lifted the suspension as of Sunday evening. Japan is still requiring those travelling on direct flights from the mainland to show proof of negative test results from samples taken no more than 72 hours before leaving China. They are also still subject to testing upon arriving in Japan. In early January, Beijing called Tokyo's move "discriminatory", though Japan argued it was necessary given the spread of infections in China.

# Japan's monthly COVID-19 deaths cross 10,000 mark for 1st time

ANKARA (AA/APP): Japan logged 252 new coronavirus deaths over the past 24 hours, exceeding the monthly figure of 10,000 for the first time, the Health Ministry said on Sunday. The new fatalities have brought the death toll for January to 10,124, Kyodo News agency reported, citing a tally based on prefectural reports. Previously, over 7,600 people died in December, the highest monthly total at that time.

The nation has seen a rapid surge in coronavirus deaths since November.

Around 54,800 new infections were reported nationwide on Saturday, with 533 patients in critical condition, according to prefectural governments.

# Memphis disbands police unit after fatal beating video

MEMPHIS (AFP/APP): The US city of Memphis on Saturday disbanded the special police unit whose officers fatally beat a young Black man, after graphic video of the assault sparked widespread shock and outrage.

The video, which shows five officers repeatedly kicking and punching 29-year-old Tyre Nichols as he moans and calls out for his mother, triggered calls for police reform amid the anger.

The southern US city on Saturday announced it had deactivated the officers' special unit, known as Scorpion, which was launched in 2021 to reduce illegal activity by

assigning more police to high-crime areas. The Memphis Police Department said in a statement it was "in the best interest of all to permanently deactivate the SCORPION Unit," which stands for Street Crimes Operation to Restore Peace in Our Neighborhoods.

"The officers currently assigned to the unit agree unreservedly with this next step," the department added. Several dozen demonstrators called for police reform Saturday afternoon as they gathered in the chilly rain in front of city hall shouting "No justice, no peace!" and carrying signs with slo-

gans such as "Justice for Tyre Nichols." At one point, a police car ended up surrounded by a group of protesters, who directed their angry chants at the vehicle. Memphis City Council member JB Smiley Jr addressed the crowd's demands, speaking to protesters in the rain. "Memphis has an opportunity to set the standard on how to respond to actions like this," he told them.

The five Memphis officers, who are all Black, were charged with second-degree murder in the beating of Nichols, who died in hospital on January 10 three days after being stopped on suspicion of reckless driving.



The Frontier Post

JALIL AFRIDI  
Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at  
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,  
Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001  
Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 415-3704551

## Myanmar military’s democracy

According to the media, Myanmar’s ruling junta has announced tough requirements for parties to contest an election this year, including a huge increase in their membership, a move that could sideline the military’s opponents and cement its grip on politics. According to the details, Myanmar Military General authored new electoral rules which demanded that political parties intending to compete nationally must have at least 100,000 members, up from 1,000 previously, must file their bid in the next 60 days or be de-registered as a party. The military junta claimed that it is fully committed to democracy and seized power to address the shortcomings of the past election, which was won by the ruling NLD.

Myanmar, a South Asian Nation suffered successive military coups and prolonged dictatorships over the past decades. Previously, the noble literate Burmese Politician Aung San Suu Kyi revitalize democracy in the country after a decades-long political movement through a quasi-civilian political system in 2016 but that endeavor lasted only for five years. Myanmar’s military overthrew the elected government on the charges of poll rigging and corruption and arrested political leaders and thousands of pro-democracy activists in February 2021. Myanmar witnessed political violence and armed resistance over the past two years anti-coup protests erupted across the country. Recently, the Military dictator unveiled his plan for an election in August during his speech on the 75th anniversary of the country’s independence.

Historically, Military Generals had always relied on politicians and bureaucrats to rule the states and run governmental affairs as Jingoists were usually well versed with the tact of attack by night and ambush on civil liberties and democracy. Earlier, the Burmese General ruled the nation for over five decades and bearly survive through a fractured democracy since 2016. Currently, Myanmar’s military Junta has perceived the idea of militarily controlled democracy through the introduction of tinted electoral laws to knock out opponent political parties including the Suu Kyi-led National National League for Democracy (NLD). The Military has also announced pardons for thousands of political prisoners and offered a partial commutation of the sentences of other inmates not convicted of criminal offenses, so the prevailing tense people-military ties could be normalized prior to the country’s transition to a newly crafted democracy. The whole exercise has been initiated to perpetuate military rule through a controlled mechanism with the participation of a retired general-led Union Solidarity and Development Party.

Presently, Myanmar is facing an unprecedented political, humanitarian, and socioeconomic crisis due to persistent residual needs that had been intensified from prevailing global economic and energy issues coupled with western sanctions against the Burmese Military Junta. According to the UN authorities, about 6.2 million Burmese need urgent economic assistance to meet their basic needs, while the ongoing violence had largely hurt the business and economic activities in the country. Realistically, unrestricted and persistent dominion is the first and foremost priority of today’s rulers in every other nation, who put aside the public needs and socioeconomic uplift for doors and philanthropists. As the rulers need a country to command instead of a nation to feed and serve.

## Energy crisis and national unity

Recently, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has urged people to opt for renewable sources of energy, especially solar, as these provide uninterrupted and inexpensive electricity and will help in reducing the burden of inflation on the masses. The senior officials from the energy department briefed the governor that 55 megawatts of solar power supply projects are underway in the province. While the government aims to shift more than 1,000 government schools, and 3,000 mosques in all the tribal districts of Kurram, Mohmand, Bajaur, North and South Waziristan, Khyber, and Orakzai are being transferred to solar energy under the solar energy projects.

The nation’s solarization is a countrywide campaign of the coalition government that had been revitalized by the incumbent rulers after the colossal energy imports bill exceeded \$ 27 billion per annum. The federal government has inaugurated multiple solar energy projects and announced the conversion of agricultural tube wells and government buildings to solar energy to reduce energy bills.

Historically, Pakistani political groups had always upheld their party legacies and never sit together in the greater interest of the public. Previously, the PTI government initiated the Sehat Card Plus scheme to provide free of cost health treatment to the public and this project had been implemented in the PTI-ruled regions including KP, Punjab, and Balochistan, while Sindh was not part of the scheme because the PPP-led provincial government did not participate in the project. Presently, the coalition government set the stage for the solarization of the country so, the warring PTI-led government in KP and Punjab were part of the initiative while both governors oversee the solar projects in their respective territories.

In fact, after assuming public office, a leader represents his constituency, province, and the entire nation at certain forums, so the public representatives must uphold their official obligations instead of party policy when attain powers. The leaders preference must be the national cause, public welfare and a collective instead of disagreement and division on political grounds so the nation moves forward. After all, a political consensus and charter of democracy are of utmost importance for, democracy, national development and growth.

# Latest Israeli violence is a sign of much worse to come

Ray Hanania

The increase in violence against Palestinians by Israel’s militant army and the armed Jewish settler movement is part of an intentional strategy by extremists in the Israeli government who have been given the green light to flex their muscles. The level of violence against Palestinians was already on the rise last year, mostly driven by the escalating political rhetoric of Israel’s far right. In 2022, Israeli soldiers and armed settlers killed 146 Palestinians in the West Bank, 32 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and four Palestinians inside Israel, the highest total since 2004, according to B’Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization.

Among the 182 Palestinians killed were five unarmed women, 34 unarmed children and seven unarmed seniors. Israel justified all of the deaths by claiming they were targeting “terrorists” planning “terrorist attacks,” without providing any evidence or proof of this or prosecuting perpetrators in Israel’s lopsided judicial system. During the same period, Palestinians responding to Israeli military incursions and armed settler assaults killed 17 Israelis, all of whom were armed.

Things are about to change, for the worse, as newly elected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to pander to the most extreme elements in Israeli society, a strategy designed to ensure his own political survival. In the first four weeks of this year, Israel’s militant government has shown a determination to surpass last year’s total number of Palestinian deaths, so far killing more than 29, including five children.

The most recent Palestinian fatalities occurred this week, when the Israeli military attacked the city of Jenin and its adjacent refugee camp using a bulldozer that was driven through the streets, crushing civilian cars and damaging civilian properties in what many viewed as an intentional provocation of the Palestinians living there. Of course Palestinian civilians will take to the streets to confront Israel’s armed extremists. They have every right to defend themselves, especially since Israeli authorities refuse to defend Palestinians or to lessen the excessive violence commit-

ted against civilians by the Israeli military and their armed settler cohorts. The violence is not a coincidence and it revolves around two political issues: The push by the increasingly extremist Israeli right to control Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the need for Netanyahu to reinforce his new, far-right coalition government through tough assaults on Palestinians.

Netanyahu is fighting for his political life against three corruption indictments. He needs to control the government to prevent the cases against him from moving forward, and to do that he had to make a deal with extremist political allies who were the only parties willing to support him. In exchange for their backing, the extremists are allowed to unleash their violent hatred against the Palestinians. For example, those extremists — including Israel’s new National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, Netanyahu’s closest political ally — have ordered a ban on the display of the Palestinian flag and the arrest of Palestinians who fly it in Israel and the Occupied West Bank.

Ben-Gvir described the display of the Palestinian flag as “an act of terrorism” and a “threat to public order.” Unarmed Palestinian protesters caught displaying the flag have been beaten and arrested by armed soldiers and settlers. Under Ben-Gvir’s leadership, settlers have also stepped-up Jewish incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Other measures being publicly discussed include a weakening of the power of the Israeli Supreme Court, even though only on a few occasions has it ruled against Israeli and settler violence.

And leaders of the Religious Zionist Party, a foundational part of Netanyahu’s coalition, have vowed to annex the West Bank and aggressively expand Jewish-only settlements on Palestinian land there. Netanyahu’s extremist and militant Israeli government has also tightened restrictions on Palestinian leaders. It even blocked Jordan’s Ambassador to Israel Ghassan Majali from entering Arab East Jerusalem through Bab Al-Asbat, the Lion’s Gate, to prevent him from praying

at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Israel is also extending the delays that prevent sick Palestinians from receiving life-saving medical care. For example, Mahmoud Al-Kurd, 45, from Deir Al-Balah, who has metastatic cancer, was forced to wait five months for permission to receive radiotherapy. When it was finally granted, the cancer had spread too much for the treatment to help.

His is not an isolated case. For instance, Akram Al-Sultan, 61, from Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip, was denied permission to receive cancer treatment in East Jerusalem.

Cancer victims such as these are not included among the statistics on fatalities caused by Israel’s assault on Jenin and the West Bank but they should be. While coverage of Israel’s growing and violent militancy is sparse in the Western news media, which embraces Israeli government propaganda that claims the violence is the result of Palestinian attacks, human rights groups such as B’Tselem are doing their best to document the truth and gather evidence that points the finger of blame squarely at Israel.

That is one reason why Israeli authorities have sought to shut down these human rights groups: To silence them and hide the evidence and facts.

Although Israel has much of the mainstream Western media in a self-applied censorship headlock, videos of Israel’s recent assault on Jenin are widely available on TikTok. Unlike Facebook, which bans or censors videos showing Israeli soldiers attacking Palestinian areas such as Jenin, TikTok allows them to be posted. That is one reason for the rise in calls from pro-Israel members of the US Congress to ban TikTok in America.

Israeli authorities can censor and twist the facts all they want but Palestinians, and much of the Arab world, can see the truth, and believe Palestinians have an inalienable right to defend themselves against armed aggression from a militant and lawless Israeli military and its armed settler cohorts.

The violence is only going to get worse and Netanyahu will be hard pressed to convince his allies in the Arab world that his government is not responsible.

## Europe and the US double down on support for Ukraine

Andrew Hammond

After fears that the European, and wider Western, unity over support for Ukraine might break down this winter, there have been fresh signs of resolve within the alliance this week, as the first anniversary of Russia’s invasion

it can be deployed on the battlefield as soon as possible.

These and other recent developments have led some to suggest that the war might have reached a critical turning point. For example, former US Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges predicted

are supplying Kyiv with increasingly sophisticated weapons, as this week’s tank agreement illustrates.

Yet, as much as Ukraine has managed to turn the tables on Russia, it will be exceptionally hard for

resources it needs to go one step further and potentially win it decisively.

This political factor was clearly in play in recent weeks during the decision-making process in Germany and the US over the tanks.

ing the aircraft might be used to strike targets inside Russia. In Scholz’s speech to the Bundestag in Berlin on Wednesday outlining the details of the agreement to supply tanks, for instance, he stated there would be “no fighter jet deliveries to Ukraine.”

has a history of regime change in the aftermath of unsuccessful wars (if that is what Ukraine ultimately proves to be), from the Bolshevik Revolution after the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War, to the collapse of the Soviet Union following its defeat

**Nearly a year later, however, Ukraine has taken back at least half of the initial territory seized by Russia. Moreover, as Ukrainian victories on the battlefield mount up, allies in Europe and the wider West, especially the US, are supplying Kyiv with increasingly sophisticated weapons, as this week’s tank agreement illustrates. Yet, as much as Ukraine has managed to turn the tables on Russia, it will be exceptionally hard for Kyiv to drive out all of Moscow’s forces from occupied territories this year. This core point was highlighted this month by Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the nation’s top-ranking military officer, who said this would be “very, very difficult” to achieve but added that this “doesn’t mean it can’t happen, doesn’t mean it won’t happen.” Moreover, tensions remain in European and wider Western policy circles insofar as allies there clearly want to ensure Ukraine has enough financing and weaponry to avoid losing the war, but are much more hesitant about providing Kyiv the resources it needs to go one step further and potentially win it decisively.**

fast approaches.

Exhibit A is the fact that European officials are — in advance of an EU-Ukraine Summit in Kyiv this coming Friday — actively planning a 10th round of sanctions on Russia. This potentially includes capping the sale prices of exports of refined petroleum products, building on the recently introduced caps on oil and gas prices.

Exhibit B is the agreement this week by the US and Germany to deliver dozens of US-made M1 Abrams and German-made Leopard tanks. This decision was greeted with some jubilation in Kyiv, which wants the heavy armor delivered quickly so

ed that Ukrainian forces will make sweeping gains this year and oust Russia from occupied territory in the Crimea.

This forecast should not be dismissed out of hand. It should be remembered that when Russia launched its three-pronged invasion in February 2022, its goal of erasing Ukraine as a sovereign nation within a matter of days was widely seen in the West as being plausible.

Nearly a year later, however, Ukraine has taken back at least half of the initial territory seized by Russia. Moreover, as Ukrainian victories on the battlefield mount up, allies in Europe and the wider West, especially the US,

Kyiv to drive out all of Moscow’s forces from occupied territories this year. This core point was highlighted this month by Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the nation’s top-ranking military officer, who said this would be “very, very difficult” to achieve but added that this “doesn’t mean it can’t happen, doesn’t mean it won’t happen.”

Moreover, tensions remain in European and wider Western policy circles insofar as allies there clearly want to ensure Ukraine has enough financing and weaponry to avoid losing the war, but are much more hesitant about providing Kyiv the

Both Chancellor Olaf Scholz and President Joe Biden stressed the defensive nature of the decision, stating that they are “helping Ukraine protect land” rather than become an “offensive threat.”

This frustrates many in Kyiv. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg that “progress must be made in other aspects of our defense cooperation,” including equipping the Ukrainian air force with technologically advanced fighter jets.

However, a significant number of European and wider Western governments remain opposed to such a development, fear-

Nevertheless, with broad support for Ukraine remaining steadfast in Europe and the wider Western alliance for now, attention and speculation is shifting to the issue of Russia’s staying power in Ukraine.

There is no question that Putin is under immense pressure. However, the balance of probability suggests that he can hold onto power for the foreseeable future, until at least the next presidential election in March 2024, unless the war begins to go exceptionally badly for Russia in coming months.

Beyond that, however, the outlook is much more murky. It should be remembered that Russia

in Afghanistan.

Yet not all previous Russian military defeats brought about great social and political change. So in the face of defeat in Ukraine, as in the case after Joseph Stalin’s failure to conquer Finland in 1939-40, Russia’s subdued elites might ultimately choose not to mount a serious challenge to their leader.

Amid this significant uncertainty, the most likely outcome this year is a continuing war of attrition. While Europe and the wider West might well be doing enough to ensure Ukraine does not lose, the Ukrainians might lack the ability in the coming months to deliver a knock-out military blow.

## End of the road for Syria’s opposition?

Dr. Haid Haid

Turkiye’s efforts to normalize diplomatic relations with the Syrian regime have fueled unease among Syria’s armed opposition groups, leading some opponents of Bashar Assad to fear the end of their decade-long cause.

Among those most concerned is Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, an armed organization that controls most of northwest Syria. While there is no evidence that Turkiye supports HTS directly, Ankara has been a major backer of other opposition groups during the 12-year Syrian conflict. Turkiye has mutual interests with HTS and has coordinated with the group on specific issues. Turkiye and Syria are working to restore ties, and if they find common ground, it could upend efforts to challenge the Assad regime, and effectively mark the end of HTS.

Assad has repeatedly conditioned reconciliation with Ankara on the complete withdrawal of

Turkish troops from northern Syria. Damascus also insists on the termination of Ankara’s support for armed opposition groups.

While some armed groups might be able to survive the regime’s territorial expansion, HTS is unlikely to be among them. That is because the group is designated as a terrorist organization by both Ankara and Damascus due to its former affiliation with Al-Qaeda. In fact, Turkiye’s efforts to reconcile with Assad pose an existential threat to HTS.

The deployment of Turkish forces to Idlib in 2017, designed to prevent the Syrian regime from seizing the last rebel stronghold, was enabled by HTS, which helped provide a safer environment for Turkish troops. Today, the group fears that this history might lead supporters to conclude that HTS favors Turkiye’s talks with Assad — a perception that could threaten the group’s unity and fuel

public anger.

HTS leader Abu Mohammed Al-Jolani was quick to denounce the Syrian-Turkish rapprochement. In a video statement, Al-Jolani said that he would not reconcile with Assad and promised to continue the fight until Damascus is liberated. He also pledged not to cede territory to Damascus. HTS is widely viewed as the strongest and most coherent armed group in north-west Syria. Therefore, it is important for rebel groups to secure their participation in the fight against the regime in order to better defend their territories.

To hammer the point home, HTS has increased its attacks against the Syrian regime in recent weeks. In contrast to the relative calm during the last year, the organization reportedly carried out 11 operations against regime forces in the past month and targeted pro-government cells operating in

Idlib.

But HTS is also pursuing a nuanced strategy, aware that its survival depends on maintaining good ties with its northern neighbor. For instance, rather than engage in direct confrontations with regime forces, it has focused operations on defensive military sites behind enemy lines. This is likely because it wants to avoid fueling tensions with Turkiye, which maintains a ceasefire brokered with Russia in March 2020.

Moreover, HTS has refrained from directly criticizing Turkiye’s foreign policy and assumed a more conciliatory tone. In a December statement, HTS blamed the Assad regime for its unwillingness to address Turkish concerns, and urged Ankara to “preserve its values and moral gains in supporting the oppressed.”

It also expressed understanding for the “pressures that Turkiye is facing at

the local and international levels.” These include Turkiye’s need to make progress on facilitating the return of Syrian refugees and countering the “Kurdish threat” before Turkish elections in May.

Privately, HTS has been more direct. Local sources tell me that HTS held a meeting in December with Turkish officials, during which the group’s leaders expressed concern about reconciliation with Syria and reiterated their commitment to honoring agreements with Turkiye.

The group’s calculated response appears to be driven by an assessment that negotiations between Ankara and Damascus are unlikely to yield results. This view is shared by many Syria observers who predict that the talks will stall because Turkiye and Syria remain far apart on many issues, not to mention the regime’s unwillingness to compromise.

This could explain why the HTS reaction so far has been designed to

assure its domestic audience of its commitment to the fight, rather than to aggressively persuade Turkiye to terminate talks with Assad.

Of course, all bets are off if talks between Ankara and Damascus produce an unexpected breakthrough. In such a scenario, HTS would likely first use its diplomatic channels with Ankara to reach a compromise that would allow it to preserve its interests as much as possible. These might include, for example, withdrawing from specific areas in Idlib in exchange for expanding into northern Aleppo.

Failing a mutually accepted compromise with Turkiye, the group would undoubtedly turn to more aggressive means of survival.

No matter how the Turkish-Syrian rapprochement progresses, these are uneasy times for Syria’s opposition in Idlib — those who fight, and those who simply long for an end to years of suffering.



# In Netanyahu’s eyes the justice system is an enemy, not a pillar of democracy

Last Saturday, more than 130,000 Israelis poured onto the streets in cities across the country in an expression of anger directed against a government that is indefatigable in its determination to destroy the principle of checks and balances in Israeli society, and with it the nation’s democratic system.

James Madison, one of America’s Founding Fathers and co-author of “The Federalist Papers,” once remarked: “If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.”

Since neither of these conditions prevails in society, there remains a need for government. And in Israel, in the aftermath of last November’s general election, it is Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his coalition who need to be controlled, otherwise they will leave nothing but scorched earth where Israeli democracy once stood.

It is not only ordinary citizens who are waking up to the new realities of the Netanyahu government’s power-grabbing intentions, which are likely to compromise their liberties, fuel rampant corruption among those who rule them, result in abuses of the rights of minorities, and increasingly target Supreme Court judges, including their president, Esther Hayot, Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara and other senior jurists.

This month, in a clear rebuff of the new govern-

ment’s attempts to legitimize corruption and make a mockery of the criminal justice system, 10 of 11 Supreme Court judges ruled that Netanyahu’s decision to appoint Aryeh Deri, the leader of the ultra-Orthodox Sephardic political party Shas, as a minister displayed “extreme unreasonability.”

The term “extreme unreasonability” does not reflect even half the scale of the corrupt nature of this appointment. Only months before the election, Deri was convicted of tax offenses after pleading guilty as part of a plea bargain with prosecutors.

In exchange for his admission of guilt, an agreement to resign from the Knesset, and a promise never to return to public life, the prosecution showed him extreme (and naive) leniency by agreeing to a suspended sentence without a conviction for moral turpitude — only for him to return to front-line politics less than a year later.

Deri previously served 22 months in prison after he was convicted of taking bribes while serving as interior minister. That verdict did carry guilt of moral turpitude.

In other words, Deri is a persistent offender, a corrupt and greedy one, who has made a career of pretending to protect the less privileged in society while, first and foremost, lining the pockets of himself, his family and friends.

In what political system that prides itself on good governance and accountability would such a person be put in charge of impor-

Yossi Mekelberg

tant ministries that control huge budgets?

Moreover, the current Knesset, in another distasteful decision, swiftly changed a constitutional law so as to allow a person who has been convicted of a crime and given a suspended jail sentence to serve in government — after which Deri was promptly appointed.

Most of the Supreme Court judges found it to be unreasonable that an unreformed, corrupt politician should be in government. Others emphasized the fact that he had lied to escape a possible jail term.

An appointment that was born in sin ended, at least for now, in complete ignominy not only for Deri but for the entire government and the person who heads it.

Considering that Deri is a key ally of Netanyahu and was handed two major ministries, health and the interior, the highest court in the country was sending the clear message that as long it is not disbanded by politicians, it intends to fully uphold the law and act reasonably — two notions that appear alien to this right-wing coalition government.

It is worth stating that opposition to the direction in which the current administration is going is not opposition to the basic principle of exploring constitutional reforms or reforming the courts. What is eminently objectionable, however, is an attempted constitutional coup by a group of corrupt politicians — led

by Prime Minister Netanyahu, who himself is facing trial on three counts of corruption — who are asking to be handed the reins of absolute power.

The president of the Supreme Court deemed the current attack on the constitutional system to be a sufficient threat to democracy to merit a departure from the court’s tradition of not intervening in what might appear to be a political debate, and issue a warning that the government’s plan to radically overhaul Israel’s judiciary “will shatter the judicial system and is, in fact, an unrestrained attack” that would enable the Knesset to “override human rights.” The court added that this plan “is meant to be a mortal wound to the independence of the judiciary, and to turn it into a silent institution.”

This was an unprecedented, but far from unfounded, intervention resulting not from some abstract fear of what the government might be planning, but based on what has already been proposed and carried out.

For example: An attempt to establish an override provision that would enable the Knesset to pass, by the slimmest of margins, legislation that had been invalidated by the court; taking away the court’s ability to apply a judgment based on “reasonable standard”; conferring on the government more power to make judicial appointments; and weakening the independence of legal advisers in government departments.

These are just a few

examples of the new government’s ill-intentioned attacks on the justice system so far. Furthermore, it is suggested that the changes the governing coalition is pushing through the Knesset at a rapid pace are merely the prelude to a flood of legislation that will weaken the safeguards on human rights, shrink the spaces in which civil society operates, and remove the protections against arbitrary acts of government targeting individuals and organizations.

In a country as complex as Israel, where the very fabric of society is already so delicate, it is not hard to imagine that these so-called reforms are merely a license for abuse of power by authorities on both sides of the Green Line.

In broad terms, those on the right who are attempting this constitutional usurpation can be divided between the sinister and the simple. The sinister aspire to absolute power without scrutiny by the courts, while perpetuating their rule and restricting the human, political and civic rights of Israelis.

The simple-minded perceive the winning of elections as a license not only to govern but to change the very foundations of the liberal-democratic settlement to the extent that the very system that created it will be destroyed, without being capable of grasping the meaning of this.

What is genuinely frightening is that the present government includes both the sinister and the simple in abundance.



## Winter blackouts in the US highlight need for clean energy

Michael R. Bloomberg

When freezing temperatures in the southeastern US led to blackouts over the holidays, some pointed their fingers at clean energy. That line of attack — solar panels and wind turbines are less reliable in storms than coal and gas plants — has become predictable. But it’s dead wrong, and it’s important to understand why, to avoid allowing a canard to slow the push for cleaner air and bolder climate action.

The issue of electricity reliability is a crucial one and is rightly at the centre of energy debates. Blackouts from storms can lead to suffering and death: In western New York last month, nine residents died after power failures cut off heat to their homes. Blackouts also result in steep economic losses. Avoiding them should be a top priority.

The most common cause of blackouts, downed power lines, is also the most visible. But there is one source of energy that safeguards against that danger: rooftop solar. If a tree takes down wires, or the energy grid fails for other reasons, solar panels with batteries can help families and businesses weather a blackout.

It’s true that on-site solar

tion that kills thousands of Americans every year, and changes to the climate that are making extreme weather — and the suffering that it brings — worse.

The second-largest cause of electricity outages during extreme weather is production failure. And once again, renewable energy has advantages over coal and gas in severe weather.

For starters, extreme heat and ice shut down coal and gas power plants faster than they hamper the sun and wind. During last month’s cold snap, nearly 90 per cent of the outages experienced by the nation’s largest grid operator were the result of coal and gas failures. If fossil fuels had been a backup source of power rather than the primary source, there likely would have been no power outages, or far fewer.

The holiday blackouts were an echo of coal and gas failures in Texas two years ago. During that freeze, some wind power did fail, but turbines can easily sustain cold temperatures — they work in the Arctic — if they are weatherproofed. Texas built them on the cheap and paid the price.

Another reliability advantage that renewable energy has over coal and

.....  
***The second-largest cause of electricity outages during extreme weather is production failure. And once again, renewable energy has advantages over coal and gas in severe weather. For starters, extreme heat and ice shut down coal and gas power plants faster than they hamper the sun and wind. During last month’s cold snap, nearly 90 per cent of the outages experienced by the nation’s largest grid operator were the result of coal and gas failures. If fossil fuels had been a backup source of power rather than the primary source, there likely would have been no power outages, or far fewer.***  
.....

is not practical for every home, but it’s viable in far more places than commonly imagined. And the main reason more homes and businesses don’t have their own solar panels is political: States and localities have made it unnecessarily difficult to obtain solar permits, and utilities have lobbied to block Americans from selling their excess power back onto the grid or force them into accepting prices far below what the utilities receive for transmitting the same units of power.

As a result, the public is paying a steep cost: in higher electric bills, dangerous blackouts, harmful pollu-

gas during extreme weather is familiar to anyone who understands a basic principle of investing: Don’t put all the eggs in one basket. Power generated by fossil fuels is concentrated at a relatively small number of large plants. In a storm, if something goes wrong at one plant, more than a million people can lose power.

Power generated by solar and wind, on the other hand, is distributed across many more units of production that are more geographically disbursed, making production more resilient in the face of extreme weather and better able to sustain the failure of individual units.

It’s true that the sun and wind don’t shine and blow 24/7, but that’s a manageable challenge. Battery storage and other technologies will continue to advance rapidly, and power that can’t be stored can be transmitted — if the US builds the long-distance transmission lines that are needed to carry it.

For example, the demand for power peaks in Chicago after the sun sets. And when Chicago’s HVAC systems are kicking in, solar panels in the Southwest are reaching their maximum. We just need more high-speed wires to connect the two regions.

Building that grid is an expensive proposition, of course, and the Inflation Reduction Act only scratches the surface of what’s needed. But it’s imperative that transmission capacity keep pace with production capacity.

Every storm or fire that knocks out fossil fuel plants is another reminder of the superiority of wind and solar in severe weather; the need to incentivise both production and transmission; the absurdity of restricting Americans from installing solar panels and selling cheaper, cleaner energy to their neighbours; and the crime of allowing

.....  
elected officials to be in the pocket of an industry that is sickening our children, killing our families and putting future generations at risk.  
Solar and wind power are already cheaper than coal and gas in much of the country. The faster we can build transmission capacity that will allow us to invert America’s energy mix — making solar and wind the primary source of power and fossil fuels the last resort — the more reliable our energy system will be during severe weather, the lower our monthly electric bills will be, and the healthier and safer our families and communities will be.

## The world must invest more in education

In a report released on Jan. 24, the International Day of Education, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization warned of serious setbacks in learning and the number of children in education around the world, most notably in developing countries.

Access to inclusive and equitable quality education is the fourth of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015 with the aim of achieving them by 2030. We are therefore now at the half-way mark in the process and last week’s report card on SDG4 was a review of the progress the world has made in the past seven years.

Some of the findings announced by UNESCO were indeed pleasant surprises; for instance, the speed at which some countries have been able to improve their positions in many of the seven benchmarks that form part of the education goal as a whole, whether in terms of the number of children in primary schools or public spending on education.

However, in most of the areas covered by the report the situation is more gloomy, if not alarming. For example, UNESCO said that as many as 41 million children in the South and East Africa region are not in school.

More than just the ques-

tion of children being out of school, however, perhaps the greater challenge lies in the poor quality of learning within schools, in particular those in developing countries.

Once again, the figures from sub-Saharan Africa are alarming. UNESCO said the region had the lowest rate of reading comprehension in the world, with fewer than 10 percent of 10-year-olds able to read and understand simple texts. Not surprisingly, children in areas where there are protracted conflicts or other crises fare the worst in terms of learning.

The situation is also grim because not all countries could provide data on progress toward achieving the benchmarks. Of those that could, UNESCO warned that only 29 percent were on course to achieve their 2025 targets with high probability in terms of the completion rate for upper secondary education, and 43 percent in terms of the participation rate in organized learning in the year before primary school.

It added that most of the data was provided by wealthier nations, highlighting the fact that the gravity of the situation would be much worse in poorer countries.

While there are multiple reasons for this poor state of affairs, the main issue is

Ranvir S. Nayar

money. UNESCO said that one in three countries overall, and two in three among low-income nations, did not spend enough on education. The target set by UNESCO is that countries should devote at least 4 percent of gross domestic product — and 15 percent of total public expenditure — to education.

Inadequate spending inevitably means fewer schools and underfunding of those that are available. This results in underpaid and underqualified teachers, and overcrowded classrooms. Many less wealthy countries also struggle to update curricula regularly. All of these shortcomings seriously undermine the ability of children to reach their potential.

To counter the challenges and help countries, at least in sub-Saharan Africa, UNESCO has called for governments in the region to sharply increase public spending on education. The organization said that consistent underinvestment can be offset if the governments would allocate at least 20 percent of annual national budgets to education. That is a tall order, however, especially for the poorest countries in the region, in which the investment in education can be as low as

3 percent of public spending.

Many of the countries in which investment is low are those affected by prolonged crises or civil wars. Unless there is a semblance of peace, therefore, governments, or rather their leaders, will certainly tend to focus on their own survival rather than the quality or quantity of education the children in their countries receive. They will, therefore, almost certainly continue to allocate much more money to weapons than teaching.

However, there is another, almost certainly even bigger, challenge than the one presented in the UNESCO’s mid-term report, which does not take into account the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education or the benchmarks for SDG4.

There have been countless studies into the severe impact of the global health crisis on education across the board and all around the world. Schools were closed for many months, in some cases up to two years, as a result of which many children suffered in a number of ways, including in terms of access to education and the quality of learning.

There are dozens of reports that sound the alarm about the severe effects of the pandemic on education. As a result of prolonged school closures

Mick O’Reilly

times longer than the reign of Sunak’s predecessor, Liz Truss.

The retreat, according to press reports, was also an attempt to focus the cabinet on five key areas that Sunak and Jeremy Hunt, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the PM’s right-hand man, that the Conservatives will focus on for the remainder of their time in office.

Controlling inflation is job one. Get that in order and a lot of the root causes of the industrial action and strikes that are underscoring the news agenda will hopefully face away. Hopefully, but the irony hasn’t been lost on the British public that Hunt, who served as the Minister for Health under Theresa May and Boris Johnson, was also the man who ran the NHS — or ran it into the ground if you would believe the leaders of

those unions now fighting for better pay and conditions for nurses and others.

**There’s no money to fix the system**

And job two is fixing the waiting times in the NHS. Sure, the government can tinker with small administrative changes — but the only real way to fix that is throw billions of more money at the system. And Hunt, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, knows more than anyone that there simply isn’t any money around now — and certainly not when inflation means the borrowing costs for the government went up £30 billion in December alone. And those borrowing costs were partially triggered by the reckless economic policy announced by Truss, during her 44 days in office.

That country retreat for the cabinet was also used as an opportunity from

Rod Stewart is a pop star who takes more enjoyment nowadays from playing with his vast model railway set-up than he does from taking to the stage in front of thousands of screaming fans.

He’s made his money and at 78 years of age, yes, his hips don’t lie. He hasn’t quite got the swagger of decades gone. He’s sufficiently wealthy that he’s mostly retired, living just outside London’s M25 motorway, and has paid his dues and taxes.

So, you can imagine the surprise then when viewers tuned into a call-in segment on a recent Thursday on Sky News heard the gravelly-voiced Scot call in to condemn the Conservative government and bemoan the sad state of affairs in the UK’s National Health Service.

**Abysmal condition of the NHS**

He said he was appalled

by the abysmal condition of the NHS, one where ambulances don’t come, accident and emergency departments have long waiting queues for treatment, and where beds are as rare as hen’s teeth because those who are in the wards should be care homes for the elderly and infirm — but they’re rarer than hen’s teeth too.

The system is broken, ambulance workers, nurses, support services — even doctors — are in some sort of industrial action. And they have the overwhelming support of the British public.

Stewart offered to use his funds to pay for scans for people — fancy a six-month wait to see whether or not you might have cancer — and viewers were urged to call the television station if they needed a scan.

On the same day that Stewart made his phone call, a coroner’s inquest in

Surrey — a county that is prime Conservative territory, also on that M25 motorway that circumnavigates the commuter belt neighbouring London — heard the terrible sad story of a woman in her 30s who died alone at home. Her mummified body was discovered three years after her death. She had mental health issues, was estranged from her family, and was supposedly under the care of the NHS. No one missed her.

And on the same day too, Rishi Sunak assembled his cabinet in Chequers — the office country residence of UK prime ministers and not far from the capital either.

The daylong gathering was an attempt to reset the agenda of government. Reset? Heck, Sunak has only been in office since September, but such is that state of chaos in the UK right now, that four-month period is pretty much three

## UK Conservatives are on life-support

senior party election gurus to brief the Conservative elite of their slim but achievable path to election victory next year.

Get inflation under control, fix the NHS and stop small boats with refugees coming across the English Channel and there’s a chance of hauling back the 20-point deficit that the Conservatives are in compared to Sir Keir Starmer’s Labour party.

As long as the party can avoid any more scandals, too.

How ironic that the briefing came on a day when Nadhim Zahawi, the Conservative party chairman and a member of cabinet too, faced intense

calls to step aside. It’s just been revealed that he paid His Majesty’s Revenue Collectors some £5 million in penalties and taxes over his business dealings. There are questions too over his property dealings, and Zahawi didn’t do himself any favours by threatening legal action against journalists who raised the issue over the last 24 months. Oh, and he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, responsible for the nation’s money and taxes when he paid the fine.

But the bigger question is what Sunak knows and when did he know it. After all, he was Chancellor of the Exchequer while the

initial press questions were asked about Zahawi’s affairs — and senior political figures are generally kept in the loop when such questions are put to officials, lest there be political fallout from the stories when they do see the light of day in print or broadcast.

But back to Stewart, who told Sky News that he had been a long-time supporter of the Conservatives.

“Change the bloody government,” he said when asked how to fix the NHS.

This current one, it seems, is on life support, and the prognosis isn’t good ...

### Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.





# Regional connectivity key to boost Pakistan's exports

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan - Kyrgyzstan Trade House Meher Kashif Younis on Sunday said that promoting bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan could be a milestone in regional and global trade integration and connectivity.

Delivering his presidential address at a seminar on "Trade Prospects between Pakistan-Kyrgyzstan" held under the aegis of Gold Ring Economic Forum, a strategic think tank, he said the geo-strategic position of Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan also highlights their geo-economic importance, which could play a significant role in promoting trade connectivity amongst different regions

and potential markets of the world.

He said that Pakistan was currently a major player in global and regional trade, bordering the Middle East and South Asian states on the one hand and the global economic power China on the other.

Similarly, Kyrgyzstan, due to its very important geographical location, had a distinctive place among the Central Asian states (CARs).

He said Kyrgyzstan exporters can also use Gwadar port for the shipment of their products to European countries and other parts of the world and Pak importers can import value-added milk products besides either side can also promote tourism and collaboration

in the mining industry.

He said that Pakistan was contributing \$100 million to the Kyrgyz economy in terms of fees and other living expenses of approximately 10,000 Pakistani students. He said Pakistan partially can also meet its energy needs from Kyrgyzstan.

He said Kyrgyzstan offered many opportunities for trade with Pakistan as it was the shortest entry point of Pakistani products to the 'Eurasian Economic Markets' of 182-million people comprising Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Armenia.

He said that goods once exported to Kyrgyzstan could be further transported to the Eurasian markets without payment of customs duties.

Meher Kashif Younis said that many high-rising buildings for shopping malls, apartments, and hotels were currently being constructed mostly by Turkish firms for which raw material was being imported from other countries. He said that construction materials from Pakistan could also be exported.

Meher Kashif Younis said we are lucky enough to have dynamic Ambassador Kyrgyzstan Ulanbek Totuaev who is all the time available only one call away to facilitate pak traders and promote bilateral trade between two countries. He said Dr Shahid Hassan President Kyrgyzstan Trade House is also actively involved to strengthen trade relations and cooperation with two Muslim states.

## Training on e-Commerce in Surgical Cluster held

SIALKOT (APP): Training on 'e-Commerce in Surgical Cluster under Cluster Development Initiative' was held here at Surgical Instruments Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (SIMAP).

Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) and Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) organized its third session of trainings on e-Commerce in the office of Surgical Instruments Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (SIMAP), said a news release issued here on Sunday.

The training was imparted to the members of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by PITB e-Rozgaar Trainer Muhammad Ahsan Faryad. The purpose of training sessions was to capacitate the selected firms of Surgical manufacturing on e-Commerce.

## PCMEA says may attend 2 exhibitions in India

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA) is considering the Indian invitation for participation in two exhibitions, going to be held there this year.

The invitation was extended to a PCMEA delegation at Domotax exhibition, recently held in Germany, Association's Senior Vice Chairman Usman Ashraf told the media after chairing a meeting of the North Zone Committee of PCMEA, here on Sunday.

He said the meeting discussed various matters including annual report of Carpet Training Institute (CTI) 2021-22, establishment of the management committee and the reports, presented by various committees and the problems faced by the industry.

Usman Ashraf said, "At Domotax, India has invited us to participate in two exhibitions, to be held in

India this year and we are considering their invitation." He said that preparations would be started regarding active participation in the next Domotax exhibition 2024 to be held in Turkey.

It was also observed that due to fluctuation in the dollar rate, exporters were facing numerous problems.

The meeting, he mentioned, expressed concern over difficulties in importing chemicals and other inputs for manufacturing of handmade carpets, and said that it had become difficult for them to complete foreign orders.

The exporters, who participated in the recent Domotax exhibition held recently in Germany presented a report and said that Pakistani products have received immense appreciation in the exhibition.

In the meeting, the exporters who participated in the Domotax exhibi-

tion, presented a report in the meeting and said that Pakistani products had received immense appreciation in the exhibition; however, the government should provide more support to increase the number of stalls.

"In the meeting, there was also a discussion regarding the participation in the TDAP Expo to be held in Karachi this year," he added.

Usman Ashraf apprehended, "Due to fluctuations in the dollar conversion rate, there is anxiety among the exporters and there is a deadlock in the final negotiations with foreign buyers, which is likely to further affect the exports."

PCMEA senior central leaders Abdul Latif Malik, Pervez Hanif, Major (R) Akhtar Nazir, Riaz Ahmed, Ijazur Rehman, Saeed Khan, Kamran Razi, Shahid Hassan, Umair Usman and others were also present.

## Analysts fear further decline in rupee against dollar in coming week

KARACHI (INP): The analysts have expressed fear that Pakistani rupees is expected to decline further against US dollar in the coming week.

They were of the view, "No stability in Pakistani rupee unless the inflow of foreign currency improves." It is worth mentioning here that during the outgoing week, the local currency's performance was poor as it slid from 230.15 to 262.60 against the dollar in the interbank market following two days of devaluation. The value of the rupee against the greenback decreased by Rs32 or 14%.

Meanwhile, in the open market this week, the local currency dropped by Rs29 to 269 against the dollar.

Pakistan's currency has been declining to transition to a market-determined exchange rate since control on the currency was removed in compliance with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions.

One of the requirements for resuming a bailout programme

Pakistan sought from the IMF is a market-based currency rate. Pakistan's finances have been in disarray due to diminishing foreign exchange reserves and stalled external financing.

The cash-strapped country has hardly three weeks' worth of import coverage in its foreign exchange reserves and is struggling with a severe balance of payments crisis. Pakistan is desperate to secure external funding to avoid default.

The central bank's foreign exchange reserves have depleted to \$3.7 billion as of January 20.

"The rupee will depreciate slightly over the coming week as a result of a significant adjustment (to the exchange rate) that was previously made over the last two sessions," said an analyst.

The crucial \$1.1 billion tranche, which is a part of a \$6 billion IMF loan agreed upon in 2019, was initially scheduled to be released in November 2022, but the Fund has yet to approve its release.

Due to the IMF's demands that

the government has to carry out fiscal consolidation measures and economic reforms, recent discussions regarding resuming the bailout have been put on hold.

The resident representative of the global lender announced on Thursday that an IMF mission will arrive in Pakistan next week to discuss the ninth review of the country's ongoing funding programme, which has been halted.

"While there was no intervention in the forex market on Friday, the rupee/dollar parity struggled to go up beyond 264, and after staying at that level, receded somewhat to close at 262.60. Indeed, there was interest from exporters at these levels," said Tresmark in a client note.

"The market will struggle to go above 270 in the short-term, correcting to 265 levels, if there is no negative news on the IMF or the political front. But traders will keep a close watch on depleting reserves which went below \$10 billion for the first time in years," it added.



ISLAMABAD: A women displaying shawls and jewelry on his stall during Exhibition at local mall.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers along with their tools waiting for daily wages work while sitting along road at Khana Pull.

## PBF says policy makers pushed the economy into a ravine

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Businesses Forum (PBF) on Sunday rejected the sharp increase in petroleum prices of Rs 35.35 per litre; termed further ruin the life of masses and industry.

The nation is already witnessing a tsunami of inflation "unfortunately policy makers have pushed the economy into a ravine".

PBF Vice President, Jahanara Wattoo said total mismanagement of our economy by a incumbent government and they further crushed masses and salaried class with latest

hike in petrol & diesel prices yesterday. Now Electricity and gas prices may also hike in few days and around 35 percent unprecedented inflation expected with Rs 300 mini budget forecast after the unprecedented and artificial rupee devaluation to Rs262.6 against one dollar.

She said now all imported goods will become more expensive by an additional 10%, due to the more than 10% drop in the value of the rupee against the greenback. These goods will include food (wheat and

wheat-flour, pulse and cooking oil), cotton for textile, steel scrap and energy products (oil, gas and coal).

Wattoo said the rising price of essential commodities will severely hit the common man the most, particularly those from the lower-income segments of society who were already struggling due to the ongoing financial turmoil and political upheaval. PBF official also viewed that the economic crisis appears to have entered a critical phase in Pakistan as the cash crunch is fast squeezing the supply chains

of everyday consumables with the eventual breakdown staring in the face.

The decision-makers in financial policy have wasted precious time, leading some to speculate that the crisis is caused by more than just economic factors, and that their resolution has emerged as the primary point of contention. Although the nature of these considerations is unknown, they are significant enough to sustain the crisis, and we believe that the chances of resolving the issues are remote unless a satisfactory settlement is reached.

## Oil prices rise amid positive sentiment

NEW YORK (Xinhua/APP): Oil prices advanced on Sunday, bolstered by positive sentiment. The West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for March delivery gained 86 cents, or 1.07 percent, to settle at 81.01 U.S. dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude for March delivery added 1.35 dollars, or 1.57 percent, to close at 87.47 dollars a barrel on the London ICE Futures Exchange. The rally came as traders bet on rising energy demand in China.

Meanwhile, stronger-than-expected economic data from the United States provided additional support to oil markets.

## Jobs report to give further clues about where economy is headed

NEW YORK (CNN): The Federal Reserve is going to raise interest rates again on Wednesday. But will it be another half-point hike or just a quarter-point increase? And what about the rest of the year?

The Fed's actions beyond this week's meeting will depend primarily on whether inflation is truly slowing. Investors will get another clue when the January jobs report is released on Friday.

Economists predict that 185,000 jobs were added last month, a slowdown from the gain of 223,000 jobs in December and 263,000 in November. A further deceleration in the labor market would likely please the Fed, as it would show that last year's rate hikes are successfully taking some air out of the economy. The Fed knows it's in a tough situation. Inflation pressures are partly fueled by wage gains for workers. In an environment where the unemployment rate is at a half-century low of 3.5%, employees have been able to command big increases in pay to keep up with rising prices of consumer goods and services.

Along those lines, average hourly earnings, a measure of wages that is also part of the monthly jobs report, are expected to increase 4.3% year-over year. That's down from 4.6% in December and 5.1% in November. As wage growth cools, so do price increases. The Fed's favorite measure of inflation – the Personal Consumption Price Index or PCE – rose "just" 5% over the past 12 months through last December, compared to a 5.5% annual increase in November.

## Turkiye keen in raising trade ventures with Pakistan, says Mian Kashif Ashfaq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council, Mian Kashif Ashfaq Sunday said Turkiye wanted to launch joint ventures with Pakistan to further cement bilateral trade and economic ties.

Talking to a delegation of business community led by Faran Shahid, he said Turkey has offered a joint roadmap to give new direction to either sides for strengthening economic and commercial relations to generate employment and overcome growing financial problems.

He said there is a vast scope of exploring new

avenues of mutual investment and enhancement of economic cooperation between the private sectors of two Muslim countries.

He said Turkiye Embassy Commercial Counsellor to Pakistan Nurettin Demir told him that "A preferential trade agreement has been signed between Turkiye and Pakistan which he added is expected to be approved by the Turkish parliament next month which will also act as a catalyst for improving trade and economic relations between two countries".

He said trade volume between both countries is very low which he hoped

will jump to new heights through mutual cooperation. Mian Kashif Ashfaq called for concrete measures to bring the business community of both countries closer, business-to-business meetings, Joint trade exhibitions and full exploitation of bilateral trade potentials.

He said Pakistan could address the current economic issues by taking advantage of Turkiye's experiences.

He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is a suitable trade route for Turkish investors to export goods to Central Asian states via Afghanistan.

## MCCI proposes barter exchange system for trade with neighbours

MULTAN (APP): Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (MCCI) sub-committee for liaison with government met here Sunday and proposed that department concerned should introduce a barter exchange system for trade with neighbouring counties and demanded legislation for international e-payments.

The meeting, chaired by sub-committee convener, Khawaja Muhammad Hussain, unanimously named MCCI president Mian Rashid Iqbal as the co-convener of the sub-committee.

The south Punjab industrialists discussed the national economic situation in detail and the initiatives of the government to bring stability. Speaking on the occasion Khawaja Muhammad Hussain said that the industries that are self reliant should be encouraged and businesses relying on these industries should be given incentives.

Khawaja said that a barter trade exchange system should be developed for trade with neighbouring countries to jumpstart trade activities in the region and develop good relations with neighbour.

To further strengthening the national economy, legislation should be introduced for information tech-

nology sector particularly the international e-payments.

Moreover, he said that lectures of senior MCCI business persons should be arranged for students of Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Pakistan (ICMAP) to make them understand the business and industry requirements.

President MCCI and co-convener of sub committee Mian Rashid Iqbal, senior vice president Nadeem Ahmad Sheikh, vice president Sheikh Asim Saeed, Suhail Tufail, Waqas Khalid, Aqeel Qureshi and secretary committee Sajid Ansari were present.

## FPCCI's UBG greets Punjab caretaker ministers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman United Business Group of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Shahzad Ali Malik Sunday felicitated the newly inducted caretaker ministers Punjab SM Tanveer and Syed Azfar Ali Nasir.

He said the first time two renowned industrialists enjoying good reputation coupled with the highest degree of integrity laced with inherited spirit of dedication and devotion have been inducted in provincial cabinet which he added will endeavour

their best to deliver the goods in the prevailing scenario.

He said both ministers are true representatives of the business community and have vast knowledge and rich experience of good governance in the private sector. He hoped that SM Tanveer in his capacity as minister for industries, commerce, investment and energy will push forward the industrial sector and help address the genuine problems being confronted by the private sector on top priority to pave way for economic growth.

Shahzad Ali Malik said that a sustainable economy has assumed the highest priority worldwide for the survival of a state.

He said our fragile economy needs immediate result-oriented measures for its durable stability.

He hoped both ministers will take all stakeholders and chambers of commerce and industries into confidence to steer out the country from the prevailing economic quagmire.

He said the business community will cooperate with them to put the engine of economic growth into motion.





## In brief

## Third T20I washed out

CANBERRA (Agencies): The third T20I between Pakistan Women and Australia Women was abandoned without a ball bowled due to rain at the Manuka Oval, Canberra on Sunday. Australia take the T20I series 2-0. The home earlier also won the three ODI series 3-0. Pakistan women team will fly to South Africa tomorrow to feature in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup. They will play against India in their opening match on 12 February in Cape Town. Pakistan T20I squad ICC Women's T20 World Cup, South Africa: Bismah Maroof (c), Aimen Anwar, Aliya Riaz, Ayesha Naseem, Fatima Sana, Javeria Khan, Muneeba Ali (wk), Nushra Sandhu, Nida Dar, Omaima Sohail, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Sidra Nawaz (wk) and Tuba Hassan Reserves: Ghulam Fatima and Kainat Imtiaz ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2023 Pakistan fixtures 12 February v India at Newlands, Cape Town 15 February v Ireland at Newlands, Cape Town 19 February v West Indies at Boland Park, Paarl 21 February v England at Newlands, Cape Town

## McIlroy shoots 65 to take 3-shot lead

DUBAI (Agencies): World number one Rory McIlroy carded a seven-under-par third round of 65 to take a three-shot lead in the rain-delayed Dubai Desert Classic. The Northern Irishman made eight birdies and a bogey to get to 15 under on the Majlis course at Emirates Club. Englishmen Callum Shinkwin (67) and Dan Bradbury (68) are second. Joint overnight leader Richard Bland carded a 71 to sit 11 under in a group including fellow Englishman Ian Poulter (69) and American Patrick Reed (69). The final round of the DP World Tour event will be played on Monday, a day later than scheduled, after heavy rain on the first day meant only 12 of the 132-man field completed their first round on time. McIlroy birdied the first four holes as well as the 13th, 14th, 15th and 17th before dropping a shot with a six on the last. "It felt like the good golf came in two bursts, and then the rest of it was OK," said McIlroy. "I held it together. I still don't feel quite in control of my game. But today was much better than yesterday, so that was a positive. "This is my first start of the year. I don't think I've ever won in my first start of the year - I had plenty of chances at Abu Dhabi down the road over the years, and never quite got it done. "So tomorrow is a nice opportunity to try to do something that I've never done before." Adria Arnaus and Angel Hidalgo of Spain, South African Shaun Norris and last week's winner Victor Perez of France are the other players on 11 under. New Zealand's Ryan Fox fired a 66 to get into contention at 10 under, alongside Thomas Pieters of Belgium, England's Matt Wallace and Calum Hill of Scotland. Reed was cleared by the tour after claims on social media that he had identified a ball as his own that was lodged in the wrong tree on the 17th hole. A tour referee used binoculars to confirm a ball with Reed's specific marking was in the tree.

# Djokovic wins Australian Open to equal Nadal's 22 Slam titles

MELBOURNE (AFP): An emotional Novak Djokovic beat Stefanos Tsitsipas Sunday to claim a 10th Australian Open title and equal Rafael Nadal's 22 Grand Slam crowns, a victory that returned him to world number one.

The Serbian star overcame a hamstring injury and off-court drama on his return to Melbourne Park to sweep past the Greek third seed 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5) on Rod Laver Arena.

He surged to victory without father Srdjan in the stands after he sparked controversy by posing with a fan carrying a Russian flag featuring Vladimir Putin's face following his son's quarter-final win.

Djokovic climbed to his player's box after the win to embrace his mother and broke down in uncontrollable tears, collapsing to the ground sobbing.

It capped a remarkable comeback by the 35-year-old fourth seed, who missed last year's tournament when he was deported over his Covid vaccination stance.

After a three-year ban from Australia was lifted, Djokovic won the lead-up Adelaide International before reinforcing his stature as an all-time great in Melbourne.

The emphatic win drew him level with Nadal on a record 22



Slams, two clear of Roger Federer. The Spanish great made a shock second-round exit with a hip injury, but is targeting a return for the clay-court season and another crack at the French Open, and with it a 23rd Slam title.

Nadal, though, is set to slide down the rankings when they are released on Monday, in contrast to Djokovic, who will dethrone Spanish teenager Carlos Alcaraz and return to the top for the first time since June. Tsitsipas will climb one place to three.

Both men were back on a court

that helped them rise to stardom.

Djokovic won his first Grand Slam in 2008 on Rod Laver Arena while Tsitsipas burst on the scene in 2019 when he stunned defending champion Federer in the last 16.

With sizeable Greek and Serbian communities in Melbourne, and Rod Laver in attendance, there was a raucous atmosphere. Djokovic came into the match with his confidence high having won all nine of his previous Australian Open finals and with a 10-2 career advantage

over the Greek.

Moving freely with only minimal strapping on his troublesome left hamstring, he opened with a comfortable hold after being greeted by huge cheers.

Djokovic worked two break points on Tsitsipas's opening serve, to no avail, but kept probing and the Greek handed him a break for 3-1 with a careless double fault.

Tsitsipas, in only his second Grand Slam final to Djokovic's 33rd, appeared nervous, losing the first set in just 36 minutes.

But he battled back into contention in a much closer second set as his confidence grew, improving his serve and winning some pressure points.

He earned his first break point - and set point -- when Djokovic blasted a backhand wide.

But the Serb clung on to keep the set on serve and it went to a tiebreak, where his greater experience came to the fore.

Against the odds, Tsitsipas broke for the first time on Djokovic's opening serve in set three, only to relinquish the advantage immediately after a gripping rally, furious with himself.

It again went to a tiebreak, where Djokovic once again raised a level to claim another title.

## FIFA bans four Uruguay players for World Cup chaos

ZURICH (INP): Uruguay's Fernando Muslera and Jose Maria Gimenez were hit with four-match bans by FIFA, while Diego Godin and Edinson Cavani were suspended for a game each after they confronted the referee following their World Cup match against Ghana.

The Uruguayan football federation has also been fined 50,000 Swiss francs (\$54,248) and handed a partial stadium closure for their next home match over the "discriminatory behaviour of its supporters" and the "misconduct" of the players.

FIFA launched proceedings against the players who angrily harangued the referee after crashing out of the tournament in Qatar, despite beating Ghana 2-0 in their final group match on Dec 2.

In the Group 'H' deciders, Uruguay had one foot in the last-16 before South Korea scored in stoppage time to beat Portugal 2-1 and went through by virtue of scoring one goal more than the South Americans over their three matches.

German referee, Daniel Siebert, decided not to award penalties for tackles on Darwin Nunez in the opening half and Cavani in the dying minutes, with striker Luis Suarez saying after the game that FIFA was "against Uruguay". The players will also have to carry out football-related community service, and will pay fines of up to 20,000 Swiss francs (\$21,701).

## Shiffrin misses chance to equal all-time record

SPINDLERUV MLYN (Agencies): Mikaela Shiffrin missed out on the chance to equal the all-time record for World Cup wins when she finished 0.06 seconds behind Lena Duerr in Sunday's slalom in Spindleruv Mlyn.



The American won Saturday's first slalom at the Czech ski resort to move to 85 career wins, just one shy of Ingemar Stenmark's overall record of 86.

And the 27-year-old was quickest on the opening run as she flew down the course in 44.66secs which was 0.67s quicker than second-placed Duerr. The warning signals were there, though, when Shiffrin told German broadcaster ZDF after the first run: "I'm a little tired today, I'm trying to concentrate and save my strength".

Duerr responded with a sizzling second run of 45.58s, 0.05s behind Franziska Gritsch, for a combined time of 1min 30.91 which was good enough to give the German a second World Cup victory after a parallel slalom win in Moscow in 2013. Shiffrin was last out of the gate and struggled for rhythm as she came down in 46.31s, an overall time of 1min 30.97sec.

Croatian teenager Zrinka Ljutic picked up third place after two good runs, which left her 0.49sec behind Duerr. There was some consolation for Shiffrin, however, as she sealed her seventh discipline title in the slalom.

With two races to come and a maximum of 200 points for any challenger, she is 255 points ahead of the Swiss Wendy Holdener, eliminated in the first run on Sunday, and the Slovak Petra Vlhova who could only finish 13th.

She is also closing in on a fifth overall title but her bid to equal and pass Stenmark's record of 86 wins will have to wait. Like Shiffrin, Stenmark relished the slalom and giant slalom with the Swede dominating the two disciplines from 1975 before retiring in 1989.

Shiffrin has bounced back in emphatic style after a nightmare Beijing Olympics last year where she failed to win a single medal. She is heavy favourite to add to her haul of golds at next month's world championships in Courchevel and Meribel.

## Sharjah Police hosts 41st Police Shooting Championship

SHARJAH (INP): The 41st edition of the Police Shooting Championship, held under the patronage of H.H. Lt. General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, will kick off on Monday at the shooting ranges in Al Khedira camp in Sharjah.

The Championship, which organised by the Police sports Federation at the Ministry of Interior, will be hosted by the Sharjah Police (SP), and will continue until 9th February.

The event will witness the participation of 450 competitors representing the country's police, and defence and security forces, in addition to Saudi and Bahraini shooting teams.

Brigadier General Mohammed Humaid bin Dalmouj Al Dhaheri, Head of the Police Sports Federation, affirmed that the Ministry of Interior is keen to diversify sporting events and activities in a way that ensures the achievement of the desired strategic goals.

For his part, Brigadier General Mohammed Khamis Al Othmani, Chairman of the Organising Committee for the Police Shooting Championship in Sharjah, highlighted that the event will feature 13 teams from the UAE, as well as participation from Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

## Muhammad Akram inaugurates Zalmi T10 Media Cricket Cup

Shahid Khan Afridi

PESHAWAR: Former pacer and Director Peshawar Zalmi Cricket Muhammad Akram Sunday formally inaugurated the first Zalmi T10 Media Cricket Cup-2023 at historical Islamia College Cricket Ground here.

Zalmi Foundation and Peshawar Press Club is jointly organizing the Cup wherein a total of 8 specifically selected teams are taking part. President Peshawar Press Club Arshad Aziz Malik, Senior Journalist Shamim Shahid, General Secretary Irfan Musazai, Peshawar Press Club Sports Committee and other important personalities and a large number of journalists were present.

In the first match Mardan Zalmi team defeated Bannu Zalmi team by nine wickets in the opening match of the T10 Cricket Cup organized in cooperation with Peshawar Zalmi. Mardan Zalmi team captain Yasir Ali won the toss and invited the opposing team to bat first. Qari Zia-ur-Rehman scored 76 runs for the loss of nine wickets in 10 overs and was the outstanding batsman with 38 runs. Iftikhar and Irfan Khan from Mardan dismissed two players. Captain Yasir Ali, who achieved the target and won by nine wickets, played an unbeaten innings of 48 runs and was declared the man of the match.

The second match in the league was played



between Kohat Zalmi and Khyber Zalmi. Khyber Zalmi captain Bilal Afridi won the toss and invited Kohat Zalmi to bat first. Kohat scored 104 runs for six wickets in the allotted ten overs. Khyber Zalmi team could only score 91 runs in the allotted ten overs in which captain Bilal Afridi scored the highest 25 runs.

The third match was played between Zalmi Force and Dera Ismail Khan Zalmi in which Dera Ismail Khan Zalmi played first. In the allotted ten overs, they scored 111 runs for the loss of 6 wickets, in which Arslan was prominent by scoring 29 runs.

In response, the Zalmi Force team scored 106 runs in the allotted ten overs, Shah Faisal was outstanding by scoring 37 runs. In the last match, Malakand Zalmi's team defeated Abbottabad Zalmi by three wickets, Abbottabad won the toss

and batted first and scored 102 runs for the loss of two wickets in the allotted overs.

The target of runs was achieved on the second ball of the last over. Captain Zawar scored an unbeaten 57 runs. On this occasion, Director Peshawar Zalmi Mohammad Ikram said that Zalmi for the first time conducted trials for talent hunt across the country where fifteen to twenty thousand children participated and among them 100 talented children were selected who are now part of different teams.

These kids are playing the best cricket, he said, adding soon after PSL 8, trials will be held again across the country, which includes the best pitches, good coaches and welfare work that is being done through the platform of Zalmi Foundation.

He said that like Zalmi

Foundation also organized trials and leagues in Europe and UK and from there short-listed children with the best talent. Regarding the performance of Zalmi cricket team in PSL8, he said that they will start with an exhibition match against Quetta and we hope that our team will perform well.

He said that we hope that the next PSL9 matches will be held in Peshawar because recently we visited Hayatabad Cricket Stadium and Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium and we were told that both the stadiums will be ready by June.

For the last eight years, we wanted to play matches in Peshawar because there are a lot of Zalmi supporters and we want our supporters to see us in their own and home grounds. He said a request has been made by CEO Peshawar Zalmi to the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to complete the two Stadiums - Hayatabad Cricket Stadium and Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium so that international matches could be brought back to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said that Babar Azam is a world class player, his fan following is all over the world and he has earned a great name for Pakistan. "That is very important to bring journalists into the field of sports and this is the reason why for them Zalmi like other projects got the lead by holding T10 Peshawar Zalmi Media Cricket Cup.

## Open Day for the students of Peshawar Model School (Boys-I)

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Model Degree College (Boys) Dalazak Road, Peshawar arranged an Open Day for the students of Peshawar Model School (Boys-I) and Peshawar Model School (Boys-IV) on Saturday January 28, 2023. On the Open Day, the students were given a full campus tour where they visited science laboratories, examination section, college grounds, hostel and digital library of the campus.

The students also played different games, enjoyed quad bike ride and many more adventure activities and entertainment. The aim of this activity was to make the students acquainted with college life and to explore the well-established education system of Peshawar Model Degree Colleges.

another brace to take 4-2 while they fired in four more goals against one by their opponents to win the match by 8-3.

The second match took place in the rain which turned out to be very exciting one as Master Paints/Newage Cables edged pass FG/Div Polo by 8-7 in the dying moments of the match.

## U19 Women's World Cup Inspired India thrash England in final

POTCHEFSTROOM (Agencies): An inspired India won the first Women's Under-19 World Cup by thrashing England in a one-sided final in South Africa.

In the face of high-quality bowling and an exceptional fielding performance England struggled on the big occasion and were bowled out for just 68.

Liberty Heap fell for a duck in the first over before captain and key batter Grace Scriven became the second of two wickets in the fourth over.

From 16-3 India continued to take regular wickets, including a diving, one-handed catch from Archana Devi and a direct hit run-out by Soumya Tiwari.

England had progressed impressively to the final but were outclassed by an India side which featured two full internationals, including captain Shafali Verma.

The superstar opener was caught for 15 in the third over of the chase, India slipping to 20-2, but her side still cruised to victory with seven wickets and six overs to spare.

When the final runs came the India players

charged onto the field in celebration - this the cricket superpower's first victory in a women's World Cup.

India prove too good for England

Unfortunately for England their worst performance in a tournament in which they had progressed unbeaten came in the final. India, meanwhile, were superb.

They made a number of diving stops to apply pressure early on after seamer Titas Sadhu, who took 2-6 from four overs, had Heap caught and bowled with the fourth ball of the innings.

The highlight of that athletic fielding effort was the catch from Devi - who also had Scriven caught at long-on with her off-spin - to dismiss Ryana MacDonald-Gay - the only England batter to threaten with 19.

Devi swooped to her right at extra cover before plucking the ball inches above the ground and Tiwari later hit with a throw from cover to run out Josie Groves.

When Richa Ghosh, a wicketkeeper who has played 47 times for India's senior side, produced a smart stumping to dismiss

Hannah Baker there was a feeling her side could do no wrong.

England needed everything to go right to thwart India's chase to have any chance but dropped two catches in the first five overs. Even the winning runs hit by Tiwari, who ended 24 not out, came with a misfield.

While the performance was disappointing from England, the result and the tournament as a whole - the first of its kind in the women's game - generates real excitement for the future of the sport.

The auction for the first inaugural Women's Premier League is set to take place next month - a tournament set to change the landscape of the female game - and some of these India players could be signed for large sums.

The Board for Control of Cricket in India has also announced £500,000 in prize money for the victorious squad while the performances from the other 15 nations involved over the past two weeks, from Rwanda and Indonesia to England and Australia, have shown there is a bright future ahead.





## In brief

### CDA demolishes 6,295 structures

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Directorate of Enforcement, Capital Development Authority (CDA) has demolished around 6,295 illegal structures in the markets, roads, green belts and sidewalk tracks in the federal capital during the last year. "During the operation, around 10,262 items of encroachers have also been confiscated, subsequently these articles are auctioned. Besides, fines worth Rs. 4.082 million has also been recovered from trespassers as a penalty," an official in the CDA told APP. He said the Directorate of Enforcement has launched as many as 1,142 anti-encroachment operations carried out across the board in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) during the last year. The official said the Directorate was vigorously undertaking anti-encroachment operations on regular basis throughout Islamabad in order to curb the illegal constructions in the ICT. He said the continuous operations were being carried out on day to day basis 24/7 for retrieval of state land from land grabbers and encroachers.

### Police recover huge quantity of drugs

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a successful operation on the Motorway M-1 near Peshawar, the National Highway and Motorway Police recovered a large quantity of drugs here on Sunday. On the basis of intelligence, a suspected vehicle was chased by the police, but the driver fled from the scene. A woman and a five-year-old girl in the car were arrested, said a press statement. During the search of the vehicle, the police found 12 kg of opium, 40 kg and 800 grams of hashish. After completing the initial action, the Motorway Police called the relevant authorities for further legal proceedings along with the continued hunt for the absconding driver. A spokesperson from the National Highways and Motorway Police stated that the operation was a significant step in the fight against drugs and added that such actions would be continued in future.

### Applicants urge HEC to improve queue system

ISLAMABAD (APP): Applicants have urged the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) to address the service mechanism that is leading to long queues, despite scheduled appointments. A student Samina said the token machine at the attestation center in sector H-9 was faulty, causing staff to issue the token manually. The appointment timings were also not being followed which caused delays in the attestation process, she told APP. She said that applicants opt for the walk-in method for the attestation of their documents and book a slot for them. "After completing all the due requirements, applicants deserve to get the service during their booked time slot and without long delays", she added. Another applicant Abdur Rehman said that despite making appointments, he was waiting in queue for four hours. He said that delays have caused significant inconvenience due to which his university classes and schedule were disturbed. When contacted, the HEC spokesperson said that over the last few years, HEC has considerably improved the process for attestation of documents. He said that candidates are being facilitated for verification of documents in a smooth manner. Candidates now may apply online as well as in courier mode, he maintained.



ISLAMABAD: A view of double-decker tour bus service which start from Rawalpindi towards Islamabad for people to visit Faisal Mosque, Daman-e-Koh, Saidpur Village, Parliament House, the Supreme Court, Lok Virsa and the National Museum and other tourist places of Federal Capital.

## Ministry renovates 2,074 houses, flats in Islamabad during last five years

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Works Department (PWD), Ministry of Housing and Works has upgraded and renovated as many as 2,074 houses and flats in various sectors of Islamabad during the last five years. "The PWD has carried out EM works of as many as 1,107 flats and houses while around 967 civil work is executed of different categories, an official in the ministry told APP. The official said the ministry has owned as many as 5,253 houses and flats of categories-I to cat-

egories-V located in various sectors in the federal capital. To a question, he said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was responsible for the maintenance and renovation of Pak Secretariat, Islamabad, therefore, no fund has been spent on ministry's renovation. He said the Finance Division had already slashed the budget while making allocations. Hence, no funds had been surrendered to Finance Division, and all the funds allocated during 2021-22 in relevant heads were utilized by the gener-

al section, he added.

The official said the PWD has started sending notices to the allottees of government accommodation in Sector I-9/4 about payment of electric meter bills for water motors installed at residential blocks. He said the Finance Division had allocated funds for payment of utilities in the relevant heads of accounts of the users while utility bills of the residential accommodation including hostels, rest houses and judicial residences should be paid by the users.

## BISP advises beneficiaries to beware of fraudulent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) has advised the beneficiaries not to consider any message regarding payments of Benazir Kafalat program except the official number of 8171. While issuing an alert to the beneficiaries, the BISP has issued an alert to the beneficiaries to beware of fraudulent or scammers and stated, "All the payment messages from BISP are sent from 8171 only while the messages received other than this number will be fake".

BISP in support with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) is also taking legal action against those involved in sending fake messages to the beneficiaries. The BISP informed that all the messages being circulated on social media regarding registration of BISP programs are fake and BISP has no connection with all these messages and videos. The registration of BISP is only carried out through Benazir National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) and designated registration centers without any charges. For further information about the programs, the beneficiaries may contact the helpline 0800-26477.

## ANF recovers over 113 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting five counter-narcotics operations across the country seized over 113 kg narcotics and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Sunday. He informed ANF in an operation recovered 80.4 kg charras, 30 kg opium and weapons from a vehicle intercepted in Faisal Town, Rawalpindi and rounded up five accused.

In another raid at a private courier office in Rawalpindi, ANF recovered 11 grams weed from a parcel. In third operation conducted in Islamabad G-6 area, ANF recovered 19 grams Ice from a parcel booked for Australia at a private courier office. In fourth operation at Lahore International Airport, ANF and ASF recovered over 3.3 kg Ice drug from a Saudi Arabia-bound passenger resident of Sheikupura.

# PML-N is not afraid of election: Talal

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Talal Chaudhry on Sunday said that contrary the popular belief, PML-N was not terrified of elections.

Talking to a private news channel PML-N leader rejected Imran Khan's popularity claim and asserted that the election will reveal who was more popular.

Talal Chaudhry said that PML-N contests elections on the basis of performance, adding that he said "we do not believe in the politics of hatred and abuse but in the politics of working for the welfare of the people." If anything has ever been accomplished in Pakistani history, it was during the PML-N's nine-year tenure, he

claimed. Talal further said that only the PML-N government has succeeded in eradicating the scourge of terrorism, promoting economic prosperity, and ensuring the welfare of the underprivileged. Power plants, Highways, Metros, Infrastructure, and many other mega projects were all to the credit of PML-N, he added.

Talal Chaudhry said that the leadership of the PML-N has brought the country out of crises in the past, and it will do the same with Imran Khan's contrived economic catastrophe. "We have preferred to save the country regardless of political capital and will participate in the election in light of this performance," he determined.

## Various milestones achieved under STEM project during 2021-22

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Public Sector Development Program "Launching of STEM in Pakistan- Phase-I" has achieved various milestones during the fiscal year 2021-22 to give impetus to Pakistan's preparations for developing a workforce for the Fifth Industrial Revolution.

According to an official source, the project is being executed through the Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF), Ministry of Science and Technology.

Since the initiation date of the project (August 10, 2021), training modules are being developed for the Grade IX- XII for which

correspondence with national stakeholders including the National Curriculum Council (NCC), Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) and Agha Khan University (AKU), was made, paving the way for making a consolidated document in this regard. Furthermore, 76 best national scientists were contacted throughout the country and were requested to provide experiments for STEM.

A tender for the Development of Training Modules on STEM Education is also in process and is expected to be completed by December 2022.

Under the STEM proj-

ect, 50 Higher Secondary Schools (HSSs) or Cadet Colleges have been selected by transforming their existing labs into Mini STEM FABLABs, in addition to teacher training programs and module development on STEM education.

The payment of Rs one million was being provided to each school for developing the FABLABs which will provide students an opportunity to get hands-on training regarding state-of-the-art equipment, including Design Computers, 3D Printers, Vinyl Cutters, and Robotics ultimately enabling young minds for a better future.

## Rs. 240,566,109 utilized to cater catastrophic health expenditures

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety has utilized Rs. 240,566,109 to cater the catastrophic health expenditures of deserving patients under Tahafuz Program through twelve empanelled hospitals across the country during the year Fiscal year 2021-22. According to an official source, Tahafuz Program is a Public Sector Development Program (FY-2021-2024) demand-driven initiative designed to protect the extremely poor from catastrophic health expenditures.

Tahafuz Program is providing healthcare services across Pakistan to the patients in its empanelled public sector hospitals irrespective of geographical limitations and domicile.

The program is also providing healthcare assistance to the poor who fall under the pre-defined eligibility criteria primarily based on BISP or National Socio-

Economic Registry Poverty scores i.e. PMT. During the Fiscal Year 2021-22, a total amount of Rs. 46,200,000 has been utilized under the Tahafuz initiative by providing health services to deserving patients in Islamabad Capital Territory.

Rs. 47,176,180 has been utilized to cater the medical needs of the patients through three hospitals in Punjab while Rs. 5,038,441 has been utilized in treating patients through four hospitals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

A total of Rs. 130,747,501 has been utilized for patients in Sindh through a hospital in Gambit, Sindh while Rs. 7,172,222 has been utilized for the patients in Balochistan through providing treatment in two hospitals in Quetta.

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir, a total of Rs. 4,231,765 has been utilized for the patients through a hospital in Muzaffarabad.

## Establishing 'Wildlife Conservation Centre'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Zoo has finally received an allocation of Rs 500 million to resurrect a "most-modern" 'Wildlife Conservation and Information Centre'. The said amount is being earmarked for the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2022-23).

The present government was very keen on reviving the Islamabad Zoo as a constructive wildlife rehabilitation facility and a wild species learning centre where experts, students and the general public could learn more about the indigenous species

of the Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP).

The National Park has become a repository of the endangered common Asian leopards and pangolins, the most trafficked antelope, Chairperson, of Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) Rina Saeed Khan told APP while sharing her insights on the issue. She added that the Zoo was made non-operational after the judgement of former Chief Justice Islamabad High Court Justice Athar Minallah due to poor management of the wildlife including the Asian

Male Elephant Kaavan.

Khan said the blueprint for the Wildlife Centre was ready, designed by famous architect Raza Ali Dada who had created the conceptual design of the Centre. She noted that the major issue of land was resolved as the 25-acre piece of land was given to the IWMB by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and the no objection certificate (NOC) was issued. "All codal formalities have been met and only the federal cabinet's ratification is left which will be fulfilled soon," she added.

## 55th Convocation of College of Physicians & Surgeons Pakistan

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: 55th Convocation Ceremony of College of Physicians & Surgeons Pakistan (CPSP) held at Islamabad. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi graced the occasion as Chief Guest. The Chief Guest conferred medals and degrees to the position holders, fellows & members of CPSP.

While addressing the ceremony, Chief Guest congratulated the students, parents and faculty on achieving a significant milestone and also appreciated extensive efforts put in by the students and CPSP faculty. He advised the students that by pursuing health education as career, they have to deliver best possible care to their patients by keeping themselves abreast with latest knowledge. The Chief Guest acknowledged that the biggest achievement of CPSP is to have introduced, nurtured and estab-



lished an indigenous system of post graduate medical education that has paved the way for comprehensive healthcare in the country that includes primary as well specialist care.

Earlier in his welcome address, President CPSP highlighted that CPSP has recently started fellowship program in Liver Transplant and has

affiliated Pakistan Kidney & Liver Institute (PKLI) Research Centre in Lahore and an institute in Gambat near Sukkar. Moreover, CPSP has opened new Regional Centers in Gambat and Gilgit Baltistan.

The Ceremony was attended by senior officials from CPSP and notables from medical fraternity.



Families received aid in Farah

FARAH (BNA) The process of distributing food items to one thousand seven hundred and sixty needy families in Farah started today, Sunday An official at the Rural Rehabilitation and Development of Farah told Bakhtar News Agency that these aids will be distributed to needy families for at least 6 months. Each family will receive flour, chickpeas, nutritious food for children, salt, cooking oil for at least four to six months.

Police arrested 24 drug dealers

KABUL (BNA) The counter-Narcotic police of Kabul arrested 24 people in charges of dealing drugs in separate operations. During past week the counter-narcotic police conducted several operations, where many drug dealers arrested around Kabul city, said Police of Kabul in a press release. A large amount of weed, drugs' tablets, cash, two car accessories and a rifle were recovered from the detainees, police source added.

Distribution of uniforms for security forces begins in Herat

HERAT (ToloNews): Local officials in Herat said that the process of distributing uniforms for the security forces of the Islamic Emirate has been started in this province.

According to officials, three thousand security force members have received uniforms so far.

“Currently we just distribute to police who are in checkpoints and this process is ongoing,” said Hamid Ullah Mutawakil, spokesman for the governor of Herat.

“A security person can be identified by this uniform,” said Abdul Rahman, a police officer.

“We are so happy for these uniforms, no one can misuse these uniforms,” said Amanullah, a policeman.

Herat residents welcome the wearing of special uniforms by the forces of the Islamic Emirate.

“A policeman and a common man must have a difference, and we



called on the Islamic Emirate to order other policemen to wear uniforms,” said Sultan Ahmad Noril, a Herat resident.

“If he has a uniform, we understand that he is the national army or

the national police, it's very good work,” said Ahsanullah Rezaye, a Herat resident. The presence of Islamic Emirate forces without uniforms in the cities has always been accompanied by criticism.

Girls react to ban on females enrolling in University entrance exam

KABUL (ToloNews): Girls who graduated from high school expressed criticism over the decision of the Islamic Emirate to suspend the enrolment of female students for the next university entrance examination.

They called on the Islamic Emirate to allow women to continue their education.

“They should allow us to study in our classes to prepare for the university entrance exam, and then to take the examination, then to go the universities and study to build our country,” said Diana, a student.

“The Islamic Emirate does not allow us to take our examination. They don't even allow us to study in the courses. What will happen to us,” said Tahmina, a student.

“The students have lost their motivation because they suffered for one year and now face an uncertain future,” said Hassibullah Malyar, head of a private education center.

The decision of the Islamic Emirate followed an earlier decision to ban females from attending



universities.

This comes as the union of private universities said that the bans have also affected the universities across the country.

“This both damages the economic sector and the nation. It also affects the intellectual and educational sectors that will take a long time to be restored,” said Mohammad Karim

Nasiri, press director of the media.

“They give scholarships to our girls and take them outside the country for education—this is a shame for us,” said Azizullah Amir, head of Mura University.

The former US special envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, reacted to the ban on female stu-

dents' enrolment, saying that this decision will increase the suffering of the Afghan people and increase the country's international isolation. Following back-to-back bans on female activity in Afghanistan, two senior UN officials visited Afghanistan, where they urged the Islamic Emirate to reverse its decisions.

Kabul factories received no electricity in past 3-week: Sapi



KABUL (Pajhwok): The Afghanistan Industrialists Association (AIA) says most factories have not received electricity in the past 21 days but the Da Afghanistan Breshna Shirkat (DABS) said electricity to factories will be restored soon.

AIA Head Abdul Jabbar Sapi in Pajhwok's Tanazur twitter space debate said on Saturday night that no factor in Kabul received electricity in

the past 21 days.

“Factories are shutting down and lost everything,” he said.

He said: “Industry played vital role in the economic development of the country adding that currently 150MW electricity was available in the country but industrial parks are deprived from the available electricity.” “The supply of electricity to industrial parks was most important

because many people work in these factories and it is the matter of Afghanistan's exports,” he added.

“In case of non-availability of imported electricity, we reached agreement with the DABS that industrial parks will get up to 12 hours electricity from Mahipar and Naghlo Dams but besides the availability of electricity from local resources industries are not provided with electricity,” he added.

Safiullah Ahmadzai, the DABS operational director, acknowledged the issue of electricity supply to industries and said: “Factories in Jalalabad and Kabul may have stopped functioning because they needed 150MW electricity which is not available to them at this stage due to the shortage. Efforts are on to resolve the issue in coming days.”

He said Uzbekistan assured to connect 30MW more electricity after which industrial parks would be provided 10 hours electricity in two shifts. It is worth mentioning that currently Uzbekistan cut off electricity supply due to technical issues, but the neighbour country still supplied 130MW electricity.

Afghan postal services increase activity, bring in income: Officials

KABUL (ToloNews): Officials of the Afghan government's postal service said that the capacity of the postal services has increased, and revenue has increased as well.

The postal service's head of development and trade said they can reach one hundred countries.

“Before the Islamic

Emirate we made approximately 80, 90, and 100 million Afs in income, and after the Islamic Emirate we made nearly two hundred million,” said Zabiullah Omar, head of development and trade of the postal service. Kabul residents welcomed the capacity of the postal services and called

on the Islamic Emirate to apply them to ministry functioning.

“I went from office to office to process my documents, and I was able to get my certificate sealed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” said Mustafa, a Kabul resident.

“We faced so many

challenges to take our documents but today many facilities have been created so we can easily get our grades without any hassle,” said Yasra, a Kabul resident.

Telecommunication services have also been assigned to the Afghan postal service, officials said.

Herat residents urged preservation of historic sites

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): Some residents of western Herat province have said that most of historic places had been damaged and destroyed during past conflicts asking the government to pay attention to its rehabilitation and protection.

Saadullah, the resident of Chaharmahal areas of Shindand district, told Pajhwok Afghan News a historic place named Arg Chaharmahal was situated in their area but destroyed in the past war. He asked that government to rehabilitate the historic Chaharmahal.

“This fort is one of Herat's historical monuments, which would attract many tourists if it were restored. But the lack of attention from the government and public caused this historical monument to be destroyed,” he said.

Syed Masoum Ahmadi, another resident of Gunabad area in Oba district, believed historic sited with 300 years history situated in their area.

He added currently small signs from it ruins existed and the remaining completely destroyed.

Ahmadi added the historic site was called Emarat which had been mentioned in the books of history as well.

In Pashton Zarghon district several historic sites are situated such as Khezro Jan and Chakanda Jan where people from Herat City and other areas go and visit it.

Niamatullah, the resident of Rabat



Khawaja area of Pashton Zarghon district, said these sites were 300 years old and his attractive views for tourists. Nehaik Falah, one of the cultural activists, said the preservation of historic sites was government responsibility. He added by the eradication of historic sites the identity of a nation eradicate adding that there was need for greater attention in this regard. Herat Cultural Affairs Director Mawlana Naeemul Haq Haqqani said: “Since the victory of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) the acting government paid

attention to the historical monuments in the country, especially in Herat province, and has restored and restored many of the historic monuments that were likely to collapse.”

Without directly referring to the status of historical sites at the district level, he said that there was currently no reservoir that was in danger of collapsing, and if there was a report in this regard, this department will get to it immediately. Herat has 800 historic sites with most of them situated in the provinces.

KABUL (Pajhwok): The price of sugar decreased and the rate of Kazakhstan flour fell in Kabul during the outgoing week, market sources said on Saturday. Zmarai Safi, head of the Food Traders Association, told Pajhwok Afghan News the value of a 49 kilograms bag of Indian sugar decreased from 2,850afs to 2,750afs. But the price of a 49-kilogram sack of Kazakh flour surged from 2,100 afghanis to 2,200 afs, the association chief added. A 24.5-kilogram bag of Pakistani rice accounted for 3,000afs, 16-litre bottle of Malaysian cooking oil for 1,800afs, one kilogram of African black tea for 400afs and the same amount of Indonesian green tea for 350afs. But Hamid Suzfada, a retailer at Dahna-i-Bagh Market, put the retail price of a 49-kilogram bag of Kazakh flour at 2,250 afs, a 24 kilograms bag of Pakistani rice at 3,050afs, a 49 kilogram of Indian sugar at 2,800 afs, 16-litres of Malaysian cooking oil at 1,850afs, one kilogram of African black tea at 400afs and the same quantity of green tea at 450afs. Fuel prices unchanged According to a worker of the Ahmadyar Group of Pump Stations, the price of one litre of petrol stood at 70afs and diesel to 89afs. Mohammad Sharif, a liquefied gas seller in Kalola Pushta locality, said the price of one kilogram of the commodity stood at 70afs. Gold price down Mohammad Fawad, a jeweler at the Timor Shahi Market, said the price of one gram of Arabian gold decreased from 4,500afs to 4,470afs. But the Russian variety sold at 2,550 afs. Currency rates Haji Hussain, owner of the Sadaqat Money Exchange Service, said one US dollar traded at 89.30afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 330afs. Last week, one US dollar accounted for 88afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees for 350afs.

Freezing cold: Demand for dried meat up in Kabul

KABUL (Pajhwok): Some dried meat shopkeepers in capital Kabul said their sale had increased with the growing demand for dried meat also known as 'Landi' locally due to increasing cold weather.

Landi is a traditionally known food in Afghanistan and it is consumed during winter seasons. Most families dry it in their homes while some purchase it from the market.

It is the middle of the winter season in

Afghanistan and the market of dried meat had flourished.

Bismillah Rabanizada, one of the sellers of local cooking oil and dried meat in the Pul-i-Kheshti area of Kabul, said: “I daily sell up to 150 kilograms of dried meat because people demand it even from outside the country and their relatives buy it and send it to them there.” He said this year he made the Landi of 850 sheep.

According to sources currently the rate of one

kilogram of dried sheep meat in capital Kabul accounted for 750 afs.

Rustam, one of the shopkeepers of dried meat, said he sell up to 3,000 kilograms of dried meat during winter season.

He said there are two method of drying sheep meat one included fate and the other excluded fate.

He said: “Dried meat is a meal of choice and most people during winter buy it.” Mohammad Mansour, one of the Kabul resi-

dents, said: “Today I come here to buy dried meat and send it to our relatives in the foreign country.”

He said there is no facility to dry meat in the foreign country therefore they decided to send it from Kabul. “Dried meat is very delicious and people like it.” Noorul Haq Niyazi, another Kabul resident, said he has guests and wanted to cook dried meat for them so he came to the market to buy it.

Relocated Aibak vendors complain of lack of facilities



AIBAK (Pajhwok): Relocated hay, firewood and tree seedlings sellers in Aibak, the capital of northern Samangan province, complain they lack facilities at the new venue and as a result their business has slowed

down. With their number reaching hundreds, the vendors sell woods, hay and tree seedlings. They expressed dissatisfaction in interview with Pajhwok Afghan News about the new location and asked the govern-

ment to provide them the same services they had in their previous location. Muhibullah Khasar, one of hay sellers, said: “Our previous location was better, we had many facilities like mosque, water and hotels, here we have nothing”.

Najmuddin, another hay seller, said the municipality had promised to move all hay sellers to one location, but many remained at the old location. “Officials at the beginning promised that we will be provided facilities like electricity, water, mosque, toilets and others facilities, but they failed to do so”, he said.

Haji Ghulam Sakhi, one of the wood sellers, said it was good to relocate all vendors to a single location, but they should be provided with facilities like water and electricity. He asked the government to consolidate the river's banks to protect them from the danger of flooding in spring.





# Govt trying to keep poor people away from effects of IMF agreement: Shazia

## F.P. Report

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Shazia Marri on Sunday said that the federal government will try its best to not have an effect of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreement on the poor people of the country as no one is in favour of taking loans.

She said that the priorities of the country would be on top in talks with the IMF.

Talking to media persons after a ceremony of trans-genders' inclusion in the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) at the Arts Council of Pakistan-Karachi, she said that Prime Minister Mohammed

Shahbaz Sharif had constituted an austerity committee.

Shazia Marri said that they were bearing the brunt of the previous government's wrong decisions.

Condemning allegations of the PTI Chief Imran Khan against former President Asif Ali Zardari, she said that Imran Khan always issued irresponsible statements.

She said that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) would sue Imran Khan.

The Federal Minister said that the prisons were broken in PTI-led government.

She said that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and his family were under threat. She alleged that Imran Khan was facilitator of terrorists.

Earlier, addressing the ceremony, Shazia Marri said that transgenders were being formally included in BISP. She said that the transgenders belonged to a poor segment of society.

They were facing economic and societal challenges in the country, she said adding that they were ignored in society and moreover, they were separated from their families.

She said that transgenders avoid to come forward before the data managers due to society's behaviour towards them.

The Federal Minister said that as per available data 50,000 transgender were registered with an organization.

She said that their regis-

tration with NADRA was mandatory for availing BISP financial support.

Shazia said that the transgenders should register themselves with NADRA and later, visit a BISP centre for further process to get Rs7000 financial assistance quarterly.

She said that initially three transgender had got registered themselves with BISP.

She said that in all 9 lac families were being financially supported by BISP.

The spirit of the programme was to support the poor people of society, she added.

Later, she handed over Rs7000 financial assistance among three registered transgender.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Shazia Marri handing over Rs7000 as a quarterly financial support to a transgender during a ceremony.

## Facing inflation due to imprudent policies of previous govt

SHAKARGARH (APP): Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal has said that the recent price increase of the petroleum products is result of the agreement made by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Addressing a gathering of PML-N workers at Changowali village, Shakargarh on Sunday, he said the nation was facing inflation and economic crisis due to imprudent policies of the previous government.

He said that an illegible and incompetent former premier Imran Niazi signed an agreement with the IMF on difficult terms and conditions and the current government was bound to fulfill these conditions.

He said that the present government tried its best to stop depreciation of the Pakistani rupee as well as the price hike of the petroleum products, gas and electricity, but the agreement with the IMF was hurdle in it.

He said that the PML-N had corrected the country and put it on the right progressive path under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif, but in 2018, an inexperienced and amateurish person Imran Khan was given the key of the nation who had destroyed the country.

## PUIC adopts Pak's resolution

ISLAMABAD (INP): Parliamentary Union of Islamic Countries has unanimously approved Pakistan's resolution on Kashmir, that seeks reversal of India's actions of August 2019, and end to human rights violations in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The resolution was presented by Deputy Speaker of National Assembly Zahid Akram Durrani at the 17th session of the Parliamentary Union of Islamic Countries in Algiers.

The resolution urges international community to take cognizance of blatant atrocities in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, unionization of the territory and alteration of its political map. It will now be taken up at the main conference during its final session today, and if approved, the resolution will be part of the final communiqué of the conference.

## Invest in Pakistan's gainful tourism sector

NEW YORK (APP): Pakistan has the most beautiful and undiscovered touristic sites with huge untapped tourism potential, Ambassador Masood Khan said Saturday, urging members of the Pakistani community to help boost tourism in their motherland by investing in this potentially lucrative sector.

Masood Khan, who is Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, was speaking at a well-attended reception for the Pakistani delegates to New York's Travel and Adventure Show at the Consulate here.

Pakistan, he said, was not only home to ancient and modern civilizations, but also vast untouched coastal areas, deserts, and a rich cultural heritage -- all making the country as one of the top travel destinations in the world.

Ayesha Ali, the Pakistani consul general, welcomed the visiting delegates, saying they did a great job in setting up the impressive

Pakistan Pavilion at the two-day Travel and Adventure show in which 185 countries are taking part.

The reception followed the inauguration of the Pakistan pavilion at the show, depicting the country's tourism potential, by the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Tourism and Sports, Aun Chaudhry.

Aun Chaudhry cut a green ribbon to open the pavilion to visitors, saying, "Pakistan is open for tourism."

The PM's aide also said that the pavilion showcased the culture of all provinces of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, with a sharp focus on scenic Gilgit-Baltistan as well as its historical past.

Present at the inaugural ceremony at the show, among others, were the Minister for Tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan, Raja Nasir Ali Khan, the Azad Kashmir Tourism Minister, Faheem Akhtar, Ambassador Masood Khan,

Consul General Ayesha Ali, and the Managing Director of the Pakistan Tourism and Development Corporation (PTDC), Aftab Rana.

In his remarks at the reception, Ambassador Masood Khan said he was very impressed by the dynamism and the energy of the officials and delegates manning the stalls at the Pakistani pavilion while briefing tourism lovers about the ancient and cultural sites in Pakistan as well as the facilities provided for tourists.

He urged the community members to encourage fellow Americans to go to Pakistan as it was a safe place to enjoy its tourist attractions.

The ambassador said efforts were being made to further ease the grant of visas to tourists.

Raja Nasir highlighted the services available in Gilgit-Baltistan for adventure sports like skiing, paragliding, ice hockey and polo.

## APHC-AJK condemns attachment of APHC office

ISLAMABAD (INP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter has strongly condemned the attachment of APHC office in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir by India's notorious National Investigation Agency (NIA).

APHC-AJK Convener Mehmood Ahmad Saghar and General Secretary Sheikh Abdul Mateen in a statement issued in Islamabad said Kashmir is a disputed territory and the kangaroo courts of India cannot impose its decisions on the Kashmiris in the disputed territory.

They said that earlier the authorities had removed the board from the APHC office in Srinagar and ordered to confiscate it, which is completely against

the democratic principles.

Meanwhile, APHC-AJK chapter' former convener, Muhammad Farooq Rehmani in a statement in Islamabad strongly castigated India for attaching the APHC office in Srinagar, saying the Indian establishment has choked the sole representative institution of the Kashmiris for their basic rights and inalienable birthright to self-determination.

He said, "The APHC has a status as observer before the OIC and international and regional organizations, including many Indian politicians and constitutionalists have in the past remained engaged with it for finding out a solution to this international dispute of the erstwhile princely State of British India. Hence, it is against the UN Charter and

the UN resolutions on Kashmir to seize office of the organization, the only representative and collective voice for a peaceful solution of the Kashmir dispute."

Muhammad Farooq Rehmani asked the UN to take notice of the prejudicial and revengeful step of the Modi regime against the APHC and also urged the OUC to intervene in it.

At the same time, he urged Indian jurists, legal luminaries and others to take into account the consequences of such draconian measures by the Modi regime, explicitly warning that no such action, however, harsh and punitive would deter the people of Kashmir from continuing their just and peaceful struggle for the right to self-determination.

## Six killed as car crashes into tree after hitting a bike

CHISHTIAN (INP): At least people were killed and two others injured when driver of a car lost control over the steering after it hit a motorcycle and the vehicle crashed into a roadside tree here on Sunday.

Rescue sources said that the accident took place near Gajjani village of Chishtian where a car with people going to attend a wedding ceremony onboard got out of control after it hit a bike.

The out of control vehi-

cle crashed into a roadside tree resultantly six people were killed on the spot while two others sustained critical wounds. The bodies and injured were shifted to local hospital for medico-legal formalities.

## Traders, transporters reject hike in petroleum prices

KARACHI (NNI): National trade and transport bodies have rejected the recent massive increase in the prices of petroleum products.

The representative of different leading trade and transport unions demanded the government immediately withdraw the decision otherwise the decision will end the life of the common people.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar Sunday announced an increase in the price of petrol and diesel by Rs 35.

All Pakistan Anjuman Tajran (APAT) president Ajmal Baloch, in a statement, termed the fresh hike in petroleum the last nail in the coffin of the country's economy.

Ajmal Baloch said that a cruel increase in petroleum

products costs will further weaken the economic environment which is already under threat on all fronts. "At that time, it was not possible for anyone to control both Dar and Dollar," he lamented.

Traders Association of Pakistan president Kashif Chaudhry also rejected the hike in POL prices and said the latest increase would bring a flood of inflation in the country. He demanded that the government immediately roll back the hike in petrol and diesel prices.

Sindh MPA and Pakistan Goods Transport Alliance president Malik Shahzad Awan also rejected the increase in petroleum products prices and announced a countrywide protest.

As a result of the inflation, it has become impossible for them to operate their businesses, he added. "We will 'resist' the deci-

sion and devise strategy in this context, Malik Shahzad Awan said in his statement.

He said after consulting all the transporters a plan of action would be announced later. He said the policies of the imported government have brought Pakistan to the brink of ruin.

Awan said the time had come to take to the streets against the government, adding the priorities of the government were to create anti-people policies.

Tajran Khyber Pakhtunkhwa general secretary Zahir Shah said the increase in the prices of petroleum products would bring a new storm of inflation, urging the government to withdraw record increase in the prices of petrol and diesel.

Anjum Nisar, chairman of Businessmen Panel said the move will hit the industry hard. He said that the

economy of Pakistan, particularly the SMEs are striving to deal with the post-corona economic crunch and need to get support.

Instead of providing subsidies or waivers, it is unjust to overburden the industries with a hike in the cost of production, he added.

Likewise, the general public also expressed the view that they were already hit hard by the price hike of essential commodities while the successive raise in petrol prices would further increase their sufferings.

Ali Ahmad, a social worker demanded the government the unilateral increase in petroleum prices should be withdrawn otherwise people would be constrained to launch a protest drive against the government.

## Punjab prvince faces fuel shortage

OKARA (INP): Following the rumours of increase in the prices of petroleum products, several petrol pumps have been closed in many cities of Punjab.

After the rumours of increase in the PoL prices, several cities of Punjab including Faisalabad, Sialkot, Sheikhpura, Okara, Sahiwal, Daska, Jaranwala, Jhelum and others are facing scarcity of petrol and the majority of fuel stations are closed.

Pump owners also closed their fuel stations in the twin cities of Islamabad

and Rawalpindi.

Apart from Pakistan State Oil (PSO), petrol and diesel disappeared from pumps. However, the administration claims that all petrol pumps in Islamabad are open as usual.

On the other hand, the deputy commissioners of the Lahore division have submitted a report to the Commissioner in this regard and said that there is no shortage of petrol in the Lahore division, after which the commissioner has issued further orders to

the Deputy Commissioners (DCs).

Commissioner Lahore Muhammad Ali Randhawa has issued strict orders against those creating an artificial shortage of petrol and directed all Deputy Commissioners to keep ACs and field formations on full alert and monitor the situation.

On Saturday, Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) expressed serious concern over the circulation of speculative reports about an increase in prices of petrol and diesel.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Mohammad Ishaq Dar addressing "Bacha Khan, Wali Khan & 21st Century" Conference.

## Pakistan's legislative, institutional measures advancing human rights in line with UN goals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan has taken a range of legislative, policy and institutional steps to advance the human rights agenda with a focus on protection and promotion of rights of women, children, journalists, refugees and vulnerable sections of society, in line with the standards of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations.

According to official data available with APP, the federal government had enacted legislation to safeguard rights of women and children including Women's Property Rights Act, 2020, Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery Act 2020 and, Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act 2021.

The legislative and institutional steps had gone a long way in safeguarding rights of the Pakistani citizens especially women, children and transgender persons.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018 guaranteed rights for transgender citizens and prohibited any discrimination against them in their enjoyment of fundamental rights of voting, inheritance, education, work, property, access to public areas. The enactment of ICT Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2020 went further to safeguard and prevent any discriminatory acts against persons with disability. Senior citizens were also protected from discrimination under ICT Senior Citizen Act, 2022.

The Human Rights Council through the Universal Periodic Review mechanism periodically reviews the human rights record of every UN member state. The ultimate goal of UPR is to strengthen the realization and enjoyment of human rights in a country.

Established in 2007, this peer-driven review mechanism provided a platform for dialogue and constructive engagement among states.

In line with the goals of the United Nations, Pakistan had also paid significant attention to strengthening rule of law, accountability and access to justice in the country. Among these were the Juvenile Justice System Act, 2018, which laid down a comprehensive system to

deal with juvenile cases with enhanced focus on social rehabilitation and reintegration. Under the Legal Aid & Justice Authority Act, 2020, a legal aid and justice authority had been established for providing affordable and quick access to justice to the poor and vulnerable segments.

The Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act, 2022 criminalised torture, death and rape in custody and protected due process and fair trial rights of under trial persons.

The government had also taken credible steps to provide a safe and enabling environment to journalist community. The Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, 2021

(Journalist Act) was its concrete example. The act stipulated establishment of a Commission as a grievance redressal mechanism for journalists and media professionals in any case of intimidation and harassment.

Despite the serious social and economic impacts of the COVID pandemic, global economic downturn and devastating floods of 2022, the Government had taken wide ranging measures to alleviate poverty, provide adequate standard of living, strengthen social safety net, and reduce inequalities.

The Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) was a flagship initiative under which unconditional cash transfers had been disbursed to the poor and the

marginalized. During the pandemic, the program was launched to help poor families affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and an amount of approximately Rs 180 billion to around 14.9 million beneficiaries (Rs 12,000 per beneficiary) was disbursed.

Moreover, the government was also implementing the National Population Action Plan with the target to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health by taking multipronged measures including involvement of all public and private sector health facilities. A national campaign to fight malnutrition and stunting among children was also underway.

The bill to criminalize enforced disappearances was undergoing parliamen-

tary process. In line with the State's zero tolerance policy, the alleged cases of missing persons are being expeditiously and efficiently dealt by Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances. The overall decrease in number of alleged cases received from the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances attest to this positive trend.

The economic constraints notwithstanding, Pakistan had also continued to safeguard and advance basic rights of over 3 million Afghan refugees, who were enjoying access to basic amenities and opportunities like employment, health care, education, water and other public services at par with Pakistani citizens.