

Two terrorists killed
F.P. Report
RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Nagao Mountains, Kalat District on reported presence of terrorists. During the conduct of operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists, resultantly two terrorists were sent to hell, while a cache of arms, ammunition and explosives has also been recovered.

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

Shujaat advises Sarwar
LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid head Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain has asked former Punjab governor Chaudhry Sarwar not to take any political decision in the current circumstances. Both political personalities had a telephonic discussion and talked about the political scenario of the country. During the conversation, the vetal politician asked Chaudhry Sarwar to wait and see before taking any political decision.

Vol. XXXIX No. 311 Regd. No. 241 JAMADI-UL-AWWAL 12 1445 -- WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29 2023 PESHAWAR EDITION 12 PAGES PRICE. 30

Govt to support ECP for ensuring free, fair polls
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi Tuesday said under Article 218(3) of the Constitution, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) would fulfill its responsibility to conduct fair, transparent and impartial elections and the government would support it.

Talking to media persons here, he said that there were a total of 280 articles in the Constitution, not only the article of elections in 90 days, it also had Article 254.

"Everyone in Pakistan has freedom to express opinion, complain and criticize," Solangi added. The minister said the freedom that Pakistan People's Party and other parties had been enjoying, Pakistan Muslim League (N) also had same freedom. He said that the caretaker PM had informed the public about his visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) last night through a video message.

During the visit of the Prime Minister, the agreements and memorandums of understanding would be finalized, then the media would be informed in that regard, he added. The minister said he had a relationship of respect with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Asif Ali Zardari and he could not comment on their statements.

Maryam assures youth of chance in next polls
F.P. Report

LAHORE: Senior Vice President Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Maryam Nawaz on Tuesday assured the youth and minorities for offering a chance for bringing them to forefront of politics in next election.

She remarked this while heading a session participated by members and officials of Muslim Students Federation (MSF) and minority wing. Regarding general elections to be held on February 08, 2024, Maryam Nawaz expressed satisfaction over the performances of the MSF and minority wing.

During the meeting, it was decided to accelerate the election activities across the country and also to mobilize the youth in the four provinces including the federation, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. She said, "PML-N will increase the role of youth and minorities in politics while mentioning that the youth are the capital of the country and their development will lead to the progress of the country."

Maryam also claimed that under the leadership of the PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, the country would take a positive turn towards the prosperity. She said that Nawaz Sharif wanted the youth to be the vanguard of political activities in the general elections as they youth would be the future leaders while highlighting that the active role of the minorities in the election activities would strengthen the democratic culture. On the occasion, MSF and Minority wing appreciated Maryam Nawaz for extending political opportunities and they pledged to work for the betterment of the country under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif.

PM pays tribute to UAE's national heroes

ABU DHABI (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday visited the martyrs memorial of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Abu Dhabi and paid tributes to the national heroes.

The prime minister laid a wreath at 'Wahat Al Karama', the national and cultural monument meaning the oasis of dignity, to commemorate the Emiratis who laid their lives in the line of duty.

Chairman of the Office of Development and Martyrs Families Affairs, Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan briefed PM Kakar about the monument as an icon to highlight the great sacrifices of national heroes. The prime minister was presented with a static guard of honour on the occasion.

The Monument comprises 31 panels leaning on one another to symbolise the unity and solidarity between the UAE's leadership, people and heroic soldiers.

Later, PM Kakar went on a tour across the memorial and penned his expressions in the visitor book placed on the premises. Wahat Al Karama was established to commemorate the heroic actions of the UAE's martyrs and their sacrifices in defence of the UAE.

PM visits UAE's Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar visited the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, the PM Office said.

The prime minister commenced his visit by offering fateha at the mausoleum of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and recalled visionary leadership of the founding father of the UAE that enriched the culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence among various nations of the world. He recalled late Sheikh Zayed's close relationship with the people and the leadership of Pakistan.

During the visit, the prime minister was briefed about the mosque's noble message that highlights notions of coexistence, tolerance, and openness to other cultures, inspired by the nation's late founder's rich legacy. He was also apprised about the mosque's leading role in highlighting the Islamic culture's true essence and promoting cross-cultural communication worldwide. Caretaker Chief Minister of the Punjab Syed Mohsin Naqvi and Pakistan's Ambassador of the UAE Faisal Niaz Tirmizi also accompanied the Prime Minister. Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque is a master piece of modern Islamic architecture with capacity to accommodate over 40,000 visitors.

itors. Sheikh Zayed Mosque is the largest mosque in UAE and third largest in the world.

Kakar leaves for Kuwait on an official visit: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar left for Kuwait City for an official visit after concluding his two-day visit to the United Arab Emirates. At the Al-Bateen airport, UAE Minister of Energy and Infrastructure Suhail Mohamed Al Mazrouei and Pakistani diplomatic staff saw off the prime minister, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During his visit to Kuwait, the Caretaker Prime Minister will meet with Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. During the visit, a new era of economic and economic cooperation between the two countries will begin. A number of MoUs will be signed for mutual cooperation in various sectors including manpower, information technology, minerals and mining, food security, energy and defense.

Bill Gates calls PM: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has commended the support of Gates Foundation in efforts of the government to secure a polio-free Pakistan and reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to rid the country of this debilitating virus.

According to details, the caretaker prime minister on Tuesday received a telephone call from Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) to discuss progress in the ongoing efforts to eradicate polio from Pakistan.

The prime minister is currently on an official visit to the United Arab Emirates, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. During telephonic conversation, Premier Kakar and Gates followed up on their discussion in New York when they met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in September.

In this regard, the caretaker prime minister briefed Gates on the polio vaccination drive currently in progress across Pakistan. Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar assured Gates that the government of Pakistan was fully committed to delivering on the promise of a healthier, safer and financially inclusive Pakistan and counted on reliable partners such as BMGF in this endeavor. The issues of malnutrition and maternal health also came under discussion. The prime minister expressed satisfaction at the excellent cooperation between the government and BMGF.

Pakistan's economy stuck in 'low-growth trap': WB

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Martin Raiser, the World Bank's Regional Vice-President for South Asia, has said that Pakistan's economy is stuck in a low-growth trap with poor human development outcomes and increasing poverty.

Raiser, who is in Pakistan to reaffirm the WB's commitment to support the people of Pakistan, said he launched a series of policy notes that outline critical policy shifts required for a productive, sustainable, resilient, and healthy Pakistan, according to an official statement issued on Tuesday.

The policy notes — focusing on child stunting fiscal sustainability, private sector growth, energy, learning poverty, agriculture, and climate change — are the culmination of several months of outreach and engagements conducted across the country under the "Reforms for a Brighter Future — Time to Decide" banner. They are intended to help inform the public policy dialogue in the context of the upcoming elections.

"Pakistan's economy is stuck in a low-growth trap

with poor human development outcomes and increasing poverty. Economic conditions leave Pakistan highly vulnerable to climate shocks, with insufficient public resources to finance development and climate adaptation," said the WB official. "It is now time for Pakistan to decide whether to maintain the patterns of the past or take difficult but crucial steps towards a brighter future."

The policy notes urged Pakistan to address its acute human capital crisis — including the high prevalence of stunting and learning poverty — by adopting a coordinated and coherent cross-sectoral approach to basic services involving both provincial and federal governments. Improve the quality of public spending and take serious measures to expand the revenue base, ensuring that the better off pay their share, they added.

The recommendations also asked Pakistan to pursue business regulatory and trade reforms and reduce the presence of the state in the economy to increase productivity, competitiveness, and exports. Moreover, the notes called for removing distortions

that undermine the performance of the agricultural and energy sectors, including through subsidy reform and privatisation of electricity distribution companies.

"Almost 40% of children in Pakistan suffer from stunted growth, more than 78% of Pakistan's children cannot read and understand a simple text by the age of 10. These are stark indicators of a silent human capital crisis that needs priority attention," the WB statement quoted Raiser as saying. He said additional spending on water and sanitation of around 1% of GDP per year and better coordination at the local level, stunting could be halved over a decade with significant positive impacts on growth and incomes.

"This is just one example of the huge economic benefits a coherent and decisive reform strategy could have." During his visit, the global lender official will meet Pakistan officials at the federal and provincial levels, and representatives from the private sector and academia. He will also visit the Dasu and Tarbela hydropower projects, as well as project sites in Sindh and Punjab.



ABU DHABI: Caretaker Prime Minister Amwaar-ul-Haq Kakar visits Sheikh Zayed grand mosque.

Siraj flays PML-N assertion
F.P. Report

SUKKUR: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq has asserted that the proposed national government advocated by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Zardari lacks constitutional legitimacy, saying the proposal is designed to perpetuate the dominance of the same feudal and imported technocrats who have held power for decades, thereby preserving the existing status quo.

Speaking at an election convention held at Mehran Cultural Centre on Tuesday, he warned against the victory of former ruling parties in the upcoming elections, asserting that it would signify the defeat of Pakistan.

Sirajul Haq criticized the PML-N's assertion that its leadership would save the country, questioning the track record of those who previously held power. He argued that the purported former national government of the PDM and the PPP had detrimentally impacted the economy, resulting in inflation and unemployment. He queried the prospective positive changes these parties could bring after returning to power.

The JI chief alleged that the primary motive of established political parties was to amass wealth and exploit national resources. According to him, their wealth and properties multiplied with each tenure in power, leaving the general populace struggling to make ends meet. He accused the PPP and the PML-N of maintaining silence on Israeli atrocities due to fear of the United States, insinuating a dependency on foreign approval for their political aspirations.

Siraj highlighted the PPP's 15-year rule in Sindh, contending that it led to the province's deterioration, with rampant criminal activities such as dacoity and kidnapping for ransom becoming commonplace. He also lamented the decline of Karachi, the provincial capital, attributing its destruction to the policies of the PPP.

Expressing the Jamaat-e-Islami's commitment to breaking the status quo and establishing an Islamic welfare state, he emphasized that the fate of the country lay in the hands of the Pakistani people. He urged the masses to consider real change and appealed for their support in electing JI candidates on February 8.

CM KP decides to involve NAB in project cycle

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As an important step to make the officials working in development projects more confident as well as to ensure completion of projects in a timely and transparent manner, the caretaker chief minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah has decided to involve NAB representatives in project cycle including conception, planning and execution of development projects.

He directed the quarters concerned to send a formal letter to higher authority of NAB in this regard. He was presiding over 15th meeting of the Board of Directors of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Mobility Authority (KPUMA) held here at Chief Minister's House on Tuesday. Caretaker provincial minister for ST&IT Dr. Najeeb Ullah, administrative secretaries of concerned departments, DIG Traffic Police, MD KPUMA, CEO Trans Peshawar and other board members attended the meeting.

Touching upon the need and importance of the decision regarding involvement of NAB representative in the projects cycle, the chief minister said that whole exercise will not only ensure transparency in the development works but also give confidence to the working officers, and resultantly, they will not feel any hesitation and fear regarding implementation of the projects.

The Chief Minister directed that all matters related to development projects should be kept fair and transparent in all respects from the very beginning so that implementation of projects is not delayed due to fear of accountability in the future. "This process will help to ensure completion of development projects within the stipulated time lines", he remarked.

The board has approved the proposed

nomination committee with TORs to recommend/nominate the non official members of the board as well as to further rationalize the number of board members. The proposed committee will also recommend necessary amendments in the relevant law for that purpose. The board accorded conditional approval to the proposed budget of Authority for fiscal year 2023-24.

The board has also approved financial audited report of Authority for the fiscal year 2021-22 and allowed to share the same with all the stakeholders. The financial audited report had been conducted through an independent chartered account firm. Ongoing development projects and other various matters related to sustainability of Bus Repaid Transit project were also discussed in the meeting.

The chief minister while talking notice of delay in the completion of BRT commercial plazas has convened the meeting of PDA and other relevant departments with the purpose to take stock of progress on the construction of those commercial plazas and to decide future course of action in order to ensure speedy completion of the projects. The chief minister on the occasion has directed the Trans Peshawar and other autonomous bodies to pay special attention to their self-reliance, adding that all the autonomous bodies/institutions would have to ensure efficient and judicious use of available resources for this purpose.

Syed Arshad Hussain Shah said that BRT was a project of public welfare; and we have to take concrete steps in order to run it on a sustainable basis. He agreed in principle to the proposed advertisement plan and installation of a solar plant in BRT Bus Depot and directed the concerned authorities to come up with final action plan in this regard within the next two weeks.

Cipher case: PTI's chairman's trial to be conducted in jail, rules court

ISLAMABAD (INP): Special Court Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain, who is hearing the cipher case against PTI Chairman Imran Khan, ruled on Tuesday that the trial proceedings would continue at the Adiala jail but in an open court. Citing "serious security risks", Adiala jail authorities failed to present the former premier today before the special court at Islamabad's Federal Judicial Complex (FJC) as per the orders of the same court's judge.

Last week, Judge Zulqarnain had issued directives that the PTI chief and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi be presented at the FJC. The cipher case pertains to a diplomatic document that the Federal Investigation Agency's charge sheet alleges was never returned by Imran. The PTI has long held that the document contained a threat from the United States to oust Imran as prime minister. The former premier and his aide Qureshi, who is also behind bars, were indicted in the case on Oct 23. Both have pleaded not guilty.

The trial was being held at Adiala Jail and four witnesses had already recorded their statements, with the fifth being cross-examined when an Islamabad High Court division bench had termed the government's notification for jail trial "erroneous" and scrapped the entire proceedings. As a result of the judgement, the special court would now start a fresh trial while the prosecution would have to file a fresh application to conduct the trial in jail.

Police, administration and other departments concerned

were to meet on Monday to finalise a security plan for Imran's appearance. However, today, the Adiala jail authorities presented a report before the court, stating that the ex-premier could not be presented due to "serious security risks". Today, Judge Zulqarnain presided over the hearing at the FJC, where Barrister Salman Safdar appeared as Imran's counsel while Advocate Ali Bukhari was present as Qureshi's lawyer. The FIA's prosecutors Shah Khawar and Zulfikar Abbas Naqvi also appeared before the court.

During the hearing, the jail authorities submitted their report to the court, which Judge Zulqarnain reviewed. According to reports by intelligence agencies and the police, the PTI chairman faces life threats, the report stated. It further said, "It has been informed that the PTI chairman faces security risks of a serious scale".

Safdar urged the court to adjourn the hearing indefinitely and grant his client bail while Qureshi's counsel Bukhari requested the court to issue directives for his client to be presented before the court. After a brief while, the special court announced its order on the report submitted by the jail officials, approving the jail trial but saying it would be held in an open court. The court noted that the jail authorities and security agencies had expressed their reservations about holding the trial at the FJC. Therefore, the next hearing would be held at the Adiala jail and would be an open court, the order stated.

The special court stated that those who wished to attend the court proceedings would not be stopped from doing so and that journalists would also be permitted to witness the case. It further said that five family members of each suspect would also be allowed inside the courtroom. The hearing was adjourned till Dec 1 (Friday). At the outset of the hearing, Safdar informed the court that there were "two separate matters" pending before the court for on Tuesday.

"We had hoped that the PTI chairman would be presented before the court today but he has not been yet," the lawyer lamented. During the hearing, the jail authorities submitted their report to the court, which Judge Zulqarnain reviewed. The judge then said, "The jail officials are saying that he (Imran) cannot be presented." According to reports by intelligence agencies and the police, the PTI chairman faces threats to life, the report stated. It further said, "It has been informed that the PTI chairman faces security risks of a serious scale".

The jail officials then informed the court they had written a letter to the Islamabad police, requesting additional security. The police's report was also submitted to the court along with the jail's. Here, Safdar said it was the "jail authorities' responsibility to present the suspect before the court" and that they could not "ignore" doing so. The counsel then read out aloud the Islamabad High Court's order wherein it had declared Imran's jail trial "null and void".

ADB approves \$180m loan to help Pakistan improve waste management

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$180 million loan to improve water supply and solid waste management services in two rapidly growing cities in Pakistan's Punjab province.

According to the press statement, the Developing Resilient Environments and Advancing Municipal Services in Punjab Project will curtail excessive groundwater extraction and urban environment

degradation by expanding and modernizing urban water supply in Rawalpindi and solid waste management systems in Bahawalpur. "The project will help make municipal services in these two cities more sustainable, resilient, and less carbon-intensive," said ADB Director General for Central and West Asia Yevgeniy Zhukov.

"By helping to deliver reliable water supply and improving waste management, we expect to significantly improve the lives of people in

Rawalpindi and Bahawalpur," he said. In Rawalpindi, the project will help build new surface water intakes and a water treatment plant with a capacity of 54 million liters a day. It will lay transmission and distribution pipes to serve 82,000 households with metered connections. The financing will also upgrade water pumps and transmission mains to augment surface water supply and establish three pilot district metering areas to enhance operational efficiency.

In Bahawalpur, solid waste collection will be improved through the procurement of waste collection equipment and a new fleet to expand service coverage, to be supported by the new fleet management information system. The project will construct a facility for recycling as well as a floodproof landfill while the existing dump site will be rehabilitated. The financing will also enable the provision of personal protective equipment for informal sector workers.

Rain-wind/thunderstorm likely today: PMD

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast rain-wind/thunderstorm with snowfall over the hills in the Potohar region including northeast Punjab, upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir during the afternoon and evening/night on Wednesday. Cloudy weather is expected in most upper parts of the country.

Hailstorm is also expected at isolated places during the period. Smog/fog is likely in central/southern parts of Punjab and upper Sindh during morning hours.

In Islamabad, cold and cloudy weather with rain-wind/thunderstorm is expected during the afternoon and evening/night.

In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, cold and cloudy weather is expected in most upper districts of the province. However, rain-wind/thunderstorm (with snowfall over the hill) is likely in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Balakot, Mardan, Haripur, Peshawar, Kohat, Kurram, Bannu and Waziristan.

In Punjab, cloudy weather is expected in the upper parts of the province with chances of rain-wind/thunderstorm with hailstorms at isolated places in Murree, Galliat, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Wazirabad, Sialkot, Narowal, Lahore, Hafizabad, Sargodha, Mianwali, Faisalabad, Jhang, Khushab, Toba Tek Singh, Okara and Kasur from afternoon and evening/night.

CM Naqvi says Pak-UAE historic agreements will strengthen economy

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi affirms that the historic agreements between Pakistan and the UAE are poised to bolster the economy, elevating mutual relations to unprecedented heights.

In his message from the United Arab Emirates, Naqvi anticipated positive effects soon as the implementation of these agreements takes effect, signaling the commencement of a new era of economic cooperation.

According to a handout issued here on Tuesday, the Pakistani delegation experienced a warm reception in the UAE, with a special welcome extended to them. Chief Minister Naqvi deemed the meeting with the President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, as highly valuable. He applauded the commendable efforts of the Prime Minister of Pakistan and acknowledged the praiseworthy role played by the Army Chief in facilitating these significant agreements.

Highlighting the transformative impact of the investment agreements on mutual relations, Chief Minister Naqvi emphasized that the UAE's investment will diversify into key sectors such as energy, port operations, wastewater treatment, food security, banking, and financial services. This substantial investment is anticipated to pave the way for economic stability in Pakistan, heralding a new era of economic partnership between the two nations.

Chief Minister Naqvi underscored the enduring historical and brotherly relations between Pakistan and the UAE, asserting that these ties have withstood the test of time. He expressed the profound connection between the people of Pakistan and the UAE, bound by historical ties of love and brotherhood. Concluding his message, he affirmed that the relations of friendship and love between Pakistan and the UAE are eternal and will endure indefinitely.

Turkmen embassy invites PBSA for Celebration

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Waqar Shahzad National Commissioner of Pakistan Boys Scouts attended 300 Anniversary of Magtymguly Fragi celebration, with Jamal Shah Federal Culture Minister, on invitation of Embassy of Turkmenistan.

My beloved grandfather while teaching me the basics of Islam told me once, that Sufism, mystics, and derwesh belong to humanity. Their influence is beyond boundaries, centuries and conflicts. If you want to understand an sufi, read and look at him



in reflections of Rahman Baba Poetry. PBSA Commissioner experienced it first hand, as we are influenced by Magtymguly Fragi boundaries, centuries and

nations away. Rahman Baba, Bhulleh Shah, Sachal Sar Mast, Allama Iqbal and Magtymguly Fragi are flowers of same garden, with different colors and scents.

LESCO recovers Rs 1.40b from 45,103 defaulters in 76 days

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) in collaboration with Tehsildars (Recovery) has recovered more than Rs 1.40 billion from 45,103 dead defaulters in all the five districts - Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara - during 76 days of its recovery campaign.

LESCO spokesman told media here Tuesday that during the 76 days, Chief Engineer O&M (T&G) Zafar Iqbal with the support of Tehsildar City Mujahid Zia and Tehsildar Shalimar Noreez Humayun recovered outstanding dues of Rs 177.76 million from 5,759

defaulters in Northern Circle and Rs 340.91 million from 5,804 defaulters in Eastern Circle respectively. Similarly, LESCO Manager (Material Disposal) Engineer Anwar Watto along with Tehsildar Model Town Rana Aarsal and Tehsildar Cant. Sajjad Qureshi recovered Rs 195.61 million from 5,465 defaulters in Central Circle and Rs 74.04 million from 2,251 defaulters in South Circle, while Manager (Technical) Engineer Muhammad Farooq with the assistance of Tehsildar Nankana Sahib Muhammad Iqbal Rasheed and Tehsildar Sheikhupura Muhammad

Aslam Gujjar recovered Rs 92.20 million from 4,243 defaulters in Nankana Sahib Circle and Rs 210.59 million from 5,263 defaulters in Sheikhupura Circle. He added that LESCO Manager E&S (PMU) Engineer Abbas Ali in collaboration with Naib Tehsildar Kasur and Okara Mirza Zahid Baig recovered outstanding dues of Rs 89.15 million from 6,783 defaulters in Okara Circle and Rs 227.26 million from 9,535 defaulters in Kasur Circle.

On the 76th day of the recovery campaign, the LESCO with the help of Tehsildars (Recovery)

recovered more than Rs 17.8 million from 628 dead defaulters in its all circles of operation.

He elaborated that LESCO recovered outstanding dues of Rs 2.64 million from 63 defaulters in Northern Circle; Rs 3.04 million from 90 defaulters in Eastern Circle; Rs 2.10 million from 68 defaulters in Central Circle; Rs 0.84 million from 55 defaulters in Nankana Sahib Circle; Rs 4.62 million from 84 defaulters in Sheikhupura Circle; Rs 1.32 million from 138 defaulters in Okara Circle and Rs 1.94 million from 101 defaulters in Kasur Circle.

Joint efforts needed to promote education for country's development: PU VC

LAHORE (INP): Punjab University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Khalid Mahmood said that we all have to campaign together to promote education for the development of the country. He was addressing the 3rd National Conference on Research Education (NCOR) organized by the Punjab University Institute of Education and Research on the theme of 'Higher Education Institutions and Governmental Priorities'.

On this occasion, Director Institute of Education and Research Prof Dr Tariq Mehmo

Chaudhry, Chairman Department of Advanced Studies in Education Prof Dr Muhammad Shahid Farooq, Social Worker Raja Munawar Ali, researchers, academicians, faculty members and a large number of students were present.

Addressing the participants, Dr Khalid Mahmood said that the development of higher education in Pakistan must be among the top priorities of any government. Unfortunately, he said, our society also did not give importance to education.

He said that governments they should also allocate take credit for the creation appropriate grant to run of new universities but the universities.

بعدالتجتمسارمیشہصابہسولجی III کوہات،مقدمہنمبر180/1 گورنرجنرلپنجبی 02/12/23، عنوانمقدمہ: ساجی امیرخان افریدی دہلویہ بنام محمدغزویمیر۔ اشتہارنامہ: 13-گنڈہیر،14-نوازپہران سلطان خان20،عبداللہ ولدبلاخان22،اسلام الدین ولدنصراوین23،خیال زادولدصاحبزادہ25،سہرمدول پیر زمان26،شریف حسین27،فضل حسین بادشاہ پیر28،مجید خان ولد مقرب خان29،نیراکہر ولدگل اکبر(دارالمنعہعالیہ)24۔ 24/1جہانزیہ بیوہ24/2،مدارنجم پیرگروہوستانی)۔ ماکانظرفرضیل عمل شیل قوم شرکای دروادم شیل ضلع کوہات (مدعالبیم)۔ ماکان مدعالبیم نمبر20-23،23-24، کوارٹرمدارنجم پیر گروہوستانی اور27-28،عالیہرودن ملک دہلی،UAE اوردعالمیہ پیر29،عالیہمحمداباوسندھ دایج ہوکہ مقدمہنوان بالا میں تاریخ پیش مورخہ02/12/23قرےچکےآپ مدعالبیم کی قبل اسراروہمولی طریقے سے ہوئی مشکل ہے لہذا پیرا پیرا اشتہارحد آپ کو مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ تاریخ منقرہ02/12/23 پر اساتاثہ کاتایا تختیارنا عاقدراست ہوگی ورنہ مقدمہ کریں۔ بصورت دیگر حسب ضابطہ دایج عمل میں آئی جائیگی۔ آج تاریخ13/11/23 کو یادنامہ جاری شد(جوشنگ) (نہرمدالت)

PFA shuts five cooking centres

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) shut down five cooking centres and imposed hefty fines on 184 others over violations during a province-wide special inspection campaign.

The authority also served warning notices for improvement on 679 cooking centres' owners while discarding more than 107kg of stale food and prohibited ingredients. PFA Director General Raja Jahangir Anwar, in a statement, said that the food safety teams had inspected 1,000 cooking centres across different divisions of Punjab including 236 in Lahore, 68 in Faisalabad, 66 in Sahiwal, 209 in Rawalpindi, 96 in Gujranwala, 74 in Sargodha, 91 in Multan, 89 in DG Khan and 70 in Bahawalpur.



KARACHI: President Arts Council Ahmed Shah and others addressing a press conference regarding 16th Aalimi Urdu Conference.

Health dept to sign MoU with NADRA for registration of organ donors: minister

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Health Minister Prof Dr Javed Akram presided over the 27th meeting of Punjab Human Organ Transplantation Authority (PHOTA) at Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education (SH&ME) Secretariat here on Tuesday.

Additional Secretary Finance Shahid Farooq, Punjab Healthcare Commission CEO Dr Saqib Aziz, PHOTA DG Prof Dr Shehzad Anwar, PKLI Dean Prof Dr Faisal Saood Dar and officers of others departments attended the meeting.

Dr Fahad Abbas, brother of the late Rifat, who saved three human lives by donating her organs, also participated. During the meeting, tributes were paid to the late Rifat for saving three human lives and prayers were also offered for her high ranks in Jannah. The PHOTA DG presented

agenda items to the chairman for approval. The meeting approved the special grant reserved for crackdown against accused involved in the illegal transplantation of human organs. The meeting also approved standard operating procedures (SOPs) regarding human organ donation.

Addressing the meeting, the caretaker minister said the health department would sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) for registration of human organ donors, adding that every human who wants to donate organs would be registered with the NADRA. He clarified that after brain death declaration, the organs were dismantled from the body. The summary would be sent to the Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister for approval of the grant regarding

expenses of the transplantation for the Punjab Human Organ Transplantation Authority, he said.

Javed Akram said the summary would be sent to the Punjab Chief Minister for a civil award of Rifat, who saved three human lives by donating her organs.

During the meeting, PHOTA was given permission to recruit employees on short-term contracts subject to the approval of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). PHOTA's Department of Inspection and Registration was approved to register various public and private hospitals. The PHOTA has been directed to issue an annual calendar for convening the meetings of the monitoring authority and the decisions of the 26th meeting of the monitoring authority of PHOTA have been ratified.

Punjab govt all set to launch E-bikes to prevent city smog intensity: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Provincial Transport and Livestock Minister Ibrahim Hasan Murad on Tuesday said that the government was all set to launch electric bikes to prevent smog intensity. He said that the E-bikes would be cost-effective and government employees would also be provided electric bikes on lease.

Talking to a PTV news channel, he said that in an aim to reduce the usage of expensive fuel and protect the environment of the cities government has been introducing E-bike and safe city camera projects in which smoke-emitting vehicles will be detected by the cameras and immediate alerts

were relayed to the field forces.

The Electric Vehicles Policy is the need of the hour to promote a safe environment, local production of e-vehicles, providing incentives, with the ultimate goal of capturing a substantial share of the market, he added.

E-bikes being zero-emission vehicles would use lithium-ion batteries which will emerge as a cost-effective and eco-friendly alternative to traditional transportation, he mentioned.

The minister stressed that the media should play its role by creating awareness campaigns on private TV channels and radio for the conservation of energy and for wearing face

masks during smog weather.

Replying to a question, the administration has started a strict crackdown and announced to charge heavy fines for violations of the traffic rules, adding, that around 33 to 34 crore vehicles were being imposed fines for violating traffic rules. The purpose of imposing fines is to prevent people from using vehicles that increase pollution. The crackdown will continue till next month, he added. Punjab government was taking steps in accordance with PM's eco-friendly measures, he said, adding that Punjab would be the first province in the country to give such a great incentive to owners of electric vehicles.

No. SPCC. 5(2)/2019-Admn
Government of Pakistan
Strategic Policy Planning Cell National Security Division Islamabad

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Applications are invited from suitable candidates for the following Vacant Positions available for 2 years on contractual basis(extendable) in the Strategic Policy Planning Cell (SPCC), placed within the National Security Division, Islamabad:

| S. No | Name of Posts | No. of Post | Quota | Qualification & Experience | Maximum Age Limit |
|-------------|--|-------------|--------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Admin Officer (BS-17) Purely on contractual basis for the period of 2 years. (Extendable) | 01 | Sindh (Rural) | Qualification Minimum qualification Master's Degree (2 nd Class or "C" Grade) from a recognized university by Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Public Administration /Management & Social Sciences. Experience Minimum 3 -5 years' Post qualification experience in Administration matters in public or private sector. Must be a computer fluent. | 35 years |
| 2 | Assistant (BS-15) Purely on contractual basis for the period of 2 years. (Extendable) | 01 | Khyber Pakhtunkhwa | Qualification Minimum qualification Graduation Degree from a Higher Education Commission (HEC) recognized university. Experience Minimum 3-5 years' relevant experience in public or private sector Must be a computer fluent. | 30 years |
| Total Posts | | 02 | | | |

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:
1. The vacancies will be filled on open merit basis/ quota mentioned against each post.
2. 10 years' age relaxation will be given to government servants and contract employees who have completed 2 years' continuous government service on the closing date for receipt of applications, as per Government rules.
3. No TA/DA will be admissible for test/interview.
4. The organization reserves the right to stop the recruitment process on contractual basis at any stage.
5. Application submitted by hand will not be entertained.
6. Interested Candidates having above mentioned qualification and falling within the required age limit may apply online through National Job Portal website i.e. www.njp.gov.pk within 15-days of publication of this advertisement.

Ghulam Jilani Khan
Deputy Secretary (SPPC)
Ph: 051-9204017

PID(I) 3279/23

CJ: 4 out 5 policemen at CJ residence recruited on bribe

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan and Justice Waqar ordered Superintendent of Police (SP) Training Shakeel and Sub Inspector (SI) retired Malak Zada to resolve their dispute through negotiation otherwise the court will decide it, on Tuesday.

The counsel argued that registration of First Information Report (FIR) was ordered against SP Training Branch on manipulated ground and added that he neither tortured retired SI Malak Zada.

However, SI (R) Malak Zada's lawyer argued that SP Training had tortured brutally his client, while

Chief Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan inquired regarding the issue between policemen.

The counsel argued that SI (R) Malak Zada had evidences regarding bribe and corruption of SP Training Shakeel Khan along with officers taken for recruitment in police.

In the meantime, Chief Justice PHC Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan observed that it is correct that recruitment in police department conducted by means of kickback as 4 out of 5 policemen at his residence are recruited on bribe.

Chief Justice remarked that the dispute wouldn't be raised if you (SP) provided his share to SI (R) but likely Malak Zada was tortured after demanding his benefits in the procedure.

Although, SP Training Branch Shakeel Khan argued that there is no malpractice nor any SI (R) Malak Zada was tortured while SI (R) informed that court can see signs of torture on his body as well as medical report.

The divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice PHC Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan and Justice Waqar Ahmad granted opportunity to both parties for settlement of the dispute otherwise court will decide it on merit.

It is worthy to mention that Additional District and Session Judge Peshawar Bakht Alam early ordered initiation of legal proceedings against both parties.

PHC orders chairman FBR for reply: PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice Abdul Shakoor and Justice Syed Arshad Ali ordered chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for submission of reply regarding pension to widow sister of civil servant named Muhammad Nadeem passed away during service.

The counsel Malak Shahbaz Khan advocate argued that Muhammad Nadeem was died during service but he was unmarried.

He added that the pension benefit would be provided to elder widow sister or sister-in-law as per law.

PHC's divisional bench ordered federal's government and chairman FBR for submission of reply in this regard while adjourned further hearing.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah chairing 15th Board meeting of KP Urban Mobility Authority.

Pakhtunkhwa potential in art, culture, says Minister

F.P. Report

The event was inaugurated by Caretaker Minister for Tourism, Barrister Syed Feroze Jamal Shah Kakahel, along with Minister for Finance, Ahmad Rasool Bangash, senior artist Jehanzaib Malik, Head of the Art and Design Department, PHD Scholar Dr. Imrana Ayaz, Manager Events Haseena Shaukat, Manager Culture, Hamayoon Khan and Deputy Manager Visual Arts and Craft Tehsin Ullah also attended the event.

Minister for Tourism, Syed Feroze Jamal Shah Kakahel, appreciated the work and efforts of the students and faculty members.

He emphasized the importance of promoting culture and ensuring that new opportunities and exposure platforms are regularly provided to the students.

He highlighted the cultural diversity of KP, including merged districts and said that they would welcome tourists visiting KP to see its rich heritage and associated culture.

He added that the university aims to expand the dynamics of linkages for the benefit of the students and praised the KP Culture and Tourism Authority for collaborating to encourage the students work.

The exhibition was held at Nishtar Hall, Peshawar and aimed to promote female artists from KP, encouraging them to explore new opportunities in their respective fields and showcase their talents.

The exhibition was attended by a large number of university students and visitors, including professionals, who expressed deep interest in the hard work of the students and acknowledged their level of professional expertise.

The students displayed a wide range of artwork, including paintings, cultural showcases, and art displays. The students expressed their gratitude to the KPCTA for organizing the event, mentioning that such events would help them showcase their skills and provide opportunities to collaborate with students from other universities.

Caretaker minister also distributed cash prizes and commendation certificates among the students.

Sara Hazibullah got first prize of Rs. 15000, Anosha Wazir second prize of Rs. 10000 while Alishba Hassan stood third and received Rs. 5000.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali talking to media at PPC.

Beautification of PPC inaugurated

PESHAWAR (APP): Metropolitan Government of Peshawar Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali Tuesday inaugurated the beautification of Peshawar Press Club with a large number of members of the Club attending the ceremony.

Peshawar Press Club President Arshad Aziz Malik, members of the Khyber Union of Journalists and other members attended the inauguration. Beautifying the city as well as the Press Club is the need of the hour, said Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali while addressing the ceremony.

Making ancient places beautiful is a matter of pleasure for me, Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali said, adding, "We are always trying to make the city beautiful. "I am always present for the welfare of senior journalists, " Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali said while answering the office-bearers of the Peshawar Press Club.

The conditions of the city are very bad and Citizens are deprived of their valuable equipment day in and day out, Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali said. Police are busy with operations against these people, Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali.

Student of IC commits suicide

PESHAWAR (APP): The administration of Islamia College on Tuesday reported that Mubashir Ali, student of BS First Semester (Zoology), residing in Lodge-A, Room-1, Harding Hostel, committed suicide.

According to a notification issued by the Provost Office that the late student swallowed the tablets namely Aluminum Phosphide approximately after 11:00 am on November 27, 2023.

His roommate Muhammad Sadeem, arrived and found him unwell in his bed.

Mubashir Ali requested Sadeem to take him to the hospital.

Sadeem informed the Wardens and the Head Bearer. Upon searching his pockets, the Warden found the bottle of the mentioned tablets in his pocket and took that in custody, said the notification.

The Wardens informed the guardians immediately. Dr. Ilyas (Warden), the Senior Monitor and the Head Bearer took him quickly to the Khyber Teaching Hospital. He was put on treatment immediately. His stomach was washed.

In the meanwhile, his doctor brother also arrived to the Hospital.

Muhammad Wasim (Warden-1) followed them to the hospital.

The affectee felt relief for some time and was shifted to the Medical ICU.

His father, paternal uncle and cousins also reached the hospital at 06:30.

With the passage of time, the condition of the affectee kept on becoming critical.

Resultantly, he was put on Ventilator.

The Provost visited the Medical ICU, met the doctors and all his family members and stayed with them in the hospital till 11:45 pm.

Early next morning, nearly at 05:30 am, he breathed his last in the presence of his family members, the notification added.

The hospital administration handed over his dead body to the bereaved family.

The family took him to their home town at Parachinar (Kuram) for burial.

According to his university sources, he was appeared for the third times in recently held MDCAT test but was not succeeded.

Illegal transfer into MTI condemned

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The central president of the Medical Doctors in Malgari, Dr. Haider Ali, the Senior Vice President, Dr. Hamid Bangash, Dr. Rohail, the Secretary, and the Information Secretary, Dr. Shahzad, have jointly appealed to the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Chief Minister, and the Secretary of Health. They have raised concerns about the issue of illegal transfers of General Cadre doctors to other posts in various MTI (Medical Teaching Institutions) hospitals, which has resulted in a severe shortage of General Cadre doctors in these hospitals.

Additionally, doctors who are eligible for promotions are not being given appropriate positions in the MTIs, further exacerbating the crisis.

The silence of the Directorate of Health and Hospital Administration on the illegal decision of the Board of Governors is concerning. More than 240 seats have been abolished in various MTIs, affecting the job security of doctors.

The Medical Doctors in Malgari strongly condemn this illegal decision and demand immediate restoration of these 240 seats and the adjustment of doctors to these positions, or the allocation of budgeted positions in the health sector. They also demand the reversal of pension law changes and reject the handing over of MTI hospitals to any individual or board. While they do not oppose reforms, they oppose exploitation in the name of reforms.

They will protest against these grievances on every forum. They urge the Policy Board and the Secretary of Health to immediately review the MTI file because the servants of the state are suffering from the implementation of MTI. They also requested to take strict action of.

For this illegal conversation, they further said that in MTI civil servants still working these are professor, associate professor, specialists registrar, trainee registrar hospital director PMO, SMO, MO and staff nurses paramedics are working.

Blood donation camp held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The blood donation camp and Thalassemia awareness seminar regarding Thalassemia disease and its prevention held. An awareness seminar regarding Thalassemia disease and its prevention and blood donation camp was organized by Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Center and Blood Transfusion Services Peshawar held at Government Degree College Badraga Malakand.

105 healthy volunteer students donated blood after detail medical check-up by Dr. Tariq Khan for saving precious lives of 1478 registered Thalassemia and Hemophilia patients of Hamza Foundation.

It was joined by Principal Govt Degree College Badraga Malakand Prof. Muhammad Jan, Chief Promoter Sher Zada and RMOs of Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Center and Blood Transfusion Services Peshawar Ateeq ur Rehman and Ibrarullah Jan.

Commonwealth award conferred to AIG Dr. Quraish Khan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: AIG Dr Quraish Khan was conferred the Commonwealth Award 2023 at Nairobi Kenya on 27 November.

He was granted this prestigious award for his outstanding services in introducing innovations in the policing.

Some of his remarkable works includes his pioneer book on "Police Technophobia", establishment of Institute of Forensic Science at Peshawar on self-help basis and establishment of first ever women reporting centre at Pakistan 's former areas.

His innovative work got international fame in field of criminology and criminal justice. He was one of 15 awardee of the Commonwealth award 2023 that have been selected out of 3 thousands nominations from 56 countries of the Commonwealth. He is the first ever Pakistani Police officer who achieved this award. Akhtar Hayat Khan, IG KP felicitates Dr Quraish for the international fame and termed Dr Quraish Khan as an asset of KP Police.



Education play vital role in countering extremism: Dr. Qasim

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Director General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Centre of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism, Dr. Muhammad Qasim, has said that our youth must play an active role in eradicating violence and extremism to promote peace and tolerance through education.

He was addressing a seminar at Centre of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism Peshawar. Besides, senior faculty members, students of different departments, Deputy Director General CVE Dr. Irfan, Principal Research Officers CVE attended the seminar. Dr. Irfan said that today our country and the region is facing the challenges of extremism and violence which has threatened the peace and stability of the society.

"Education and educated youth can play a vital role in ending extremism and violence", he added. Dr. Irfan said that the establishment of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa centre of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism has been implemented under the National Action Plan formed by the consensus of all stakeholders to eradicate extremism and terrorism from the country.

The teachers and students of Abasyn University lauded the efforts of the Centre of Excellence and said that due to incidents of violence in the recent past, the youth were faced with insecurity and depression, however, the law enforcement agencies fought extremism and maintained peace and order in the country.

The Abasyn University offered Countering Violent Extremism full support to promote tolerance, peace in the society. Describing the seminar as very useful, Dr. Muhammad Qasim hoped that close cooperation and coordination of higher education institutions with the centre of excellence will promoted in the society further.



Meeting deliberates on proposed allocation for prioritized projects

F.P. Report

In the meeting, besides Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Rehabilitation and Prisons, Justice (Rtd) Irshad Qaiser, Advisor to the Caretaker Chief Minister for Minerals Development, Planning and Development and Energy and Power, Dr. Sarfaraz Ali Shah, Special Secretary, Home and Tribal Affairs, Muhammad Zabir, DG SDU Planning and Development Department Adil Saeed Safi and other planning and relevant officers of all concerned departments participated.

On this occasion, a detailed presentation was given to the provincial minister regarding the proposed allocated fund for the non-developmental and developmental expenses in the mentioned sectors and the importance of the priority projects in this regard.

On this occasion, the caretaker minister said that there should be at least one center in each tehsil, of the centers, established for the welfare of women under the social welfare department through gender mainstreaming project for merged districts.

He also directed to allocate adequate funds for the ongoing project of the rehabilitation of addicts there.

The caretaker minister also directed to take up the matter with relevant authorities regarding the ownership issue of Rescue 1122 Center in Wana, the capital of South Waziristan Lower, and also to speed up the compensation case of the affected businesses under the economic rehabilitation scheme in North Waziristan.

The caretaker minister also directed to allocate adequate amount for the development and provision of necessary equipment to the sub jails in the merged district. He said that the higher education department allocated fund for the launching of BS programmes in suitable colleges in the merged districts, especially in women's colleges, while it was also directed to start three more subjects, including computer science, in the women's college of Nawagai (Bajaur).

The caretaker minister proposed to use the libraries established in the colleges of the merged districts as public libraries, while taking notice of the transfer of some ADP schemes of the merged districts to the AIP program, he directed joint steps by relevant departments for the better favourable solution of this matter.

Violence against Women Day: Plights of Gaza women, children highlighted

PESHAWAR (APP): Khana Farhang, Islamic Republic of Iran Peshawar, in connection with the International Day against Violence against Women on Tuesday arranged a conference was held under the title of "Reviewing the violation of the rights of women and children in Gaza from different dimensions".

Director General of Khana Farhang Islamic Republic of Iran Peshawar, Dr. Hussain Chakqmi said, "We should be grateful to the Holy Prophet (SWT) that he spoke about the rights of women at that time and advocated giving them their due rights."

He said the rights of women and children were being violated in Gaza in the current war and according to international organizations many women are no longer able to conceive, many women have had abortions and so on.

He said that there were several other aspects of violence on which the media of the West and the world were silent spectators.



Provincial spokesperson of the Awami National Party Samar Bilour, expressed solidarity with the oppressed people of Gaza.

She said that she participated in this conference as a mother and to raise the voice of the oppressed mothers of Gaza at all international level.

The international media had presented the Palestinian youth as a fighters or militants while the ongoing brutality being committed by Israel was not highlighted.

She further said Palestinians were for their just right to protect their land from any oppression.

"We stand with and support the oppressed mothers of Gaza," she asserted.

Other speakers of the conference included Provincial Ombudsman Rukhshinda Naz, Rubina Moeen, Supervisor of Minhaj-ul-Qur'an Women's League Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nazma Bilqis of Jamaat-e-Islami Women's Circle Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Naseem Naqvi, Samina Qadir and other dignitaries.

They shed light on oppression and violence against women in Gaza, ongoing genocide there, various aspects of violation of women and children's rights and the Palestine issue.



In brief

Cop injured in Bannu firing F.P. Report

BANNU: Unidentified armed men shot injured a cop deployed for security of polio vaccination team here on Tuesday. According to details, unknown culprits sprayed bullets at police vaccination team in Surani Torka Bazaar of Bannu. Policeman Abdul Hameed deployed for security of the vaccination team was injured in the firing and attackers fled the scene. The injured cop was shifted to hospital for treatment. The police cordoned off the area after the attack and launched search operation for the attackers.

Eight business centres sealed

SIALKOT (PPI): Authorities on Tuesday sealed off eight business centres in Silakot on Tuesday for violating smart lockdown enforced to tackle smog. According to the district administration, six hotels were among the sealed business centres. So far 52 people have been arrested over violating the lockdown, while a fine of Rs508,000 has been imposed for the violations. The government has been taking steps to control the increasing threat of smog, while it has also planned artificial rain in the provincial capital in the upcoming week, the sources said. It is to be noted that the Punjab government has ordered the closure of markets and shops in six divisions of Punjab province, witnessing dangerously high smog levels. According to a notification, the markets and shops in six divisions of Punjab remained closed on Sunday (today) till 4:00 pm as part of provincial government's efforts to address the increasing levels of smog. The closure was enforced in Faisalabad, Sargodha, Multan, Sahiwal, Gujranwala and Hafizabad divisions of the province.

Youth stabbed to death

MURIDKE (INP): A youth was stabbed to death while his brother critically injured in knife attack by roommates here, police said on Tuesday. According to details, the incident took place in Muridke tehsil Muridke of district Sheikhupura where two groups residing in same room clashed over bilateral dispute. Members of one group attacked two brothers of other group with knife leaving them critically injured. The culprits fled the scene after committing the crime. The injured brothers were rushed to local hospital where Zeeshan succumbed to his wounds while condition of Ahmed was also stated to be critical. The police after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest the culprits.

Parents urged to vaccinate children

CHAGAI (INP): Assistant Commissioner (AC) Taftan Waqar Ahmed on Tuesday urged the parents to play their role in the success of the anti-polio campaign by vaccinating their children up to the age of five years against the crippling disease. According to the AC office, at the inauguration of the anti-polio campaign, Assistant Commissioner Taftan Waqar Ahmed said that the eradication of the polio virus could only be achieved through the vaccination of children aged five and under. Speaking to the polio workers, he pledged the support of the Levies Force to provide security to the polio teams and to inspect their performance. He expressed satisfaction with the day's progress and said that only by working together can we eradicate this dangerous virus and protect our future generations.

Domki pledges to ensure quality health facilities

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Caretaker Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki on Tuesday pledged ensuring quality health facilities to the masses and proper utilization of allocated resources for the health sector.

Ali Mardan Domki visited Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Medical Complex Sariab road Quetta and inspected various departments. The chief minister has also inaugurated the Hospital Management Information System (HMIS) in the Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Medical Complex.

Speaking on the occasion, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki said that the government has allocated a significant amount of fund to ensure better and quality medical facilities for the

people of the province. He said that with the functioning of HMIS in the Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Medical Complex, the data of all the patients coming to the hospital will be protected and due to the connection with the central database, the patients will be able to get medical assistance in all fields easily.

The functioning of the Post Graduate Management Institute will further improve the medical services of the hospital. Briefing the chief minister on the occasion of his visit to Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Medical Complex, Secretary Health Abdullah Khan said that efforts have been taken to bring reforms in the health sector to improve the health sector.

In Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Medical Complex, the HMIS project which has been delayed since

2018 has been completed within a week and our effort is to complete all the pending projects in the health department. On occasion, Executive Director of Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Medical Complex, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali said that steps are being taken to improve the services and modern medical machinery and quality treatment facilities available in this 250-bed hospital.

He said that the completion of ongoing projects in the hospital will significantly improve the medical facilities. On the occasion, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki awarded shields to the doctors and healthcare staff who have completed the Hospital Management Information System and provided outstanding medical services in various fields.

Punjab govt all set to launch E-bikes: Minister

F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: Caretaker Provincial Transport and Livestock Minister Ibrahim Hasan Murad on Tuesday said that the government was all set to launch electric bikes to prevent smog intensity. He said that the E-bikes would be cost-effective and government employees would also be provided electric bikes on lease.

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immediate alerts were relayed to the field forces.

The Electric Vehicles Policy is the need of the hour to promote a safe environment, local production of e-vehicles, providing incentives, with the ultimate goal of capturing a substantial share of the market, he added. E-bikes being zero-emission vehicles would use lithium-ion batteries which will emerge as a cost-effective and eco-friendly alternative to traditional transportation, he mentioned. The minister stressed that the media should play its role by creating awareness campaigns on private tv channels and radio for the conservation of energy and for wearing face masks during smog

weather.

Replying to a question, the administration has started a strict crackdown and announced to charge heavy fines for violations of the traffic rules, adding, that around 33 to 34 crore vehicles were being imposed fines for violating traffic rules. The purpose of imposing fines is to prevent people from using vehicles that increase pollution. The crackdown will continue till next month, he added. Punjab government was taking steps in accordance with PM's eco-friendly measures, he said, adding that Punjab would be the first province in the country to give such a great incentive to owners of electric vehicles.



QUETTA: PPP leader Syed Khurshid Shah addressing during a press conference.

Repatriation of illegal Afghan families continue

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Repatriation of Afghan families, residing unlawfully in various cities of the country is continuing and on the 27th day of expiration of the deadline 393 families, comprising 1493 Afghan nationals have been sent back to Afghanistan via Torkham border.

According to the Interior and Tribal Affairs department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa till 27

November, 2023 so far 0.241888 Afghanis repatriated to their motherland. As per information last day 145 families arrived in Holding Center, Landi Kotal where from they were shifted to Torkham border after necessary documentation.

While 248 Afghan families directly reached Torkham following their listing in other parts of the country and after completion of their data collection and examination process

they were let to cross the border to Afghanistan. In the same way returning of Afghanis on other borders is also in progress and till last day 3426 and 698 Afghan citizens repatriated to their native country though Angoor Ada and Kharlachi borders respectively. It is worth mentioning here that collectively 0.246013 million illegal Afghan immigrants have been repatriated from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Afghanistan.

PML-N activists to accept leadership decision on oath

F.P. Report

BUNER: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Buner candidates aspirant party tickets and office bearers from top to bottom have taken oath of accepting the party decision in this regard.

The party district chapter president Haji Salar Khan administered oath to them. The grand oath ceremony was held at league house Rega. The PML (N) party ticket aspirant candidates the office bearers from top to bottom the

party key figures the active workers largely attended.

The contents of the oath were very clear that they would follow the party policy regarding party ticket and those awarded party tickets by the party high command would be accepted and all of them promised they would take active part in electioneering and would cost own vote and would also make sure family relatives friends and public as well.

The party president Haji Salar Khan in his presiden-

tial speech congratulated all those who took oath of following party policy and assured them due respect adding PML (N) was a party always struggled for democracy in the country and itself respected democracy within ranks too, Haji Salar Khan told media persons being a president he would always respect and value to the own free opinions of party workers and would never let one to impose own agenda and hijack the party, he concluded.



HYDERABAD: Sindh Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Maqbool Baqir visiting general bus stand area.

Governor urges students to venture into field of research

F.P. Report

UPPER DIR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali on Tuesday underlined the significance of education in existing scenario and said that discovering new fields of emerging technologies and venturing into research is needed to achieve progress and a respectable position among comity of nations.

He was addressing first convocation of Shringal University Dir Bala as a Chief Guest. The governor highlighted significance of education and said that our younger generation must divert their attention towards contemporary education and new technologies to lead country towards progress.

I am proud to address first convocation of the Shringal University and distribute certificates among students as a native of the area, he said and added that the university has educated more than 6000 since its inception.

The governor said that convocation in Shringal University is a proof that we are heading towards a bright future. He said that our youngster should take advantage of the facilities being provided by the government and change their destiny to live a successful and respectable life. He urged students to focus fields of innovations and research and said that tireless efforts and hard work is of supreme importance for development and prosperity.

Culprits involved in girl killing arrested

F.P. Report

KOHISTAN: Kohistan Police has arrested all those involved in killing of a girl whose picture goes viral on social media in Kolai-Palas incident.

According to details, police has also arrested three for abetting the culprit. The judge hearing the case has also granted police seven day custodial remand of the culprit to police for conducting interrogation.

Meanwhile, police has also safely recovered a boy, Rehmat Shah from Barsharial who was seen in the viral video. Further probe into the incident is underway.

Murder accused escapes from hospital

F.P. Report

KARAK: An under custody accused involved in a murder case managed to escape from hospital where he was brought for treatment from the jail, police informed on Tuesday.

According to police, the accused namely Ahmad who was accused of killing a youth, fell ill in District Jail Karak and was brought to District Headquarters Hospital for treatment. During treatment, the accused managed to escape from the MLC ward of the hospital.

The district police officer, while taking notice of the inmate escape, has ordered the arrest of four police officials deputized on the security of the accused.

PTI-P to bring peace and prosperity: Saeed

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Pakistan Tahreek Insaf Parliamentarian (PTI-P) leader Brigadier (retired) Saeedullah has said that he is contesting the next general elections for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly from PK 15. Talking to local journalists at the Timergara press club here on Tuesday he said the Lower Dir district was a backward area that needed government attention. He said the previous lawmakers from the district had played their role in development but the district still needed some mega projects.

He thanked the people of Talash and other parts of the district for the PTI-P successful power show at Talash on Nov 24 which was addressed by former chief ministers Perviz Khattak and Mahmood Khan. The retired army officer said that he had taken part in politics for bringing peace, prosperity and development in the area. He said that the majority of youths left the

country for jobs while the district had great potential in tourism and businesses. The PTI-P nominated candidate said that due to dilapidated condition of roads, locals faced several difficulties.

He said that he would try to include the Chakdara Dir road in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project and would convert it into an ExpressWay. He said the former PTI MPAs from the Lower Dir district had not raised effective voice for the area development. He said the PTI-P had been formed to serve people of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and he would also work hard to bring the district at par with other districts of the province.

ANP nominees: The Awami National Party nominated candidate for NA 7 Zahid Khan, PK 15 Malik Muhammad Zeb, PK 16 Wasil Khan and PK 17 Malik Sajjad Yousafzai on Tuesday said that the ANP would never accept the imposition of taxes in Malakand division.

Speaking at a news conference at the Chakdara press club the ANP nominated candidates clarified that there had been no rift in the party ranks over the award of tickets. He said the ANP had formed a working committee for awarding tickets to suitable candidates and they had nothing to do with it.

The ANP leaders said the previous governments had ignored the Adenzai tehsil in development and they would take practical steps to make the area developed. They said that street lights would be installed in all markets of Adenzai tehsil, each union council would be provided with basic facilities and the THQ hospital Chakdara would be upgraded if the ANP formed a government in the province.

They said the ANP would maintain the 'Stoory Da Pakhtunkhwa' programme for brilliant students and would establish an autonomous higher education commission in the province to enhance the standard of university education.

Balochistan re-shuffles officers

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Government of Balochistan re-shuffles officers. A notification issued by Services and General Administration Department said on Tuesday.

According to the notification, Capt. (Retd) Jumadad (PAS/BS-18), Deputy Commissioner, Kachhi has been transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner, Pishin vice

Capt (Retd) Jameel Ahmed while Captain (Retd) Jameel Ahmed (PAS/BS-18), Deputy Commissioner, Pishin has been transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner, Kachhi.

A notification issued by Services and General Administration Department on November 28, 2023 says that Qadir Bakhsh Pirkani (BCS/BS-19), Chief of Section, Planning and Development Department has been transferred and posted as Special Secretary, Agriculture and Cooperative Department.

Separately, Abdul Salam Achakzai (BCS/BS-19), Additional Secretary, Home and Tribal Affairs Department has been transferred and directed to report to SandGAD while Murad

Khan Kasi (BCS/BS-18), awaiting posting orders in SandGAD, has been posted as Additional Secretary, Home and Tribal Affairs Department vice Abdul Salam Achakzai, said a notification issued by Services and General Administration Department on November 27, 2023.

Students protest against hike in fee: Students of Balochistan University on Tuesday protested against the spike in the fees. According to detail, students of Balochistan University rallied and protested, demanding the authorities to withdraw the decision regarding increase in the fees.

Carrying placards inscribed with slogans, protesters demanded to grant relief to the students. Addressing the protest demonstration, speakers said that poor students were being looted in the name of fees, adding that Rs. 9000 fee had reached to Rs. 26000. They said increase in the fees had added to the miseries of poor students.

Meanwhile, Jabbar Baloch, Administrator Quetta Metropolitan Corporation, has said archery was not only the

FIA arrests outlaw for harassing girl

MULTAN (INP): Federal Investigation Agency's Cyber Wing claimed to have arrested an alleged outlaw for harassing and blackmailing a girl.

According to official sources, an alleged outlaw namely Shah Faisal Sajjad son of Sajjad Hussain, resident of Multan was allegedly found involved in harassment and blackmailing to complaint named S. Nadeem daughter of Muhammad Nadeem, resident of Multan. The accused has objectionable data of the complainant. An FIA team led by Muhammad Tariq Mehmood Sipra (Assistant Director) raided and managed to arrest the alleged outlaw.



BAHAWALPUR: Prominent leader of minorities Ishphanyar Bhandar ex-MNA celebrating Diwali Milan Party with Hindu community.



Dozen dead in storm across Russia, Ukraine and Moldova

MOSCOW (AFP): Hurricane force winds, snowfall and flooding that swept parts of southern Russia, Ukraine and Moldova left at least 13 people dead and almost two million without power, authorities said. Dubbed the 'storm of the century' by Russian media, the violent weather has lashed the southern regions of Dagestan, Krasnodar and Rostov, as well as the occupied Ukrainian territories of Donetsk, Lugansk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and Crimea.

President Vladimir Putin has been following reports of the "meteorological disasters" and ordered the government to take measures to help the affected regions, Kremlin spokesman Dmitri Peskov said. Russia's energy ministry said about 1.9 million people were affected by power cuts. Four people were reported to have died in Russia and Crimea due to the storms, with another four reported dead in Moldova. In Ukraine, the severe weather left at least five people dead and almost 1,500 towns and villages in the dark after storms dumped up to 25 centimetres (10 inches) of snow in some places.

"Unfortunately, as of now, there are some deaths. The highest number (of casualties) is in the Odesa region -- five people," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said. Huge waves crashed over beachside areas of Russia's Black Sea coast, video from social media showed, as wind speeds reached over 140 kilometres (about 90 miles) per hour in some places. Two bodies were found in Russia's southern Krasnodar region, while state media said a sailor was killed in the Kerch Strait between Crimea and Russia. "One man on the Russian-annexed Crimean peninsula's southern coast was also killed, according to Oleg Kryuchkov, an adviser to the region's Russian-installed governor Sergei Aksyonov. "The man went out to look at the waves and, unfortunately, tragically died," he said. In Moldova, the bodies of two people were found in a car buried in a snowdrift in the southeastern area of Coscalia, Moldovan media reported. A 48-year old man was found dead in the eastern village of Cruglic and the storm claimed the life of another man in Grigoriopol in the separatist region of

Transnistria. In Russia's Krasnodar region, which includes the resorts of Sochi and Anapa, several people were injured when hundreds of trees were blown down, the Russian emergency situations ministry said. In Vitiazovo near Anapa, the storm caused a large Belize-flagged cargo ship, the "Blue Shark" to run around, the ministry said. The Caspian Pipeline Consortium said it was suspending the loading of oil and sheltering its tankers due to "extremely unfavourable weather conditions" with winds gusting up to 86 kph (53 mph) and waves up to eight metres (26 feet) high. Crimean lawmaker Vladimir Konstantinov said on state television that the peninsula had experienced an "armageddon"-like scenario. "Old-timers can't remember this kind of wind and waves," he said. Parts of Crimea's coastal highway linking the cities of Yevpatoria and Simferopol were closed due to flooding, and ferry services from Crimea's largest city of Sevastopol were suspended. About 500 marine animals in Sevastopol's aquarium were killed during the storm, which flooded one of its floors, the city's Moscow-installed governor said. Transport on the Ukrainian mainland and southern Russia was also affected.

Train traffic on Russia's Black Sea coast was disrupted after rail tracks fell into the sea, while oil loading at the port of Novorossiysk was suspended. Regions in the south, like Odesa and Mykolaiv, were worst affected by the weather, as were Kyiv and Dnipropetrovsk in central Ukraine. In Odesa, which has been subjected to repeated Russian strikes, authorities said they had helped 1,624 people who had been trapped due to snow. Regional authorities said the temperature had fallen to below freezing with reports of gusts of up to 72 kilometres (44 miles) per hour. Ukraine's energy grid has been targeted systematically by Russian forces since Moscow's assault began last year, and officials have warned strikes could intensify over winter. Weather forecasts show downpours are expected to continue in the Crimean port of Sevastopol and Sochi on Russia's Black Sea coast. Freezing temperatures are forecast on Tuesday morning through much of Ukraine.

Lorries line up at Poland-Ukraine border as truckers expand blockade

KORCZOWA: Polish truckers and farmers have started a blockade of one of the busiest border crossings with Ukraine, expanding a protest against what they say is unfair competition from Ukraine and demanding more government support. The Polish truckers and farmers began an around-the-clock blockade of the southeastern Medyka crossing. Medyka is the fourth border point Polish workers have blocked since November 6, stranding thousands of lorries for days in kilometres-long lines.

The Polish truckers said they are losing out to Ukrainian companies, which offer cheaper prices and are transporting goods within the European Union rather than just between the bloc and Ukraine. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the EU lifted permit requirements for Ukrainian truckers entering the bloc and for EU truckers entering Ukraine. The Polish truckers are demanding the EU

reinroduce the old permit system, offering exemptions for the transport only of humanitarian and military supplies. They also want empty trucks from the EU to be excluded from an electronic queueing system in Ukraine and measures to stop Belarusian and Russian hauliers from setting up companies in Poland to get around sanctions. Polish farmers joining the blockade are pressuring their government to extend support to help them cope with low grain prices. Tomasz Borkowski, leader of a Polish transporters union, said the workers are committed to maintaining the blockade until their demands are met.

"I would like to end this protest as soon as possible because it is as burdensome for us as for everyone around us," Borkowski said. "We have no intention of giving up, and we will stand until we get our terms."

Protesters said only two trucks were being allowed

to pass through the Medyka border crossing per hour with exemptions made for humanitarian aid and war supplies. This has led to a 127-hour wait for trucks to cross at Medyka, one of just eight road border crossings with Ukraine, according to data from the Polish border guard. Ukraine said the protest is damaging its fragile wartime economy by hampering exports and stopping supplies of essentials like motor vehicle gas from entering the country. With Ukraine's Black Sea ports, a key export route before the war, virtually blocked by Russia, Ukrainian businesses rely on roads and railways to reroute exports and imports.

Ukraine's Ministry of Infrastructure estimated that an average of 40,000 to 50,000 trucks had been crossing the border with Poland per month via eight existing crossings, twice as many as before the war. Most of the goods are carried by Ukraine's transport fleet. — Aljazeera

Kenya floods death toll rises to 76

NAIROBI (AP): The Kenyan government urged people living in flood-prone areas to relocate to higher ground as heavy rains and flash floods continued to wreak havoc across East Africa. At least 76 people have died and 40,000 displaced from their homes since the rains began pounding the country in October. President William Ruto convened an emergency cabinet meeting and said 38 of Kenya's 47 counties had been affected by floods and mudslides made worse by the El Niño phenomenon.

State House spokesperson Hussein Mohammed also noted "disease outbreaks, destruction of infrastructure and property as well as prolonged power outages" across Kenya and the region. The worst affected areas are the coastal cities of Mombasa and Malindi and the northern Kenya region which borders Somalia, also hit hard by flooding. In Kenya's Garissa town, thousands of people have been displaced after their homes were swept away. "All roads are destroyed. I don't even know where people will go," Garissa resident Joel Ngui told The Associated Press. Many roads and bridges have been washed away or partially destroyed, making it difficult to reach people marooned by flood waters. Residents living by the Tana River, Kenya's largest, have been left homeless and hungry after it burst its banks.

Lula appoints justice minister to SC

BRASILIA (Reuters): Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said he will appoint his Justice Minister, Flavio Dino, to a Supreme Court seat that has been vacant since the retirement of Justice Rosa Weber in late September. Lula also said he would nominate Paulo Gonet as the country's new prosecutor general.

Dino, 55, is Lula's second appointment for Brazil's top court since he took office in January for his third non-consecutive term as president. Earlier in June, he tapped his former defense lawyer Cristiano Zanin for another Supreme Court seat. Previously, former President Michel Temer appointed his own justice minister, Alexandre de Moraes to the court while Lula's predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro, picked Andre Mendonca for a seat. Dino, whose nomination will now be voted on by the Senate, has been serving in Lula's cabinet since January.

A former federal judge, he was a congressman for the Communist Party of Brazil from 2007 to 2011 and later governed the northeastern state of Maranhao from 2015 to 2022.

What may have sparked the mutiny in Sierra Leone

FREE TOWN (BBC): Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone, was jolted awake by gunshots. Armed men had tried to break into an armoury at a military base near the president's home, then attacked two of the city's main prisons, releasing some of the inmates. At least 19 people, including 13 soldiers, died in the violence, according to the army. The president has vowed to prosecute the gunmen - but what was their motive? Were they inspired by military takeovers elsewhere in the region?

"The days, weeks, even months leading, there was no clue, none whatsoever that something of this nature would happen," says Valnora Edwin, a civil society advocate and political analyst based in Freetown. "But in hindsight when you put the pieces together, you realise that there was a lot of discontent and something was bound to spark." For Ms Edwin, there were a number of issues that may have contributed to mutiny. One of them is politics. High unemployment mean lots of people want steady government jobs, she explains. This means the stakes are high during elections - people feel they need to be affiliated with certain parties in order to have access to state jobs and other benefits. "If your political party loses, that means someone else comes in and if you've been open about your political affiliation you lose all you have: influence, opportunities and access."

Sierra Leone's information minister and army spokesperson have said soldiers were among those responsible for attack. This will come as little surprise to many Sierra Leoneans, including Ms Edwin. She explains: "When a new government comes in, even within the military and the police, when it comes to promotions, transfers, retirement they favour certain ethnic groups. "There's a lot of discontent among the military and police." A bleak economic outlook may also have contributed to events. Like many countries in the region, Sierra Leone imports a lot of what it consumes, making consumers in the country vulnerable to external economic shocks. Inflation in Sierra Leone is over 50%. Ms Edwin explains: "Other countries have put policies in place to cushion the effect as best as possible, but the current state of our economy leaves much to be desired. Something more needs to



be done to cushion the impact of external shocks." Alie, a 61-year-old businessman who lives in Freetown agrees that politics has an influence on the armed forces.

"Politics is in every sphere of life in this country. The security forces are hugely divided along these lines. Each administration that comes in tries to get rid of supporters of the opposition in the armed forces," he tells the BBC on condition that he do not publish his second name. In June, President Julius Maada Bio was elected for a second term after narrowly avoiding a run-off. The main opposition party, the All People's Congress (APC) questioned the result and boycotted parliament for four months. The stalemate only ended after mediation by the regional bloc Ecowas. Alie believes some APC supporters, including those within the armed forces, still think the party was robbed. "Many people think the [President Bio's] SLPP didn't win and that has led to this anger where some people think they have the power to reverse what has happened," he says. International observers criticised the June elections, highlighting a lack of transparency in the count. Afolabi Adekaiyaja from the Centre for Democracy and Development was part of a civil society group that monitored the elections and raised a number of concerns. "The president won

re-election on the first ballot even though polls and the PVT (Parallel Vote Tabulation, or exit polls) that were carried had predicted it was much more likely that the president would need to go for a second ballot to get re-elected," he says.

Within two months of the election, the authorities said they had arrested a number of people, including members of the armed forces, who were plotting a coup against the president. It is not clear what happened to them, but for Mr Adekaiyaja it reinforces the message that President Bio's government is under threat. None of the commentators that spoke to the BBC for this article believe the string of recent coups in West and Central Africa directly influenced the events in Sierra Leone. Instead, they cite specific political and economic factors. But Mr Adekaiyaja says we are unlikely to see an end to soldiers rebelling if issues around governance and election fraud are not addressed. "An election process needs to be free, fair and credible. Where there are significant concerns about the validity of the process then it is only going to lead to questions about the legitimacy of the leader and concerns about how true that support is. "Because if you believe that a leader doesn't have as much support as was required then you might want to carry out a coup, for example," he says.

For HK's arrested pro-democracy activists, justice must wait

TAIPEI: Closing arguments are due to begin in Hong Kong on Wednesday in the high-profile trial of 16 pro-democracy activists and legislators, more than 1,000 days after they were arrested by national security police. Ten days have been set aside for prosecutors and defence lawyers to summarise their arguments in the case against the 16, who are among 47 pro-democracy figures arrested on charges of conspiracy to commit subversion in pre-dawn raids in January 2021.

If convicted, they face a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. The high-profile case has been marked by repeated delays, drawing international criticism, with most of the defendants remanded in custody for nearly three years after being denied bail. The trial, which was predicted to last 90 days, has dragged on for nearly 10 months as three national security judges - hand-picked by the government - wade through thousands of pages of evidence provided by the defence and prosecution. Hong Kong prosecutors allege that the 47 violated the city's sweeping national security legislation by organising an unofficial election primary in

July 2020 as part of a plot to gain a majority in the semi-democratic legislature and veto the government's budget bills. Among the group, 31, including prominent activist Joshua Wong, former legislator Claudia Mo, and legal scholar Benny Tai, have pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing.

"Delayed justice is injustice and repeated delays or postponement of trials particularly in [national security] cases reflects that the prosecution has not done a good job in managing these cases," Eric Lai, a research fellow at Georgetown Center for Asian Law, told Al Jazeera. While the "Hong Kong 47" case is the largest national security case to date, drawn-out proceedings have become a feature of the city's British-inherited legal system since the imposition of the national security law following anti-government protests in 2019. Although Hong Kong retained its common law legal system after the city's return to China in 1997, the national security law weakened or scrapped many common law norms, including the presumption in favour of bail and the right to a jury trial. The number of people in Hong Kong prisons on

remand - those in detention while awaiting trial or sentencing - jumped from 2,044 to 3,304 people between December 2018 and September 2023, according to data collected by the Hong Kong Correctional Services Department. As a percentage of cases, the share of those in remand grew from 24.98 percent to 37.24 percent over the period. Much of the backlog stems from some 3,000 prosecutions that followed the 2019 protests, when more than 10,000 people were arrested and charged for offences such as unlawful assembly, possession of an offensive weapon, criminal damage and assaulting a police officer, according to data compiled by the Georgetown Center for Asian Law.

Prosecutions of protest-related cases have typically taken 30 percent longer than other criminal cases, according to an analysis by the Georgetown Centre, with 41.8 percent taking more than a year to complete as of August 2022 - eating up court time and resources. "The number and proportion of people in [Hong Kong] jails who have not been convicted are both at record highs. — Aljazeera

The beginning of the end? The hypothetical future of Palestinian politics

WEST BANK: The masked Qassam Brigades fighter adjusts his AK-47 assault rifle before he slides into a chair in the Gaza office of Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas. "Hello, Condoleezza Rice. You have to deal with me now. There is no Abu Mazen [Abbas] any more," the fighter jokes in an imaginary phone call to the then-United States secretary of state. Around him, fighters with the armed wing of Hamas snap photos of themselves.

The year is 2007, and Hamas has just fought and beaten a faction of Abbas's Fatah party for control of Gaza. Fatah lost the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections and was unhappy with the result, attacking the winners, Hamas. This spelled not only a political fracturing but also a geographical one. The Palestinians split into the occupied West Bank, partially governed by the PA, and Gaza under Hamas.

The situation had remained frozen since then - until now when Palestinians' political future seems more uncertain than ever. Israel's stated objective for its current bombardment and ground offensive in the Gaza Strip in retaliation for Hamas's surprise attacks on October 7 in southern Israel has been to take out the armed group. If Israel is successful, the return of the PA to the beleaguered enclave is being touted as a possibility. But will it return? And can it? Under Hamas, the Gaza Strip has been besieged, impoverished by Israel and assaulted on five occasions in the past 17 years. In this latest assault, the Palestinian political future looks very precarious. Israel said it aims to destroy Hamas entirely and that is why it launched an all-out assault on the Gaza Strip on October 7. Israeli raids, settler violence and settlement expansions in the occupied West Bank are among the

reasons Hamas launched its attacks on October 7. Izzat al-Rasheq, a member of Hamas's Political Bureau, said.

"We warned the Israelis and the international community that this relentless pressure will result in an explosion, but they did not listen," al-Rasheq told Al Jazeera, adding that incursions on Al-Aqsa Mosque, thousands of unjustly detained Palestinians, and the blockade on Gaza all played a role as well. In a scenario in which Israel succeeds in eliminating Hamas somehow, it has been suggested by the US that the PA take over the beleaguered enclave. So far, Israel does not agree, but what do the Palestinians think of the PA? Can it return to Gaza? And can Hamas be destroyed? The crux of the divide between the two most dominant players in Palestinian politics is their differing approaches to the Palestinian cause. While Fatah and the PA, whose current leadership is one and the same, focus on cooperation with Israel, Hamas's strategy is to confront Israel militarily, said Aboud Hamayel, a lecturer at Birzeit University in the West Bank.

"There's nothing we can do," Hamayel said, mimicking what he said is the PA's defeatist tone. The PA's support base in the West Bank is based on a transactional relationship with Israel, the analyst said. However, some Fatah factions do take part in the armed struggle in the West Bank, where the movement is more vocal and diverse than the PA, he added. Fatah still exists in Gaza, where it is now in the opposition. Its supporters there are split between loyalty to Abbas and former Fatah leader Mohammed Dahlan, who has been in exile in the United Arab Emirates for 10 years, Hamayel said. The PA has international recognition and receives funding and tax revenues. In turn, it manages security in its territory, theoretically

freeing Israel from dealing with day-to-day Palestinian life, Hamayel said, except when Israel conducts raids and arrests resisting Palestinians. Fatah does want to achieve unity with Hamas, according to the group's spokesperson, even though several attempts over the years to do that have failed. "Through national dialogue, we will reach a consensus on how to govern ourselves, how to lead our cause and present it to the world," Jamal Nazzal, a Fatah spokesperson and a member of its parliamentary body, the Revolutionary Council, told Al Jazeera.

A unified Palestinian entity is the stated US goal, especially as discussions arise on the fate of Gaza after the war, according to Kenneth Katzman, a senior fellow at the New York-based Soufan Center. This entity would control both Gaza and the West Bank, accept Israel's existence and resume Oslo negotiations with Israel, he said, referring to agreements between Israel and the umbrella Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the 1990s. "I think the intent is to get back to where the talks left off," Katzman told Al Jazeera, adding that they would be the precursor to Washington mediating a two-state solution. Rafe Jabari, a French-Palestinian political science analyst, agreed that a two-state solution should be pursued after the war's end but said a new agreement should be drawn up to replace the Oslo Accords because Palestinians were coerced to make too many concessions in that process.

Israel will be unwilling to relinquish control of the lands it occupies, he added, and it will not be able to take out Hamas as it says it wants to. "Hamas is a part of Palestinian society. They can't eliminate Hamas," he told Al Jazeera, adding that they're not just a political wing. Hamas agrees. "They cannot

rearrange the Palestinian house to suit themselves. Hamas will remain, and what comes after Hamas will also be Hamas," said al-Rasheq, adding that Palestinians would not accept "the US or Israel or anyone else" telling them who should govern them. "The Palestinian people will never accept an entity that enters Gaza on an Israeli tank," he said. Because it is impossible to eradicate Hamas, Jabari said, the group will have to be involved in any post-war negotiations. "All actors should be involved in the resolution of the conflict," he said, citing past negotiations in which that occurred even when one party was viewed as a "terrorist group", such as during the French-Algeria peace agreement in 1962 or, more recently, in talks between the US and the Taliban.

A transition period involving an international peacekeeping force in Gaza was mentioned by both Katzman and Jabari as a possible first step before negotiations. But, Jabari added, these forces have been subject to failures in recent conflicts. The PA's government in the West Bank is seen by many Palestinians as collusion with Israel. Much of the frustration is with Abbas, who is seen as weak for not managing to advance any peace processes in his nearly two decades in power, Jabari said. He is also seen as not having advocated enough against Israel's practices from settlement expansions to harassment of Palestinians, he added. PA security practices in the occupied West Bank have also been criticised as heavy-handed but, Nazzal said, the PA needs to "restore order and protect the law". "Movements of the Palestinian security forces or officials or normal individuals sometimes require security coordination with the occupying power," he said, adding that everything the PA adminis-

ters in the occupied West Bank "has to be coordinated with Israel". Nazzal distanced Fatah from the PA, however, saying it is "a liberation movement that doesn't have any sort of contact with Israel".

Despite frustration with the PA, Katzman said Palestinians who are bearing the brunt of the Israeli aggression may be more disgruntled with Hamas's actions. "Much of the Gaza population now realises that Hamas is going to keep dragging them into a war with Israel, and they don't want that," he said. "So I think they're willing to overlook the Palestinian Authority's faults. I think that's true for Palestinians in the West Bank as well. They don't want ... forever war with Israel." However, al-Reshaq said: "Palestinians everywhere support Hamas more. They see Hamas is working to resist the occupation," he said, adding that global support for Palestinians has surged in the past few weeks. With mixed support for the PA among Palestinians, what is the likelihood of it returning to govern Gaza? Nazzal pointed out that, despite Hamas rule, the PA already runs certain elements of life in Gaza, such as the health and education ministries and the banking system.

Meanwhile, the Fatah movement, he added, is opposed to a future in which Hamas is taken out. "We do not agree on the Israeli military objectives in Gaza, nor can we predict what will be the outcome of this terrible assault that Israel has launched against our people," Nazzal said. What Fatah knows, however, is that Palestinians should decide who governs them through legislative elections that secure a path for the two-state solution, he added. "The only thing that nobody has tried is for the Palestinians to live freely in an independent state of their own," Nazzal said.

"Until that happens, we will keep going from one cycle of violence to the next." The US is still ramping up its push for the return of the PA in Gaza, though, and the reasons President Joe Biden's administration has for this strategy is multifold, Hamayel said. First is to buy time for Israel to finish its military operations by distracting the international community, he said. It wants to allow its ally to retaliate for Hamas's October 7 attacks while coaxing it to think about what's next, the analyst said.

The White House also wants to keep its regional allies on side, especially as Arab states struggle with their citizens not feeling that they are doing enough to end the Israeli assault, according to Hamayel. However, he concluded, the PA takeover would happen only if Hamas loses, an outcome still too early to predict. Hamas, meanwhile, sees weakness in Israel's seemingly directionless attack on civilians. "The size of the defeat [on October 7] made [Israel] lose its mind and strike out in any direction with no thought," al-Reshaq said. "It has failed. It failed on the battlefield on October 7 when faced with the Qassam Brigades, and it is failing now because it is unable to achieve any real goals in Gaza." In the event that Israel cannot take Hamas out, the fissure between the two Palestinian political groups will deepen, Hamayel predicted. Hamas would remain standing, a valiant hero for Palestinians for fighting Israel, and the PA would appear weak, shamed for cooperating with Israel over the years, he said. That would kick off a vicious cycle of a seemingly weak PA inspiring more settler activity in the West Bank, which would erode the group's control of the territory more and more, he said. "This could be the beginning of the end of the PA," Hamayel said. — Aljazeera

The Frontier Post

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Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at
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Pak-UAE fraternal ties

PAKISTAN and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have signed several multi-billion dollar Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) in a range of areas on Monday to boost economic and strategic cooperation between the two brotherly nations. The historic bilateral cooperation agreements were signed during a prestigious ceremony in Abu Dhabi that was also graced by the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and the UAE President, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, while Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M) was also present on the occasion.

Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates are two brotherly Muslim countries that have enjoyed cordial bilateral relations and fraternal ties throughout the past years. The foundation of the Pak-UAE friendship and brotherhood was laid down by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan in the 1970s. It has been taken forward by his son and the UAE President, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to a new era. Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) share strong bilateral ties across various domains, including trade, economy, defence, and cultural exchange. The UAE is the second largest destination for the Pakistani workforce and is currently home to 1.8 million Pakistanis, which is playing an important role in the progress, prosperity and economic development of the United Arab Emirates along with consolidating the bilateral bonds between the two brotherly nations. Historically, the UAE has been a crucial source of investment for Pakistan, particularly in sectors like real estate, energy, and infrastructure. Both nations have collaborated on several projects and initiatives aimed at fostering economic development and enhancing bilateral trade. Over the decades, the historic and deep-rooted fraternal relationship between Pakistan and the UAE has grown manyfolds and stood the test of time, while Diplomatic interactions and high-level visits of the leadership from both nations have further augmented their relationship and boosted their bilateral cooperation emphasizing each other support on regional and global issues relating to their nations and broader Muslim Ummah.

Historically, the UAE has always stood beside Pakistan during hours of need including natural calamities, earthquakes, and super floods together with economic challenges and fiscal depletions in the past years. The brotherly Arab nation has provided crucial support to Pakistan at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in countering hostile propaganda and getting out of the notorious grey list of the international anti-money laundering watchdog. The UAE government extended generous financial support of \$1 billion to help avert Islamabad's worst financial crisis and a looming economic collapse last year.

Presently, the government of Pakistan and newly formed the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) are making concerted efforts to bring foreign investment into the country to help revive economic activity and move the wheel of the industry. Under the recently launched initiative, Pakistan and the UAE signed various memorandums of Understanding (MoU) on investment cooperation in multiple sectors including energy, port operations, wastewater treatment, food security, logistics, minerals, and banking and financial services. The current investment by the UAE government is not meant for profit but to assist the brother Muslim nation in resolving its financial glitches and help attain long-held economic goals to achieve sustainable development and economic stability. That must be acknowledged and appreciated by the Pakistani nation. Hopefully, the magnificent endeavour will unlock multi-billion dollars of investment from the United Arab Emirates into the country and will help realize various initiatives to envision the dream of a stable and prosperous Pakistan.

Election season, new realities and alliances

AS the poll date is coming closer, the political temperature is gradually heating up in the country, and the rumours, prophecies, and predictions of the political pundits are at their peak. The majority of civic groups had already started lobbying for the next nationwide election along with making grounds to dispute the polls if they failed to achieve victory. Previously, the PPP Co-Chairman and former President Asif Ali Zardari forecasted the possibility of a unity government in the aftermath of the February 8 election and now the party's provincial President invited all political parties to form a charter of democracy and Charter of Economy to give root to democracy.

Historically, strong democracy and a stable economy have always been the most important pillars of any successful state. No political analyst ever refused the power of consensus and national unity. However, history revealed that those golden principles had always been used by the civics groups while being in the opposition while ruling parties always tried to bulldoze their adversaries by using government powers, biased umpires, police, and Patwaris. The PPP and PML-N conceived the first-ever Charter of Democracy in 2008 to overthrow dictatorial rule of General Pervez Musharraf. Again both PDM allies tried to use this recipe against their common adversary Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) during their one and half year rule but failed. In the current scenario, the PML-N has launched a sweeping election campaign through striking poll alliances with multiple groups including MQM-P, JUI-F, BNP, and most likely the ANP, while leaving the least space for the People's Party. There are rumours about a potential partnership between the PPP and the PTI, as a changed political atmosphere and new realities forged a unique consensus between the past diarch opponents that might be close allies in the future.

The prevailing political scenario summarizes that PPP-PTI teamwork has become mandatory for the People's Party if PPP intends to form governments in Punjab and the Centre. Hence, Bilawal needs to partner with his staunch enemy to defeat his seasonal contender who is a major hurdle in his path to Premiership. All is possible in today's world, yet the time would illustrate the tact of Pakistani politicians in the future.

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Fact or Fiction: The propaganda war won't stop, even during a truce

Marc Owen Jones

AFTER weeks of discussions on a "humanitarian pause", there is finally a tenuous truce in place. This has been a long road, largely because Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wants a never-ending war - in part to defer his ongoing domestic political and legal woes, and in part because he claims to want to pursue the almost impossible task of eliminating Hamas.

Meanwhile, Hamas know their only hope for being perceived as victorious - however pyrrhic any such "win" might be - is to secure an indefinite ceasefire. With that scenario unlikely, they must also maintain a narrative of escalation, and use rhetoric to ensure that their regional allies remain primed and ready.

Cue the rise of anti-diplomacy, which international security studies scholar James Der Derian characterises as a form of "war by other means". It encompasses practices that effectively perpetrate a form of violence against the traditional process of diplomatic mediation and reconciliation. Part of this anti-diplomacy is an increase in attacks on those advocating mediation, reconciliation and peace - often involving disinformation and propaganda. These attacks are multifaceted, occurring domestically, regionally and internationally. On November 23, the Israel account on X, run by the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, posted an edited video showing an Israeli soldier purportedly navigating a Hamas tunnel near al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza - adding to a growing set of such videos. Intriguingly, the video references Qatar three times, specifically pointing out the tunnel's proximity to the "Qatari compound" and the "Qatari building".

The phrase "Qatari building" in the context of al-Shifa has only ever been used since November 16, with the earliest mention appearing to emanate from a video posted by the Israeli army. Usually, the Qatari building refers to the

"Qatar Reconstruction HQ", which lies 3km (1.9 miles) away. The use of such language is no coincidence. With propaganda, nothing happens by accident. Word choices - especially the mention of particular countries or people, are carefully selected to convey certain messages. In this case, it's part of a broader attempt to try and link Qatar to Hamas and the Israeli narrative of al-Shifa serving as a command-and-control centre for the armed Palestinian group. Why? Qatar has been playing a leading role in mediating for peace amid the current war. Its work has been central to the negotiations that have led to the release of captives by Hamas and Palestinian prisoners by Israel, starting Friday.

By trying to undermine the mediator's credibility, Israel hopes it can pressure Qatar into securing a better deal for itself - sometimes, even when its efforts are at odds with what the United States, its closest ally, is saying and doing. In October, for instance, the Israeli army deleted a video critical of Qatar following US President Joe Biden's commendation of Qatar for its mediation efforts, pointing to a tension between US policy and Israel's internal politics. In other words, Israel's attempts at anti-diplomacy have run afoul of the US, which has emphasised its faith in Qatar's role as a mediator. There are other examples, too, of anti-diplomacy at work. United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories Francesca Albanese has been the target of a smear campaign accusing her of violating the UN's Code of Conduct.

Albanese, an international law expert and outspoken advocate of peace, publicly refuted accusations promoted by pro-Israel propagandists surrounding a trip to Australia, clarifying that the journey was officially funded by the UN as part of its mandate. Albanese has emerged as one of the most eloquent and credible voices in calling for an end to the war

through a ceasefire. Her snappy put-downs of ill-informed questions from journalists have frequently gone viral, earning her a growing social media following. In Australia, one pro-peace protester even held up a placard bearing her picture and the slogan "The real Albanese" - in a reference to the country's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. For Israel, the end of conflict may also mean the process of accountability beginning. This is why influential diplomatic voices like Albanese's, calling for peace, are targets of disinformation.

With more than 100,000 followers on X, her reach and social media savvy make her a threat to Israel's forces of anti-diplomacy. The war on attempts to bridge differences - diplomacy, in a broader sense - is playing out on college campuses in the US and Europe, which have become battlegrounds of public opinion. There have been allegations of college protests promoting anti-Semitism and anti-Palestinianism. Yet these are also subject to anti-diplomacy campaigns designed to promote division and conflict. The University of British Columbia's branch of Hillel, an organisation dedicated to promoting Jewish life on campus, reported that a contractor of theirs, without the organisation's knowledge, had placed stickers around the campus with the message "I love Hamas". The aim was clearly to manipulate anxieties and smear pro-Palestinian activists as necessarily pro-Hamas. Hamas will have its own propaganda plans for this period of truce. And in the absence of a full ceasefire - with Israel making it clear that it intends to continue the war after the pause - Hamas might have reasons to worry.

At the moment, the global public mood, including in the West, seems to be in support of a ceasefire - although Western politicians seem less inclined to back that sentiment. Mainstream media and social media are vital in

shaping opinions. Hamas knows this, and that it needs relentless global pressure against the war. Hamas doesn't just need Gaza to remain in the news, but needs Palestinians to be humanised. Will the world stop caring as much if the temporary let-up in bombing slows down the tide of horrific social media videos of slaughtered civilians coming out of Gaza? With Israel gunning for further war, Hamas must prepare both militarily and also rhetorically.

Enter anti-diplomacy, again. On November 23, after the truce had been announced and less than a day before it was to come into force, the military wing of Hamas released a video calling for "all resistance fronts" to escalate confrontation with Israel. It may seem counterintuitive to call for an escalation right before a pause obtained through tough negotiations. But Hamas will not want the truce to send the signal to its allies in Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran that they can ease up in their support for the Palestinian group in the war against Israel. The threat of regional escalation - yes, on "all resistance fronts" - has been one of Hamas's trump cards in trying to encourage even reluctant US efforts to call for a truce. So, what do I expect in the next few days? Israel will seek to keep public opinion mobilised in support of war and undermine mediators or those calling for peace. For their part, Hamas will want to generate maximum sympathy for Palestinian suffering, while also maintaining a level of bellicosity to maintain support from their allies.

On November 25, the deal that has enabled a pause in fighting faced another crisis when Hamas delayed the release of captives, accusing Israel of renegeing on aspects of the agreement.

It's hard to say which side was to blame, or whether both shared responsibility - but the drama underscored the fragility of the truce. The bombing may have been paused, but war by other means continues.

A ceasefire in a time of genocide

Haidar Eid

THE bitter reality for us, Palestinians in Gaza, is that we are alone, beleaguered, under siege, and are seen as undesirable even by some of those who are supposed to be our brethren. Forty-five days of barbaric massacres have claimed the lives of more than 14,000 people, including more than 6,000 children and 3,500 women.

Among the thousands of men who have been killed are university students, doctors, nurses, shop owners and youth who were sent out by their families to search for food or water. More than 7,000 are still missing, including 4,000 children - most of them are dead, buried under the rubble of their homes.

More are dying in bombed-out hospitals rendered unoperational and in the few that are still working but cannot cope with the tens of thousands wounded due to the lack of staff and medical supplies. Soon even more will be dying of disease, hunger and the winter cold. Israel's deliberate targeting of civilian homes has completely wiped out hundreds of families from the population register. Some 1.7 million people have been displaced.

For 45 days, Palestinians have been left alone to face the onslaught of the world's fourth strongest army, which possesses 200 nuclear weapons, hundreds of F-16 jets, attack helicopters, gunboats, battle tanks and armoured vehicles, and hundreds of thousands of soldiers and reservists. As the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza has reached unimaginable levels, some Arab regimes have done nothing more than issue timid statements, denouncing and condemning. Nothing more.

In fact, Arab regimes have let down the Palestinians since 1948, and to this day, official Arab positions are a combination of cowardice and hypocrisy. They have failed to bring an end to the Israeli siege on Gaza for 17 years now and are now failing to stop Israel's genocide. We in Gaza are now wondering how the timid expressions of support coming out of the streets and capitals of the Arab nations can be turned into concrete action in the absence of democracy. We wonder whether the Arabs living under the rule of authoritarian, oligarchical regimes can change them in non-violent ways. We exhaust ourselves trying to figure out the possible means available to achieve democratic political change, because with the genocide in Gaza and the apartheid regime in the rest of Palestine, we have not seen any practical translation for the solidarity shown by some Arab peoples with Palestine. Desmond Tutu, the late South African anti-apartheid activist and Anglican bishop, once said, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

As I argued during Israel's brutal assaults on Gaza in 2009, 2012, and 2014, the United Nations, the European Union, and Arab states have not been neutral; they have remained largely silent about the atrocities the Israeli forces have committed. Since thousands of corpses of women and children have failed to convince them of the need to act, they have taken Israel's side. This state of affairs put two choices before the Palestinians in Gaza: dying dishonourably while thanking our killers for a trickle of food and water;

or fighting for our dignity, for ourselves and the coming generations. It is now clear that after years of self-deception that portrayed slavery to the occupier as a fait accompli, we have chosen the second option. But instead of recognising our resistance as such and seeing it in the context of the decades-long Palestinian struggle for freedom from occupation and apartheid, the international community is instead reducing it to a "conflict" between two "equal" sides.

The ongoing truce and the longer-term ceasefire initiative reflect this attitude. They in no way take into account that Israel has two clear objectives in its war on Gaza: the slaughter of the largest possible number of Palestinians by targeting Palestinian civilians; and the elimination of any possibility of resistance in order to maintain stability in this open-air concentration camp. It appears that what the international community is requiring of Palestinians is to behave as "house slaves" and be grateful for the crumbs their white masters are letting them have. They are to appreciate the trickle of food and water that is allowed to sustain them barely alive and accept their slow death. They are to concede that if they die, it is their own fault. But Palestinians in Gaza and beyond will not oblige.

Accordingly, any agreement that does not lead to the immediate lifting of the blockade, the reopening of the Rafah crossing and all the other crossings in a manner that allows the introduction of food, fuel, medicine, and all other needs - in conjunction with an agreement that ends the Israeli occupation and apartheid and upholds the Palestinian right of return - will not be acceptable to the people of Gaza. The biggest source of concern for the Israeli "masters", their Western allies, and their Arab lackeys, would be for us to raise the ceiling of our demands to that level; to demand that the conflict be put in the context of the multifaceted settler-colonial enterprise, the occupation, the apartheid, and the ethnic cleansing. October 7 is a pivotal moment in Palestinian history. Gaza and the rest of Palestine yearns for a leadership that rises up to the level of this historic moment, a leadership that would take the following measures without any further delay: Enacting a full cessation of security coordination with Israel;

Going to the International Criminal Court and suing Israeli political and military leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity; Reviewing all agreements signed with Israel, particularly the Oslo Accords and related agreements; Declaring a clear position on any initiative that does not take into account the need for the immediate end of the siege, the reopening of all crossings, and the restoration of the full freedom of movement. Any talk about improving the conditions of oppression in light of the great sacrifices of Gaza is a betrayal of the Palestinian martyrs. It is time to start discussing radical solutions away from the "interim programme" and the Bantustan-like state, and adopt a clear slogan: end the occupation, end the apartheid, and end settler-colonialism. This is the only way the loss of thousands of lives in Gaza would not have been in vain.

Aljazeera

China-US Sunnylands statement rekindles hope of tackling climate crisis

Qiu Ju

THE recent meeting between the leaders of China and the United States has attracted considerable attention. But that should not detract from the importance of the Sunnylands statement, which showcases both nations' commitment to engage in dialogue and collaboration on climate issues.

Because of the three years of the COVID-19 pandemic and escalating geopolitical tensions, global efforts to combat climate change have faced hurdles and even regressed. In this context, the Sunnylands declaration undeniably brings the much-awaited warmth of hope amid the prevailing challenges. Particularly on the eve of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) taking place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from Nov 30 to Dec 12, the agreement to expedite actions against the climate crisis despite previous disagreements sets a

positive tone for negotiations and is poised to significantly contribute to its success. It is imperative to acknowledge that the climate crisis is now an undeniable reality, transcending mere scientific models. That is why, despite the tumultuous international environment, major powers have continued dialogue on climate-related issues. Addressing the climate crisis has become an indispensable priority for world leaders. At the heart of international relations lie national interests. The willingness of nations to set aside past grievances, bridge religious and cultural differences and development needs, to cooperate on climate issues underscores the pressing reality of the crisis.

According to a report the World Economic Forum published in 2021, if the climate crisis continues unchecked, the global average temperature could rise by 3.2 C by 2050, resulting in an approximate 18 per-

cent loss of the global GDP, equivalent to roughly \$23 trillion. In contrast, effective implementation of the Paris Agreement, limiting global temperature rise to below 2 C, would result in less than 4.2 percent in economic losses to the global GDP. Asia is anticipated to bear the brunt of the impact, with the region's GDP falling by 5.5 percent, even within the 2 C scenario.

However, these numbers only scratch the surface, encompassing extreme weather events, climate disasters, food scarcity, flooding from rising sea levels, and population displacement. More profound losses, such as the extinction of numerous species, impacts on human health, exacerbated poverty and inequality leading to social upheavals, are incalculable. WHO estimates suggest that between 2030 and 2050, climate change could cause an additional 250,000 deaths annu-

ally due to malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and heat stress. Both the US and China are not immune to these consequences. In 2022, the US incurred losses exceeding \$176 billion due to weather and climate disasters. Research from Tsinghua University's Institute of Energy, Environment and Economy reveals China's faster temperature increase compared to the global average over the past 70 years. The country experiences an average annual economic loss of approximately \$50 billion due to climate-related disasters, roughly equivalent to 0.4 percent of the nation's GDP. Although 0.4 percent may seem trivial compared to China's past double-digit GDP growth rates, the impact of climate change is not linear. Temperatures surpassing critical points could lead to a scenario of an 18 percent global GDP loss by 2050, or even worse.

Contemporary Chinese citizens have not seen significant nationwide economic downturns. In recent years of economic slowdown, many businesses and individuals have felt the chill though. If the climate crisis remains inadequately addressed, far more adverse outcomes could follow, impacting generations born in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s during their later years or even in their prime. The climate crisis fundamentally represents a tragedy of the commons. To draw an analogy, we are all "shepherds" tending to the Earth's land. In times of abundant grass and water, it experts predict that overgrazing might deplete resources in 100 years, a shepherd focused solely on self-interest might ignore the warning. Shepherds who are concerned about their descendants would persuade others to limit herd expansions while clandestinely growing their own. However, when the proph-

cy becomes a reality - as pastures begin deteriorating and some herds suffer from malnutrition - even the self-centered shepherds will start reducing livestock size on the basis of cost-and-benefit calculation. Moreover, influential shepherds will aim to persuade others to collectively mitigate risks. Younger shepherds, facing potential starvation without inheriting elders' pastures, would vehemently voice concerns. As such, participating in collective action to address the climate crisis is no longer purely altruistic but a rational choice. As the world's largest economies and top emitters of greenhouse gases, the China-US leaders' meeting and the Sunnylands statement inject confidence and vitality into global climate cooperation at a crucial historical juncture. This reinforces our belief in the power of "rationality" and our faith in the international community to make informed choices in tackling the climate crisis.

Happily, Joe Biden is finished

Andrew Mitrovica

IT will be remembered, I hope, as the hug that sank a Craven president. It was mid-October. US President Joe Biden made the requisite pilgrimage to Tel Aviv to show that his staunch support for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was not simply rhetorical. His grateful host, fidgety with excitement, waited for Biden to emerge from the bulging hull of Air Force One.

Apart from the loud harangues of a throng of nearby journalists, the whir of the White House-in-the-sky's engines muffled much of the chatter below. Netanyahu nodded to his companion, President Isaac Herzog, as an army of stoic Israeli and American bodyguards stood by - at the ready. After a minute or so, Biden appeared with his trademark aviator sunglasses in hand. He paused for a moment at the top of the aircraft's steps to reach out to Netanyahu, like an expectant bride to his groom. Then, looking pale and tired, Biden walked down the aisle - as it were - and towards his beaming beau. The pair embraced, with Biden patting Netanyahu on the back. The delighted prime minister said something. Biden offered a short, perfunctory reply. As hugs between politicians go, this one seemed long and sincere. Israel's indispensable patron had arrived in person to verify, once more, that America stood with and by its equally indispensable ally.

But whether Biden and his camp knew it or not, in that instant the president's already precarious political fate may have been sealed by an image now fixed in consciousness and memory - the unintended consequence of an act of "bro"-like solidarity on an airport tarmac in Israel. The unmistakable irony, of course, is that Biden had

rushed to Tel Aviv to confirm his comradeship with an indicted authoritarian whom, for years, he had treated with wariness and, on occasion, contempt. Bygones were apparently bygones. Still, weeks later, "the hug" has emerged as a defining symbol of Biden's blatant hypocrisy and obstinacy. A president who has denounced Russia's ruthless aggression and outrages in Ukraine now defends - without reservation - Israel's ruthlessness in Gaza and beyond, while, remarkably, extolling the necessity and virtues of the cataclysmic outrages being committed largely against Palestinian children, the infirm, and the elderly by America's indispensable ally.

Biden's hypocrisy and obstinacy have not only offended but also infuriated crucial constituencies - young Democrats and Arab Americans, among others - that the ageing commander-in-chief must carry if he intends to win re-election in less than 12 months from today. Recent polling suggests that Biden and myopic company have underestimated the breadth and visceral depth of the potent reaction to his unqualified backing of Israel and warm embrace of a media-savvy, calculating politician that millions of Israelis cannot abide. Biden's approval rating has plummeted to a treacherous 40 percent among all registered voters in the wake of the hug - an all-time low since his inauguration.

That animus is being driven mostly, pollsters say, by voters' near-blanket rejection of Biden's embrace of Israel and Netanyahu's goal of destroying Hamas - no matter the appalling nature, extent and tally of human casualties that Americans and the world have witnessed. "I do not support his sup-

port of Israel," Meg Furey, 40, a Democrat from Austin, Texas told NBC News. A clear majority of Democrats believe that Israel has "gone too far" in its retributive designs, in effect, to erase occupied Gaza and, bit by inevitable bit, the West Bank. Indeed, an astounding 70 percent of Democrats between 18 to 40 have made it plain to pollsters that they "disapprove" - to put it charitably - of Biden's "handling" of the Israel-Gaza "war." "This poll is a stunner, and it's stunning because of the impact the Israel-Hamas war is having on Biden," one pollster said.

The poll is, as well, a stunning rebuttal of the Biden administration's belief that its diplomatic and military girding of Israel in light of Hamas's murderous October 7 assault would prove popular and be welcomed as a necessary expression of Israel's "right to defend itself" without limits or any measure of restraint dictated by humanitarian conventions and international law. Other numbers are even more sobering. She is not alone. Arab-American support for Biden is fast evaporating. In a poll taken in late October, a paltry 17 percent of Arab Americans backed the president, an astonishing 42 percent drop from three years earlier. As the halting pictures of the limp bodies of dead and bloodied, dirt-caked Palestinian children pulled from the pancake-like rubble continue to flood social media and television screens, that jarring figure is sure to fall further.

The potential existential political consequences of this pervasive anger and alienation may be starting to register with Biden and his in-denial campaign crew. Despite battling a slew of federal and state indictments, Donald Trump

remains a stubborn, even emboldened, threat. A spate of surveys shows the former president edging ahead nationally and carving out sizeable leads in a string of swing states where Biden prevailed in 2020. To staunch the haemorrhaging and confront the yawning and bitter discontent, Biden has tried to reposition himself lately as a sort of honest broker who understands, and is sensitive to, the toll the "war" has exacted on Israelis and Palestinians alike. Reportedly, Biden has penned two letters. One was addressed to "pro-Israel" Americans, in which Biden, predictably, reiterated that "the United States stands with Israel." The other appealed to "pro-Palestinian" Americans by insisting that: "We mourn the many innocent Palestinians who have been killed."

The hackneyed, almost pathetic gambit has failed - miserably. I doubt that one young Democrat or Arab American has been moved to reconsider their pointed and poignant objections to what Israel has done to Gaza by Biden's stale, hollow bit of performative nonsense. It is too late. The damage has been done and it will not be undone by a cliché-laced letter written on the White House letterhead. The mood and momentum is with Trump. So, happily, I am convinced that Biden is finished. The other delicious, unmistakable irony is that Biden has likely forfeited the presidency ostensibly to "save" Israel and prop up a prime minister who, in due and deliberate time, is certain to lose the position and powers he has long enjoyed and abused. Soon, these strutting presidents and prime ministers will face the stiff, emasculating wrath of citizens whom they claim to lead. I, for one, am looking forward to such a deserving and satisfying comeuppance.

In China, spirit of white paper protests still inspires

Ye Bing

ON Nov. 24, 2022, a fire in a high-rise residential building in Urumqi killed at least 10 people and injured nine, sparking local protests that quickly spread across China's cities, where people had been chafing for three years under Beijing's draconian zero-COVID policy.

The protests are now widely seen as a turning point for China, as the protestors - many of them students or young people adrift in China's contracting job market - demanded an end to zero-COVID measures and denounced the Chinese Communist Party's authoritarian rule. Holding blank sheets of white paper, an internationally recognized metaphor for censorship, people took to the streets of Shanghai on Nov. 26, in a Saturday night vigil for the fire victims.

Witnesses had said the victims may have been unable to escape or be rescued because doors to their building had been locked to comply with COVID mandates. The white paper protests quickly spread to Beijing, Chengdu and elsewhere - even Wuhan, where COVID was first identified in humans in December 2019. As police moved to quell the protests and censors scrubbed China's tightly controlled internet of references to the unrest, China abruptly rescinded all COVID restrictions. The move restored order to the streets but opened the door to a surge of COVID deaths among the elderly and other at-risk groups.

A year later, some of those arrested in the protests remain in prison. Many of those who were released are under surveillance. Yet the spirit of the White Paper Movement remains, according to many protesters interviewed by VOA Mandarin. VOA granted the participants anonymity or the use of a pseudonym so they could speak without fear of reprisal about their experiences during the November 26 to 28 protests and share their views on how those days changed them and China. VOA Mandarin asked the Chinese Embassy for comments on the movement's anniversary but has not yet received a response. Those who spoke with VOA Mandarin pointed to a greater willingness among Chinese to protest in ways both bold and subtle, often at the same time. An example: Halloween celebrants in Shanghai last month whose costumes poked fun at Chinese figures and social problems. One young man who was arrested in Shanghai on Nov. 27, 2022, last year after he showed up at an intersection on Urumqi Middle Road, where the white paper protests began spontaneously on Nov. 26, told VOA that police arrested so many people he heard officers say they had "to distribute the detainees to all the police stations in the entire Xuhui District." "The fact that this event could take place shows that people were

very angry because the lockdown caused some economic downturns and job losses," he said. "But I feel that although it has not achieved something substantive, it will leave a footprint in history. Nowadays, young people and college students are still willing to take to the streets. If it happens again next time, I will still participate and support it."

He said the white paper movement was China's most confrontational national movement since the student-led Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 that ended with a bloody massacre of participants. Last year, Diana Fu, an associate professor of political science at the University of Toronto who specializes in civil society, activism and state control, with a focus on China, told Canada's CBC: "This is a generation that is thought to be politically inert and brainwashed by patriotic education. The recent protests on university campuses ... show that patriotic education has not completely wiped away yearnings for freedom among Gen Z." Han Yun, a twentysomething woman in Beijing, said that after a nightmarish three years of lockdown and testing, when she saw a social media posting about a protest in the Liangmaqiao area of Beijing on Nov. 27, 2022, she took a costly \$8 taxi ride to the scene. There she found police and undercover security personnel monitoring the nighttime gathering. "I have no regrets because I know that if we didn't go that night, Beijing would have to be closed for who knows how long," she said. She said that although authorities suppressed the white paper movement, it continues to inspire people.

"After the white paper movement, everyone may have gone through a process of gradually overcoming fear. ... For Halloween in Shanghai, some people covered their bodies with white paper," she said. Some online videos and images from the Halloween event show people in costumes designed to vent their dissatisfaction with Chinese leader Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party. They dressed up as Winnie the Pooh, who symbolizes Xi, and COVID-testers in white hazmat suits. One person dressed as Batman to remind people that the coronavirus might have originated in bats.

Huang Yicheng, a graduate of Peking University who used his real name, commented in the US-based Chinese-language online magazine Yibao about the recent display.

"The 2023 Halloween parade was the largest social movement in Shanghai after the 2022 Urumqi Middle Road blank paper movement, with thousands of people participating," he wrote. "Each activist used their creativity and brought their own 'repertoire' to the scene,

turning the streets of Shanghai into a movable feast." Han Yun said this year's Halloween revelry made her feel "that now everyone is actually looking for a way to express themselves in the streets." In recent days, however, Chinese police began detaining people who appeared that evening in costumes that carried a political message, according to VOA's sister organization Radio Free Asia.

Han Yun also pointed to the public response to the sudden death of former Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Oct. 27. Li was seen by many as the rare high-level official who represented the path of reform in Xi's increasingly authoritarian China. Han Yun said some people left flowers to commemorate him. Others posted comments online on Li in contrast to Xi, triggering swift and strict censorship on China's social media platforms. Qu Zichuan, a netizen who claims to be a postmodernist, posted on X, formerly Twitter: "In my opinion, Shanghai's cosplayers showed various 'ghosts' in reality, including the continuation of the blank-paper youth spirit. ... 'People in Hefei set a record of 3 million people spontaneously paying tribute to Li. ... People in Shanghai and Hefei expressed what they could not before, and their behavioral language can be spread infinitely." One college student in Beijing told VOA that when his campus locked down during the 2022 protests, he put up a piece of blank paper in school to express his solidarity.

He said that, as far as he knew, some young people who participated in the movement lost their freedom, and these people should not be forgotten. "A year after the blank paper movement, China has lifted its lockdown," he said. "Everyone seems to have returned to a normal life. "But as far as I know, many young people who were arrested for participating in the movement were released on bail ... and are currently facing political oppression, such as harassment by state security and restrictions on leaving the country. "Some people are still in detention, and their information is unknown to the outside world. I hope people don't forget these arrested and persecuted young people who are fighting for everyone's rights." The college student added that the large-scale collective protest had led the Chinese government to finally reopen the country. "But everyone should also see that such an authoritarian system locked everyone up at home for three years, causing such a huge disaster. If the entire system does not change, if this continues, the next disaster will be in the not-too-distant future, and it will be even worse than this three-year lockdown. So, the fight for democracy and human rights must persist."

VOA

Liberal elite's assumptions

Sherelle Jacobs

THE liberal orthodoxy on mass immigration must change. Even when it was thought that net migration had hit a historic 600,000 last year, it seemed to tip the country into precarious and uncharted territory. But the revision of that figure upwards to 750,000 has plunged politics into the realm of parody. In a country where the refusal to deliver Brexit fully has left millions feeling duped and ignored, that is dangerous. We may be on the cusp of the country's second major political upset in seven years. The Reform Party is surging, even without the starpower of Nigel Farage, and the Tories face electoral annihilation over their abject failure to bring down the migration numbers.

The good news is that politicians on both sides may be grudgingly getting the message. Sensitive to voter anxiety that immigration is out of control, they are becoming reluctant heretics against the status quo. True, the Tories are still tying themselves in knots. With the Cabinet split over how best to revive the Rwanda plan, the new Home Secretary James Cleverly has risked backbench ire by downplaying the notion that it is a "silver bullet".

But behind the scenes there appears to be a genuine scramble to stem the number of legal entries. An increase to the salary threshold for work visas is believed to be imminent. Labour is also slowly changing its tune. Over the weekend, it committed to bringing net migration down to a more "normal level". If this is indeed a departure from the liberal orthodoxy on immigration, it will be no small matter. It has prevailed for three generations. A quasi-religious belief system, this orthodoxy is suffused with the

spirit of post-war humanitarianism, and a fundamentalist faith in the benevolent forces of globalisation. But the real secret to its success is that it is practical as well as spiritual. Its gospel has been spread, not only through the poetry of moral compassion but the prose of sensible bureaucratic pragmatism. And yet, increasingly, it is the "sensible" arguments for a relaxed liberal attitude to immigration that are breaking down.

Take the doctrine that the British economy is so reliant on immigration that it would collapse if numbers were dramatically reduced. At the moment, economic stagnation is, if anything, reinforcing the establishment consensus on the matter. As the UK becomes trapped in a vicious cycle - whereby a rising population is the only thing growing the economy - business lobby groups and economists are doubling down on the need to keep the borders open. As a cash-strapped NHS haemorrhages home-grown staff, the health department is if anything being even more aggressive as it pressures the Home Office to continue issuing visas for healthcare workers.

This is transparently unsustainable. It is undeniable that many migrants make a net contribution to the Treasury. But the British state has shown itself to be too dysfunctional to make the infrastructure and public service improvements necessary to ensure that high population growth is not detrimental to living standards. Even leading establishment number crunchers, such as David Miles of the Office for Budget Responsibility, have started to allude to this. This is not to mention the fact that, as the

world stands on the brink of the AI age, having such a long tail of essentially unproductive businesses addicted to cheap labour will look recklessly outdated.

The tactic of recruiting high numbers of doctors and nurses from abroad has also backfired. The failure to build a sustainably funded health system with competitively paid staff who enjoy good career progression, and who aren't forced to expend much of their energy battling red tape, has led to horrific churn rates and a brain drain, with doctors and nurses emigrating to countries like Australia. The luxury of being able to endlessly poach people from developing countries may have contributed to a fatal belief that reforming the NHS can always be kicked down the road. Then there is welfare. Believers in the liberal orthodoxy think that the country cannot hope to produce more home-grown workers because millions of Britons are in no position to work. The entire "benefits blob" is adamant that there can be no grand movement to get people on benefits into employment because most of them are too sick.

Yet this is based on highly questionable assumptions. With mental health issues accounting for one third of all benefits claims, and a whopping 70 per cent of claims among the under-25s, compassionate liberalism risks collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions. It is surely not too hyperbolic to imagine that, based on current trends, we may be mere years away from a situation when even net migration of one million a year won't be enough to offset a shrinking domestic talent pool. While the country must take

mental health seriously, that should not stop the authorities from interrogating the increasing numbers of claims, and questioning whether the definition of poor mental health has been drawn too widely. The liberal orthodoxy is also in trouble on refugees. The prevailing establishment view has been that the only realistic way to stop the boats is through a deal with the French - involving Britain taking a share of asylum seekers off France's hands. This might have been politically possible just after Brexit, when the economy was in better shape and the public was more relaxed about migration, having "taken back control". Today, it would be electoral suicide. The basic reality - that only hard deterrence can settle the issue - is becoming impossible to deny.

That will mean challenging the inviolable status of some of the orthodoxy's sacred and outdated texts, such as the European Convention on Human Rights and the Geneva Convention on Refugees. Any suggestion that Britain should leave the ECHR is met with derision that this would damage Britain's geopolitical standing. But how can this position - which deems it more important that the UK adheres to international liberal norms than defend its borders - possibly hold? It flies in the face of not only the democratic will but also basic issues of national security, and faith in the British values of order, sovereignty and fair play, and can only invite the rise of a far-Right party.

Unless elected politicians can find the will and courage to question outdated liberal doctrines on migration, Britain is heading for serious trouble. One can only hope that the penny has finally dropped for Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer.

Iceland's magnificent nature comes with a monster

Catharine Fulton

I remember the first time I experienced an earthquake in Iceland. I ran for the nearest door frame - that's what you're supposed to do, right? - under the sloped ceilings of my attic apartment in one of Reykjavik's iconic bárujárn houses. I remember being frightfully aware of my fate should the old timber frame and corrugated iron siding decide to simply give way.

The shaking ended in seconds, but my knees quaked and my heart raced a while longer. I remember the first time I saw an active volcano. It was the eruption of Fimmvörðuháls in March 2010; the precursor to the infamous Eyjafjallajökull eruption that began just a month later, spewing forth ash and memes about its impossible-to-pronounce name in equal measure. In what seems like a daydream to think back on now, I donned a snowsuit, boots, balacava and helmet and rode a snowmobile over the crunching, crackling, crevassed surface of Sólheimajökull glacier as the sun set to witness a fissure vent spewing glowing fountains of liquid magma high into the air, while a lavafall cascaded down the soot-black side of the newly formed crater. The site of it was magnificently multisensory. The glow of the lava against the night sky, the waves of heat from the eruption lending an intermittent reprieve from the paralysing cold atop the glacier, the sound of the earth churning.

That sound remains the most vivid memory - the sound of the

Earth's pulse. Such perceptible reminders of the tectonic plates shifting beneath me were not something I was accustomed to. Growing up in the suburbs not far from Toronto, earthquakes and volcanoes were phenomena I'd see on my television screen or described in the pages of old issues of National Geographic.

The closest thing my home came to experiencing an earthquake would have been the result of slamming my bedroom door with a bit too much teen angst. It wasn't until I moved to Iceland in March 2009, lured by an opportunity to witness and report on a nation emerging from an economic implosion, that I came to understand and appreciate the explosive qualities of the world. It's easy to appreciate the physical beauty of Iceland.

With its dearth of dense tree cover, and expanses of sometimes barren and other times moss-covered lava fields, it's come to be described as "otherworldly" to an almost cliché degree. But inquisitive visitors soon learn that Icelandic nature must be respected, not only for its preservation, but for their own safety. It's something that all Icelanders know. Their country is beautiful, but there's always the potential for danger. Icelanders have been reminded of that now that residents of Grindavik - a small town 50 kilometres from Reykjavik on the south coast of the Reykjanes peninsula - are staying with friends and family, and at Red Cross emergency

shelters around the country. Though the majority of the country is safe, a large swath of this peninsula has been evacuated as the Icelandic Meteorological Office continues to predict an eruption is imminent.

It's perhaps the Icelandic understanding that "this is just the way it is" that saw the people of Grindavik previously stay put when the ground starting shaking in recent years not far from their homes. The peninsula entered a new volcanic cycle in 2019, with an uptick in earthquakes and measurable ground rise around Fagradalsfjall volcano that culminated in an eruption in March 2021. The cycle of near-constant earthquakes heralding an eruption near Fagradalsfjall repeated in July 2022 and again in July 2023. News during those seismic and eruptive periods characterised the earthquakes as an inconvenience for nearby Grindavik - nearby, but far enough away from the epicentre of the volcanic action to be well out of danger.

The trio of eruptions in as many years were touted as "tourist eruptions" - far from infrastructure and safe to view if you were up for a 10 km hike. We could feel the larger quakes here in Reykjavik, too. Now, in a sturdier concrete home, I can hear shockwaves approaching like a large truck speeding down the street before slamming into the building with a jolt and rolling on. The 140,000 of us living in the capital experienced the most recent activity on

Reykjanes peninsula much the same. The odd jolt or occasional rumble.

But the most recent burst of seismic activity that began on October 25 was different for the people of Grindavik. Rather than quirky news stories of residents taking sea sickness tablets to cope with the constantly moving Earth, the epicentre had moved beneath the town, described by one resident to The Reykjavik Grapevine as a "monster under their feet." That monster was restless, causing tens of thousands of earthquakes before finally throwing a tantrum on November 10 that repeatedly pulled the ground from under people's feet. It was late that night that the 3,700 residents of Grindavik were ordered to evacuate. The monster had burrowed a 15-kilometre lava tunnel that stretched beneath the town. Nobody is in harm's way now. While the earthquakes have subsided somewhat - we haven't felt them in the capital since the swarms of November 10 - but the explosive nature of this country straddling tectonic plates, and its potential impact on humans, has been brought to the fore.

Not since the Westman Islands awoke to an eruption in their backyard in 1973 has an entire town been evacuated. Now everyone waits and watches and wonders if residents of Grindavik will ever go back home. Will they even want to? I remember my first volcano. I don't want the memory of one destroying peoples' homes.

CNN

Ireland can't stop disgracing itself on the world stage

Ross Clark

HOW charming of Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar to tweet of his "enormous joy and relief" that nine-year-old Irish-Israeli girl Emily Hand has been reunited with her family. "An innocent child who was lost has now been found and returned, and we breathe a massive sigh of relief. Our prayers have been answered."

Just the one problem. Emily wasn't exactly lost on a walk in the sand dunes. She was kidnapped by a brutal terrorist organisation which had just murdered hundreds of her compatriots, and only kept her alive so that she could be used as a human shield in the inevitable military campaign against it. Varadkar may point to a longer statement in which he called Emily a "hostage", and acknowledged that there were some other hostages still being held in Gaza, but sorry, his tweet belies a serious problem which Varadkar and his government have with Hamas. His full statement, by the way, didn't include the word "Hamas" nor properly mention the wider context of her kidnapping, as part of a

terror attack. It did, however, reiterate the call for a ceasefire made by his foreign minister Micheal Martin two weeks ago, a call which effectively tells Israel: sorry, but you must not do as every other country in the world would after a murderous attack by a foreign entity - launch a military action to try to neutralise the threat and make it clear that your attackers will not be allowed to win. No, you must lay down your arms, accept these things happen and maybe sing a few peace songs.

Varadkar tries to pose as an international peace broker, but his words speak of somewhat lopsided sympathy. Earlier this month he didn't have a problem condemning Israel of overreacting, and doing so by name. He told reporters: "What I'm seeing unfolding at the moment isn't just self-defence. It looks like... it resembles something more approaching revenge." His difficulty in reckoning with Hamas as the terror organisation it is follows a long history of Irish sympathy for

Palestinian terrorism. In 1980, long before the PLO renounced terrorism, the then government of Charles Haughey decided to recognise the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. Ireland has long been a supporter of a two-state solution in the Middle East - which is fair enough and one which I sympathise with - but did Haughey or any of his successors really think that a peaceful settlement was made more likely by recognising an organisation which had just spent two decades facilitating terrorist attack after attack?

Ireland's troubled relationship with Palestinian terror didn't begin with Varadkar. The cause has long been romanticised as a struggle against colonial oppression, likened to Ireland's own birth as a nation. But Varadkar's apparent inability to see Hamas for what it is continues to shame his nation. Until he comprehensively recognises Hamas as terrorists, and frames his policies and statements on that basis, he can forget trying to position himself as an international statesman.

The Telegraph



Stock Exchange crosses another milestone — reaches to 60,730 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) crossed another milestone on Tuesday and reached to 60,730.26 points by gaining 918.92 more points, a positive change of 1.54 percent, PSX reported.

A total of 779,671,060 shares valuing Rs 26.138 billion were traded during the day as compared to 657,580,760 shares valuing Rs 20.272 billion the last day.

Some 392 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 177 of them recorded gains and 200 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 15 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Kohinoor Spinning with 79,242,500 shares at Rs4.02 per share, WorldCall Telecom with

57,449,984 shares at Rs 1.56 per share and Bank of Punjab with 44,327,667 shares at Rs 5.45 per share.

Hoechst Pak Ltd witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 85.00 per share price, closing at Rs 1,348.00, whereas the runner-up was Ismail Ind with a Rs 80.28 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,157.00.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 100.00 per share closing at Rs 22,400.00, followed by Rafhan Maize with a Rs 57.05 decline to close at Rs 10,333.33.

Rupee gains 12 paise against Dollar

Pakistani Rupee on Tuesday gained 12 paise against US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 285.52 against the previous day's closing

at Rs 285.64.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs 285.7 and Rs 288.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 33 paise to close at Rs312.39 against the last day's closing of Rs312.72, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen gained one paise to close at Rs1.92; whereas an increase of 08 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs360.33 as compared to the last closing of Rs360.25.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 03 and 04 paise to close at Rs77.74 and Rs76.12

respectively.

Gold rates up by Rs 800 to Rs 218,400 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.800 and was sold at Rs 218,400 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs 217,600 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 686 to Rs 187,243 from Rs186,557 whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went up to Rs 171,640 from Rs 171,010, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained unchanged at Rs.2,620 and Rs.2,246.21 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$3 to \$2,033 from \$2,030, the Association reported.



ISLAMABAD: Vendor displaying fish to attract customers at Weekly Bazaar in Federal Capital.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where four ships, Ince Marmar, Yasa Saturn, Ullswater and Eyridiki carrying Wheat, Coal, LPG and Gas oil, berthed at Grain Terminal, Bulk Terminal, Engro Terminal and Elengy Terminal respectively on Monday.

Meanwhile three more ships, carrying Containers and Gas oil also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during last 24 hours.

A total of eight ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, a container vessel America left the port on Tuesday morning and two more ships New Fairy and Eyridiki is expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo throughput of 112,611tonnes, comprising 79,565tonnes imports cargo and 33,046tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,507 Containers (1,397 TEUs Imports and 1,110 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 11ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them four ships, Carina, Ardmore Engineer, MSC Ellen, Maersk Cabo Verdo and Maersk Columbus scheduled to load/offload Rice, Gas oil and Containers are expected to take berth-

MW-1,FOTCO, and QICton Tuesday, while a gas carrier Al-Daayen is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Wednesday.

Pakistani delegation visits Kashgar — to explore cooperation

BEIJING (APP): A delegation from Pakistan, led by Nadeem Alam, CEO of Alam Group of Businesses, recently visited the Kashgar Yiwu Shopping Mall Group in Kashgar, China to explore potential collaboration opportunities.

Accompanied by Xie Hongjun, Head of Kashgar Yiwu Supply Chain Company, the delegation toured the Kashgar Yiwu International Procurement Center and the Cross-Border E-commerce Marketing Department, which provided valuable

insights into the development prospects of the Kashgar Yiwu Shopping Mall Group and the specific investment advantages it offers, China Economic Net (CEN) reported.

Nadeem Alam, CEO of Alam Group of Businesses, stated, "Kashgar's geographic proximity to Central Asia and South Asia positions it as an ideal platform for fostering economic partnerships. We are interested in expanding exchanges and cooperation with Kashgar, and we aspire to introduce Pakistani prod-

ucts to the Kashgar Yiwu International Procurement Center. Together, we can promote the development of China-Pakistan import-export trade."

The meeting concluded with a cooperation initiative to launch selected Pakistani products on Yiwugo, an online platform of Kashgar Yiwu International Procurement Center. This strategic move aims to leverage the immense potential of the platform and facilitate the entry of Pakistani goods into the Chinese market.

Saudi trade balance achieves over SAR43 billion surplus

RIYADH (APP): Saudi Arabia's trade balance achieved a surplus of SAR43.735 billion in September 2023, according to Saudi Arabia's recent preliminary international trade data, making it the third largest monthly surplus of the year; it had reached its highest level in April and its second highest in February.

Saudi Arabia's international trade reached SAR163.911 billion in September, with commodity exports accounting for SAR103.823 billion and commodity imports for SAR60.088 billion. The group of Asian countries, excluding Arab and Islamic countries, topped the coun-

tries that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia exports to, receiving 55.03% of the total Saudi commodity exports, at a value of SAR57.129 billion.

The group of EU countries came second, receiving 11.2 percent of the total Saudi commodity exports, at a value of SAR11.582 billion, while the group of Gulf Cooperation Council countries came third, receiving 11.1% of the total Saudi commodity exports whose value stood at SAR11.536 billion. As for exports, China ranked first, as the largest country receiving Saudi exports in September, which made up 18.3% of the total Saudi commodity exports, at a

value of SAR18.992 billion, while Japan was second, receiving goods worth SAR11.374 billion, accounting for approximately 11% of the total Saudi commodity exports.

South Korea came in third, receiving goods worth SAR10.247 billion, accounting for 9.9% of the total Saudi commodity exports. The initial value of non-oil exports, including re-exports, stood at SAR20.701 billion; these were exported through 32 customs crossings, of which King Fahd Industrial Port recorded the highest value of non-oil exports for September, at a total value of SAR3.254 billion.

3rd International Conference on Iqbal 2023 held at Bahria University



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The 3rd International Conference on Iqbal 2023 was organized at Bahria University at Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore Campuses on 28 November 2023. Chairmen HEC Prof Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed was the Chief Guest of the Opening Ceremony held at Bahria University Islamabad Campus (BUIC). A number of foreign universities and institutes are conference partners and have featured speakers among their scholars on Iqbal.

The theme of this year's conference was 'Iqbal as a catalyst in the Renaissance of Muslim Ummah'. More than one hundred research scholars and teachers sent their research paper abstracts. Seventy-two papers were selected and presented in the conference.

Rector Bahria University Vice Admiral (Retd) Asif Khaliq HI(M) while inaugurating the conference, highlighted that the endeavour of this conference is to bring Iqbal's Qur'anic thoughts to practical implementable levels and educate our youth about his teachings and philosophy. The Rector reminded the youth that they represent the vanguard of Muslim Ummah's aspirations, and Allama Iqbal always had high expectations from them. The Rector thanked the foreign ambassadors for their interest in the conference.

Chief Guest, Prof Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, elaborated that Iqbal's teachings are rooted in the authentic teachings of Islam and are relevant to the contemporary times.

Dr. Mukhtar reminded that Iqbal's teachings encourage Muslims to

rekindle their engagement in research and technology. Dr. Mukhtar further elaborated that Iqbal remains an enduring source of inspiration for the youth as potential architect of Ummah's future.

Earlier, Dr. Muhammad Fayyaz, Director Conference while welcoming the guests narrated how the Iqbal Conferences at Bahria University has grown from national to high profile International conference where we have received research abstracts from a number of foreign countries which include Iran, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Egypt, Australia, and the United States of America.

In her keynote address Prof. Dr. Najeeba Arif, Chairperson Academy of Letters reminded that Iqbal's message was not focused on the Indian Muslims only but was

directed towards the Ummah. Iran could use his message in the reformation of society and so can other Muslim countries.

Chairman Iqbal Chair Bahria University recapped that the Muslim Ummah and Muslim countries should follow the teachings of Iqbal to make decisions that can help them solve their problems and carve pathways for the nation's development.

Rear Admiral (R) Muhammad Arshid Javed SI(M), Pro-Rector (Academics) and the conference chair, while addressing the concluding session, elaborated that this conference aimed to delve into and explore the profound ways in which Iqbal's teachings can contribute to the resurgence of the Muslim Ummah, rekindling its glorious past. He thanked national and international conference partners for participating in the conference.

Every year Bahria University organizes Iqbal Conference in November to commemorate Iqbal's birth anniversary.

This is the fifth conference in as many years being organized by Iqbal Chair Bahria University. This was attended by a number of Ambassadors and intellectuals.

Business confidence on increase: Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce survey

ISLAMABAD (APP): In its latest Business Confidence Index Survey (BCI) – Wave 24, the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) unveiled a promising upswing in Pakistan's business confidence.

The survey, spanning from October to November 2023, showcases a substantial seven percent improvement compared to the preceding wave in March-April 2023, said a news release.

The survey paints a nuanced picture of business sentiments, with the overall business confidence in Pakistan standing at negative 18 percent, marking a positive shift from the negative 25 percent recorded

earlier.

The largest increase was recorded in the manufacturing sector at negative 10 percent followed by the services sector.

President OICCI Amir Paracha attributed the improvement in business confidence to "relatively stable macroeconomic indicators, favourable changes in the political and economic landscape which were also supported by some stability in FX rates and a record performance at Pakistan Stock Exchange. Key parameters contributing to the positive trend include Capital Investment and the outlook for Pakistan's business situation in the next six months."

OICCI's BCI, a comprehensive survey conducted periodically across nine cities, gathered feedback from frontline business stakeholders.

The survey encompasses regional, national, sectorial, and business entity levels, with business stakeholders representing almost 80 percent of the GDP.

Notably, the Wave 24 sample included 43 percent of respondents from the manufacturing sector, 34 percent from the services sector, and 23 percent from the retail/wholesale trade.

The BCI of randomly selected OICCI members, representing foreign investors, stood at a positive three percent, a significant

improvement from the negative 19 percent in the previous wave. OICCI members' confidence surpasses that of non-members, which has been a trend for a long period.

OICCI CE/Secretary-General M Abdul Aleem said, "While challenges persist, the overall trend indicates a resilient business community anticipating improvements in the coming months. Foreign investors, as represented by OICCI members, have expressed hope that the authorities will soon take control of anomalies, including undue price controls, and streamline the taxation regime, which collectively is reflected in a

particularly positive outlook, contributing to the overall upward trajectory in business confidence."

Exploring the future business outlook in Wave 24, new orders remain in negative territory, but the confidence index for expansion plans improved by two percent, indicating a decreased wariness among businesses.

Expectations for a decrease in employment opportunities improved by two percent, suggesting a more positive outlook for the business environment.

Capital investment plans showed a significant improvement of 22 percent, contributing to the overall positive trend in business confidence.

Tokyo markets end lower

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks ended lower Tuesday as investors awaited clues about central banks' rate policies.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index was down 0.12 percent, or 39.28 points, to end at 33,408.39, while the broader Topix index slipped 0.21 percent, or 5.05 points, to 2,376.71. The dollar fetched 148.18 yen, against 148.64 yen in New York. Traders will be eyeing this week's data releases including the Conference Board's reading of US consumer confidence due later in the day, said National Australia Bank strategist Rodrigo Catril.

COURT NOTICE

IN the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No. 243/1. Institution. 12/1/2023 Date of hearing. 18/12/2023. Ashraf Khan VS Said Babar Mian etc. Notice to no 23/1. Said Bakhtal Shah. 23/2. Zahir Shah sons of Said Ali Shah. 24/2. Khurshed s/o Said Habib Shah residents of Bajkatta tehsel Gagra district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 18/12/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Fire tragedy at Rashid Minhas Road Plaza M. Aamir rescues 25 lives

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Mohammad Aamir, a courageous resident of Karachi, displayed tremendous bravery during a harrowing fire incident at R.J. Shopping Mall near Dalmia on Rashid Minhas Road. As the blaze engulfed the fifth and fourth floors of the building, nearly 25 individuals were trapped inside, including Aamir's son, Abdul Subhan.

Fortunately, Subhan managed to contact his father and informed him about the fire, pleading for help.

Aamir, an air conditioner technician, quickly summoned the fire brigade and offered to unlock the lift to access the upper floors. Alongside a firefighter, he ascended through the fire brigade's ladder and swiftly opened the lift door, breaking the glass with a hammer to facilitate the rescue. Using an axe, he broke the grill and rescued a girl, assisted by a cutter.

Upon reaching the fourth floor, thick smoke surrounded them, making it increasingly challenging to breathe and see.

Despite the perilous conditions, Aamir and the firefighter persisted in their efforts. They managed to escort all the individuals trapped on that floor, utilizing the same route they had arrived through.

Aamir recounted the ordeal, mentioning that the smoke had become overwhelming, making it diffi-



cult even with their masks on. In a panic-stricken situation, the route they took was initially sealed, but they broke through and finally led everyone to safety outside the building.

Amidst the chaos and turmoil of the fire, Mohammad Aamir's quick thinking and bravery emerged as a beacon of hope. His selfless actions and determination to rescue those trapped inside the blazing building showcased an extraordinary level of courage.

Despite the immense danger posed by the smoke and flames, Aamir's unwavering resolve to save lives stood as a testament to his heroism, earning him praise and admiration from the local community and authorities alike.

His heroic efforts in the face of adversity serve as a reminder of the extraordinary valor that can emerge from ordinary individuals in times of crisis.

It's essential to note that the FIR for this fire incident at Gulshan-e-Johar Shopping Mall has been filed by the government. According to the FIR, 11 individuals lost their lives in the tragedy, while five others sustained injuries.



In brief

KP Handicap teams wins series
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Handicap cricket teams wins the ICRC supported bilateral cricket series in Peshawar. In connection of observing the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) supported a bilateral three match cricket series between teams of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Handicap and Azad Jammu Kashmir Handicap at the Islamia College University Peshawar. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Handicap cricket team won the bilateral series 3-0. At the occasion the Head of Sub Delegation of the ICRC in Peshawar Mr. Jihad Nabhan distributed prizes among the teams and encouraged both teams for their participation and spirit.

PCB waives off fine on Azam Khan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Tuesday reviewed its decision and abolished 50% match fee fine imposed on batter Azam Khan for displaying the Palestinian flag on his bat during National T20 Cup match. Azam was fined for breaching clothing and equipment regulations (displaying unapproved logo/political messaging), as he didn't remove the sticker despite the match umpire's warnings. However, two days after the incident, the PCB reviewed the penalty and officially waived it. "Azam Khan's 50 per cent fine imposed by match officials has been reviewed and waived off by the Pakistan Cricket Board," the PCB said in a brief press release. "Azam Khan was found to have violated Article 2.4 of the PCB Code of Conduct For Players and Players Support Personnel for repeated failure to comply with the instruction or directive of an Umpire during a Match. "Players and team officials are not permitted to wear, display or otherwise convey personal messages on their equipment unless approved in advance by both player or team official's cricket association and PCB Cricket Operations Department," the board's statement concluded. The PCB's decision comes after cricket fans expressed their anger over the action taken against the cricketer on social media.

Jagielka retires

LONDON (AFP): Former Everton and England defender Phil Jagielka announced his retirement on Tuesday at the age of 41, following 800 appearances in a 23-year career. The centre-back started his playing days at Sheffield United, where he spent seven years before moving to Everton in 2007. In 12 seasons at Goodison Park, Jagielka established himself as an influential figure and became Everton captain in 2013. He scored Everton's winning penalty in the FA Cup semi-final shootout victory over Manchester United in 2009 at Wembley, but missed the final defeat against Chelsea due to injury. After being released by Everton in 2019, Jagielka spent two seasons back with Sheffield United following the club's promotion to the Premier League. Jagielka, who was released by Stoke at the end of last season, won 40 caps for England between 2008 and 2016. "All good things come to an end and after just over 800 appearances my playing career is done," Jagielka wrote on Instagram.

Nida Dar's four-fer helps Pakistan women's team defeat New Zealand XI



CHRISTCHURCH (Agencies): Nida Dar's four-wicket haul led Pakistan women's team to a 57-run win over New Zealand XI in a 50-over practice game at the Bert Sutcliffe Oval in Lincoln University in Christchurch today.

The practice match allowed both sides to play their 15 players in an innings. Opting to bat first, Pakistan women scored 238 for the loss of 13 wickets in 50 overs. In the batting department, wicketkeeper-batter Najiha Alvi top-scored for her side with a 52-ball 38, which included two fours.

For New Zealand XI, GES Sullivan and LM Kasperek bagged four and

three wickets, respectively. In turn, New Zealand XI managed to score 181 and lost 13 wickets in their 50 overs. Opening batter AG Gerken was the top run-getter for the losing side, scoring 42 off 78 balls, hitting six boundaries.

Right-arm off-spinner and captain Nida was the most successful bowler for her side, clinching four wickets for 11 runs in four overs. Aliya Riaz, Diana Baig and Nashra Sundhu grabbed two wickets each.

Pakistan women's team will train tomorrow in the afternoon at Bert Sutcliffe Oval before taking on New Zealand XI in a T20 match at the same venue on Thursday, 30 November.

The match will be live-streamed on New Zealand YouTube Channel.

Pakistan and New Zealand women's cricket teams will feature in a white-ball series starting from December 3. The series includes three T20Is and three ODIs. The ODIs are part of the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25.

Scores in brief: Pakistan women beat New Zealand XI by 57 runs

Pakistan women 238-13, 50 overs (Najiha Alvi 38; GES Sullivan 4-41, LM Kasperek 3-40)

New Zealand XI 181-13, 50 overs (AG Gerken 42; Nida Dar 4-11).

Ryan Umar, Faizan, Junaid's winning spree continue in DG Aman Ullah Khan Memorial Tennis

PESHAWAR (APP): Ryan Umar, Faizan Afridi and Junaid's winning spree continued in their respective age group categories in the ongoing DIG Amanullah Memorial Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Open Tennis Championship being played here at Synthetic Courts of the Peshawar Sports Complex on Tuesday.

In the U10 category, Ryan Umar Khalil and Faizan Afridi, Junaid Khan and M Shayan Afridi of APS Peshawar in U14 categories qualified for the finals while Hamza Roman in Men's doubles moved to the top positions.

Shoaib Khan defeated Zakirullah and Inam Gul in the doubles by 6-2 and 6-3 and reached the final while Shaheen Mehmood and Shahid Afridi defeated Uzair Khan and Shahsawar Khan by 6-0 and 6-1 got the honor of playing in the final.

In the ongoing DIG Amanullah Memorial Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tennis Championship U10 category Rian Umar Khalil defeated Salar Khan by 2-6, 6-2 and 7-5 (6-6). In the second semi-final, Faizan Afridi defeated Muhammad Hassan by 6-2 and 6-2 to

reach the final.

In the U-14 semi-final, Haneed Khan defeated Uzair Khan 6-3 and 6-1 while M. Shayan Afridi qualified for the final by defeating Ahmed Hussain 6-2 and 6-2. On this occasion, President of Provincial Olympic Association, former Provincial Sports Minister Syed Aqil Shah was the chief guest along with General Secretary of Provincial Tennis Association Umar Ayaz Khalil, coaches, Nauman Khan, Zakirullah, Shehryar, Shah Hussain, Roman Gul and Shahid were also present.

Team Muhammad Aslam clinches hockey title

KARACHI (APP): Team Muhammad Aslam won the title of International Musheer Rabbani Memorial 5 A Side Hockey Tournament 2023 by defeating Team Abdul Azeem Khan by 2-0 in the final at Mini Astro Turf of KHA sports Complex.

The tournament was organized by Rabbani Hockey Club in collaboration with Karachi Hockey Association, a communique said on Tuesday.

6 teams participated in this tournament. The chief guest of the final match was Rameez Ahmed Chowdhary business Head middle East and Africa Tech Matter UAE, Olympian Hanif Khan along with Amir Akhtar Director Dallas Field Hockey USA Master

Manager Head of the State of Oklahoma Distributed medals, Shields and cash prizes to the participants and officials.

Details of Winners are as under with match details:

Winner: Team Muhammad Aslam.

Runner: Team Abdul Azeem Khan.

3rd Position: Team Munawwar uz Zaman.

Man of the Final Match: Mubashir Atif.

Player of the Tournament: Haris Naseer.

Best Defender Senior: Zafeer Ahmed.

Best Defender Junior: Shahid Balti.

Best Midfielder: Mohsin Nawaz.

Emerging Players: Tanveer Ali & Abdul Sami.

Best Forward: Fakhir Ali

& Mubashir Atif.

Top Scorer: Shahzaib Arbab

1st Semifinal Muhammad Aslam beat Abdul Naeem Khan by (3-2)

Goal Scorers Muhammad Aslam 3 Shahzaib Arbab (6,8,16mins)

Abdul Naeem Khan 1 Fakhir Ali (3mins)

1 Saad Alam (17mins)

Man of the Match Zafeer Ahmed (Muhammad Aslam)

2nd Semifinal Abdul Azeem Khan beat Munawwar uz Zaman by (1-0)

Goal Scorers Abdul Azeem Khan 1 Mohsin Nawaz (19mins)

Man of the Match Mohsin Nawaz (Abdul Azeem Khan).

Pakistan to hire foreign batting coach for Australia test series: Hafeez

LAHORE (APP): Team Director Muhammad Hafeez has said that he was not the batting coach of the Australia-bound Pakistan Men's cricket team and a foreign batting coach with knowledge and experience of the Australian conditions will be announced shortly.

Addressing a press conference at the PCB headquarters Gaddafi Stadium here on Tuesday, he said the complete tour management has not yet been revealed, adding that the supplementary support staff, for better condition-based adjustments, will join the team in Australia.

Pakistan cricket team led by Shan Masood will leave for Australia in the wee hours of Thursday (December 30) and will play three test matches between December 14, 2023 and January 7, 2024.

Muhammad Hafeez further said the Chairman Management Committee of the PCB Zaka Ashraf must be credited with bringing together the former heroes of the game to perform coaching and selection jobs, adding, however, the batting coach will be picked from abroad. He said the PCB was also in the process of finalising a revised policy on league cricket participation for the PCB contractual players.

To a question, the former all-rounder Muhammad Hafeez said he was very happy with the squad's hunger for making a difference in the unfamiliar conditions the down under, adding that the Chief



Selector Wahab Riaz had picked an experienced batting line-up led by Babar Azam while the young pace battery was hoped to do well in the inhospitable Australian conditions. "I have a gut feeling that the selected bowling line-up will give series winning performance and once you pick 20 wickets in the match, you have more chances of victory," he said, adding the Pakistan is leaving with a positive intent as it has nothing to lose as under-dogs.

He, responding to a query, further stressed play 'modern day' cricket in order to make a difference in the series, adding that modern day cricket is about playing aggressive, impactful cricket. He further said the youthful cricket coaching and selection teams will ensure that Pakistan plays positive cricket in line with the needs of the modern day challenges.

Praising the team selection, the Team Director said he was pleased with the way Chief Selector Wahab Riaz had acknowledged perform-

ances in the domestic cricket and picked them for the important Australian tour.

To another question, he said Pakistan has devised its own strategy to win the series against Australia, adding that Pakistan cricket flourishes when it plays aggressive cricket and the boys have been communicated the same during the five-day training camp. "Every team has its own mantra of winning but Pakistan will not imitate any other team," Hafeez stressed.

To a query, he dispelled the impression of any change in the Central Contracts of the Men's cricket team, adding that the central contract binds the contracted players to take part in the FTP. He further clarified that no player will be barred from playing leagues across the globe but the duty for the country should come first. He further said the PCB will shortly make NOC policy public.

On Haris Rauf's refusal to play test rubber against Australia, he hinted at revising the category of such player only who did not wish to play all formats

but he was placed in all-format category.

Hailing services of Imad Wasim for Pakistan cricket, the Team Director said he had contacted Imad but he opted to retire from international cricket. He said he had also urged fast-bowler Muhammad Amir to come out of retirement and play domestic cricket to make himself eligible for selection in the national team, adding that Muhammad Amir said he wanted to play league cricket as he had moved on with his priorities.

On Ahmed Shahzad, he said no player will face any discrimination and merit will be the only criterion of the Zaka Ashraf-led MC, adding that the other openers Abdullah Shafique, Imamul Haq have been performing well as openers while Saim Ayub is an exciting talent and has been selected to provide his the right exposure before he is put to the test.

On accountability in the face of failure, the former all-rounder said he was straight-forward in his dealings and would accept responsibility for success or failure instead of making the captain a scape-goat.

He said the Pakistan team is take up the voyage with a positive mind-set and will do everything to win the series against Australia. On Babar Azam, he said Babar Azam was a great team man and his bonding with the Captain Shan Masood and other members was very strong and he was part of the all strategies in the dressing-room.



Howzat! Pakistan cops arrested after shaking down star cricketer

KARACHI (AFP): Four Pakistan police officers have been charged with corruption hours after one of the country's top cricketers complained of having been shaken down for bribes during a recent road trip, officials said Tuesday.

Sohaib Maqsood, who played 29 one-day internationals and 26 Twenty20 matches for Pakistan until 2021, wrote on X that he had been stopped while driving from Karachi to Multan.

"Sindh police is so corrupt that they stop you after 50 km and ask for money or they threaten you to go to the police station....," he posted.

He said he paid 8,000 rupees (around \$28) on his way to take part in a T20 match. Later Tuesday, a statement from Sindh police said four police officers had been found to have been involved in the incident.

"Legal action has been initiated," the statement said, adding that two police officials had been suspended for "negligence."

Police officers in Pakistan have long been accused of corruption, and those in rural areas of the Sindh province have a particularly bad reputation. International cricketers are usually treated as celebrities in Pakistan, but often conceal their identities in public.

Zeeshan declared as fastest athlete in Hazara Athletic Meet

PESHAWAR (APP): Zeeshan of Haripur district declared as the fastest athlete in the Commissioner Hazara Inter-District Athletic Championship played at Tartan Track of the Baloch Regiment Sports Complex Abbottabad.

Commissioner Hazara Division Syed Zaheer Ul Islam was the chief guest on this occasion. Regional Sports Officer Hazara Division Ahmad Zaman Khan, former national athlete M Iqbal, District Sports Officers of all the eight districts of the Hazara Division, officials and players were also present.

It is for the first time that Hazara Division Inter-District Boys Athletic C'ship was organized by Regional Sports Officer for the first time wherein athletes from all across Hazara Division took part. Zeeshan Ahmad, a promising young athlete recorded his clock time 11.64sec, got first position in the 100m sprint race and was adjudged as the fastest athlete of the Hazara Division Inter-District Athletic Championship.

Muhammad Ibrahim of Datagram district with his time 11.71sec took silver medal and Hamza of Mansehra district with his clock time 11.74sec took bronze medal. Umer of Haripur got gold medal in 200m sprint race with his time 23.47sec, followed by Shaharyar of Haripur and Shehzada Khan of Haripur. Young upcoming athlete Umer was declared as the best athlete who won gold medals in the 200m and long jump.

Speaking on this occasion, Commissioner Hazara appreciated the organizing committee for holding the Athletic Meet wherein players from all Hazara Division participated. He said all the district sports officers have been instructed to hold the District level athlete event, before selecting the young and upcoming talented athlete to represent their respective district in the Athletic Meet.

It is good to see such a good talent that Hazara Division have and hopefully a good strong team of athletes would be selected for the forthcoming Inter-Regional Athletic Championship wherein athletes from all across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would participate.

Syed Zaheer Ul Islam, who is also the President of the KP Athletic Association,

said that a strong and talented team would be selected to represent KP in the forthcoming Athletic C'ship to be organized under the aegis of Pakistan Athletic Federation at Attock on December 2, 2023.

At the end, Commissioner Hazara gave away medals and trophies and cash prizes to the position holders athletes. He also thanked Commandant Baloch Center Muhammad Jamil for extending all facilities for holding the Hazara Division Inter-District Athletic C'ship. He said at the same venue All Inter-Division Athletic Championship would be organized very soon for which arrangements have already been made.

Results:
100m
Zeeshan Haripur Ist 11:64
Muhammad Ibrahim Battagram 2nd 11:71
Hamza Mansehra 3rd 11:75

200m
Umer Haripur Ist 23:47
Sharyar Haripur 2nd 24:12
Shazada Khan Haripur 3rd 24:90

400m
Shazada Haripur Ist 11:64
Momin Mansehra 2nd 11:71
Khalid Abbottabad 3rd 11:75

800m
Ubaid Tanoli Haripur Ist 02:24 min
Ubaid Khan Haripur 2nd 02:25
Mujtaba Mansehra 3rd 02:26

1500m
Sibgtullaha Abbotbad Ist 5:07 min
Shahbaz Khan Haripur 2nd 5:10
Abid Khan Haripur 3rd 5:11

Long Jump
Umer Haripur Ist 6:05 m
Abdullah Mansehra 2nd 5:89m
M.Aqib Mansehra 3rd 5:46m

Triple Jump
Zeeshan Haripur Ist 37:5 Ft
Aqib Mansehra 2nd 37:4 Ft
Ubaid Haripur 3rd 36:9 Ft

Discus throw
Hassan Haripur Ist 34:60 m
Noman Shah Haripur 2nd 27:92 m
Raheem ud Din Kohistan Up 3rd 27:85 m

Shotput throw
Hassan Haripur Ist 10:65 m
Noman Haripur 2nd 9:62 m
Amjad Khan Battagram 3rd 9:54 m

Javelin throw
Jawad Khan Kohistan Upper Ist 180:0 ft
Danish Ali Haripur 2nd 160:0 ft
Asad Mansehra 3rd 145:4 ft.



PESHAWAR: Head of Sub Delegation ICRC Peshawar Mr. Jihad Nabhan in a group photo with the winning team of KPK bilateral cricket series for persons with disabilities.



In brief

IRSA releases 89,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 89,600 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 42,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1499.94 feet and was 99.94 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 22,200 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1178.10 feet, which was 128.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded 5,600 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 51,800, 45,000, 39,900 and 17,400 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

AIOU announces results of HSSC, FA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Tuesday announced results of HSSC and FA programs offered in the spring semester 2023 and results had been uploaded to the CMS portal. The students who complete their program will receive completers soon, said a press release issued here. Moreover, the university also announced the assignments schedule for Matric and F.A programs offered in autumn semester 2023 and details have been uploaded on its website. According to the schedule, 4th December is the submission deadline for the first assignment, December 28, for the second assignment, January 29, 2024, for third and, February 16, 2024, is the last submission date for the fourth assignment. The submission deadline for two course assignments of matric and F.A programs is December 28, 2023, and February 16, 2024, respectively. The students can get names, addresses, and other information of their respective tutors on CMS portal at <http://enrollment.aiou.edu.pk> or from any nearest regional campus. The students will be responsible for late assignment submission, and assignments reaching after the due dates will not be accepted. It is worth mentioning here that Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mehmood directed the heads of the Examination Department, Admissions Department, Regional Directors, and other departments to take steps to strengthen the student support system.

52 liters of liquor recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police arrested three liquor suppliers and recovered 52 litres of liquor from their possession during a crackdown here on Tuesday. According to a police spokesman, City Police held Haroon and recovered 20 litres of liquor from his possession. Similarly, Gujjar Khan nabbed Abdul Jabbar and recovered 20 litres of liquor from his custody. While taking action, Bani police recovered 12 litres of liquor from Dawood. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. Divisional SPs appreciated the performance of police teams and said that the arrested accused will be punished according to law.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Health Minister Dr. Nadeem Jan administrating polio drops during polio campaign.

Govt to provide free SIMs, female abayas to hujjaj: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Tuesday said that the government would provide free of cost mobile SIMs with roaming internet packages, female abayas having a Pakistani flag on the backside and 13 Kg suitcases to pilgrims performing hajj this year.

Talking to a private news channel, minister said that it was a historic step that caretaker government has declared a significant reduction of one lac in government Hajj expenses, adding, further 50,000 will also be reduced in coming few days after which hujjaj will get back their money in their accounts.

He said a new mobile

application has been designed to assist pilgrims, which will provide navigation support and enable constant communication between pilgrims and relevant officials.

Initially available in English and Urdu, the application will later incorporate various regional languages, he said, adding, app will also provide digital training programs to every pilgrim. Minister also disclosed a project that ministry of Hajj with the collaboration of ministry of education have planned to convert city mosques into schools to enrolled out of school children where Imam of mosques will play a leading role. Minister said that mosques will play their

role as a community centers in every city areas, adding, Imams will resolve community issues as well after offering prayers.

He said that ministry of hajj is taking all four provinces on board and enhancing the connectivity of mosques.

While describing another project, minister for religious affairs said that his ministry with the collaboration of health ministry has another project in which medical clinics will also be part of mosques.

Lady health workers and other essential staff of doctors will also be provided in all masajid where they will facilitate to citizens visiting inside the masque of areas, he added.

ANF seizes 34 kg drugs in three operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in its ongoing crackdown against drug trafficking managed to recover 34 kg of drugs and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman.

He said 3.6 kg hashish was recovered from a resident, arrested near Murree Expressway, Islamabad.

In another operation, 28.8 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Baleli check post, Quetta while an accused was also arrested during the operation.

In the third raid, 2 kg Ice drug was recovered from a drug smuggler, a resident of Qilla Abdullah netted from the RCD highway. Separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

‘Education vital for progress of country’

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Federal Minister for Education, Madad Ali Sindhi has said that education plays a vital role in the progress of a country.

This he said on Tuesday, while addressing a conference on the topic of "Revolutionizing higher education: reconciling required & acquired learning" held at International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI).

The Education Minister said that the digital revolution has changed the learning methods, while hurdles of time and place for education are no longer an issue. He emphasized the use of technology in teaching and learning. The Minister opined that education is the best way to make the society strong, stable and prosperous. Madad Ali Sindhi was of the view that education must be a top priority of our nation. This international conference is being organized by the Faculty of Education of IIUI in collaboration with IQRA University and Intentional Centre of Excellence. Around 50 papers are being presented by national and international scholars in the conference.

The participants of conference debated on reimagining a traditional degree path and integrating skill-based education in higher education, which may help in addressing the issue of how to change lives by addressing long-standing educational issues such as inequality, learning poverty, economic insecurity, and the exclusion of

youth from the job market who are not in degree programmes.

Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC), said that no country may progress unless it invests in education. He said that Youth have the potential to change the fate of a nation. He added that Pakistan has won maximum scholarships for Europe in previous year. "Things have changed, we have to buckle up and catch up with the rest of the world" said Dr. Mukhtar adding that technology and AI based learning are the prime choices to excel.

He referred to the global pandemic saying that it exposed the conventional education, while he also apprised of the response of HEC. He called for equal opportunities for all three sectors of education mentioning primary, vocational and higher education. Rector IIUI, Dr. Samina Malik in her address said that training of the teachers in the light of contemporary requirements of teaching is a prerequisite for a successful education system. She opined that innovative approaches and modern modes of teaching are necessary to compete the rest of the world.

Dr. Samina also lauded the role of HEC in revolutionizing higher education with the help of modern modes of education and requisite training. She hoped that the conference will help in bringing the recommendations to devise strategies and policies for the innovative approaches and modern techniques in teaching.

Parents urged to ensure vaccination of children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan on Tuesday urged parents to ensure vaccination of their children during the ongoing polio immunization drive.

Addressing the launching ceremony of the third nationwide polio vaccination campaign, Dr Nadeem Jan said that poliovirus has paralyzed five children this year. He added all these children deserved a healthy life and future. "We cannot allow a vaccine-preventable disease to continue to harm our children like this," he said. He said that protecting children's well-being was a collective responsibility. He said, "Every country that has eliminated polio so far has done so with the support of communities, parents, religious leaders, and social organizations." "We need the same in Pakistan, for communities to join the government in its fight against polio."

The event was held in Islamabad Model

School, I-8/1, where school children presented a short tableau in cultural costumes of provinces. The minister officially launched the campaign by giving polio drops to children under five year of age.

Dr Shahzad Baig, Coordinator of the National Emergency Operations Centre for Polio Eradication, said, "Polio cases are fewer than they have ever been, yet the virus has shown up in sewage samples in several major cities this year, indicating that some population pockets that have missed out on the vaccine. The programme is continuously reviewing and reassessing its strategies and campaigns. "We will ensure that we find these missed populations and vaccinate them." Over 44.3 million children under five years of age will be vaccinated in 159 districts during this third and last national campaign of 2023, which is being held in phases across the country.

MoCCC to showcase Pakistan's Climate-Resilience initiatives at COP28

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCCC) is all set to represent Pakistan through its delegation to be led by Caretaker Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Ahmed Irfan Aslam at the international climate summit (COP28) to be held in Dubai from November 30 to December 12 and would sensitize the world on climate adaptation significance and its climate resilience-related projects.

MoCCC, Secretary Syed Asif Hyder Shah in a pre-COP media briefing informed the environmental journalists about the preparations of the Ministry vis-à-vis the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP-28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Setting the background for the journalists, Shah mentioned that during the previous COP-27 meeting held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, the country played a major role in bringing global agreement on Loss and Damage Fund due to its position as G-77 plus China chairmanship and floods in 2022.

The current, COP-28 conference would focus five key agendas mainly Loss and Damage Fund architecture and its operationalization, first Global Stock Take (GST) report, mitigation work program, global goal on adaptation and climate finance (new collective quantified goal), he added.

The secretary informed that the first effort was to create the fund as an interim fund and then after three

years it would made a standalone fund, whereas its criteria to extend climate finance should focus on developing countries.

"However, the rich developed countries want the fund to be focused on small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries, but Pakistan argues that developing countries should also be part of it," Asif Hyder Shah said.

He further mentioned that it would be the first ever GST report which would review the eight years' performance after Paris Agreement as the reports indicated that the world was not on the right track due to exacerbating climate crisis and carbon emissions. He added that Pakistan had no liability of it due to its minuscule carbon emissions, whereas the major greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) emitters would have to revise their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and net zero emissions targets.

"Adaptation is very important for countries like Pakistan. It is important to understand that mitigation is reduction in emissions and adaptation is preparing for disasters through capacity build up," the secretary said. Climate finance, he said was so far focusing on mitigation but Pakistan also wanted to focus adaptation.

"The slogan of Pakistan for this year is 'Build Resilience Together', whereas previously it was 'What Happens in Pakistan Will Not Stay In Pakistan'," he added.

"Pakistan will sensitize the world that adaptation is equally important

as mitigation whereas the Annexed-I countries have given \$1 billion target for global climate finance but Pakistan will take its position to scale up this target and it should be more than that," he said.

Commenting the pavilion of Pakistan at COP-28 Expo, he said the ministry would set up a pavilion while maintaining austerity and we had panel discussions on critical issues starting from Living Indus and Recharge Pakistan and showcasing of climate resilience building projects.

On reporting and communication of COP activities, the secretary briefed that timely and perpetual information sharing mechanism was crucial and the ministry was establishing a COP cell and a communication cell dedicated to share correct information related to the global climate conference engagements of the country delegation.

Responding to media queries, the secretary said to disseminate information, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was the mainstay of the Ministry whereas this time the NDRMF web-portal would share realtime data of COP activities. "Dr Adil Najum will be part of Living Indus Initiative dialogue to be held on December 2nd and it will be the first ever event to be hosted by Dr Adil Najum, a world renowned climate and global studies expert," he added. He clarified the mediapersons that the COP agenda was rigid and strictly restricted to global climate issues, whereas during the leaders' summit plenary the countries give statement which would be participated by 136 heads of states.

XPCC delegation, Shah discuss cultural ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): A China Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) delegation, headed by Liu Jianming, discussed bolstering cultural ties with Caretaker Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Jamal Shah at Heritage Division on Tuesday. In the meeting, both stressed the importance of enhancing cultural connections between the two countries.

The minister highly praised China's visionary leadership of President Xi Jinping. Jamal Shah highlighted the strong bond between Pakistan and China and encouraged Chinese investment in Pakistani historical heritage sites like Takht-e-Bahi. He said the friendship between Pakistan and China is higher than mountains, deeper than the ocean, sweeter than honey and stronger than steel. Today, we will witness the manifestation of this friendship through art and cultural heritage.

The minister apprised that his ministry plans to organize a second China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) cultural caravan aimed at promoting economic ties and strengthening cultural bonds between Pakistan, China and the Central Asian States.

The cultural caravan will be composed of diverse groups of Pakistani, Chinese and Central Asian artists, musicians, photographers, anthropologists, writers and filmmakers. Liu Jianming, the Deputy Party Secretary and Deputy Political Commissioner of XPCC, highlighted an extensive history of cultural exchanges. He emphasized the significance of agriculture, tourism, and culture as crucial domains for enhancing people-to-people contacts between Pakistan and China.

He said that cultural exchanges, and cooperation in agriculture and tourism sectors would help advance the exceptional friendship between Pakistan and China. The delegation comprised of Tian Yonghao, Director-General of Bureau of Agricultural and Rural Affairs of Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, Wang Zibin, Director-General of Bureau of Culture, Physical Education, Radio, Television and Tourism, Sun Wei, Director-General of Office of Foreign Affairs of Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, Han Gen, Director of Agricultural Department of Xinjiang Tianye (Group) Co., Ltd.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Madad Ali Sindhi attended the opening ceremony of International Conference on "Revolutionizing Higher Education: Reconciling required and Acquired Learning" by IIUI.

Surveying of dam started

SAR-E-PUL (TOLOnews): Officials of the National Development Corporation said that the budget for the construction of the Sultan Khan Dam will be provided from the revenues of Sar-e-Pul oil. Governor Sar-e-Pul said that with the completion of the dam, a large issue of the people will be solved regarding water and electricity. Head of National Development Corporation and the technical delegation of Sar-e-Pul governor's office visited the area where the Sultan Khan Dam is to be built.

The Frontier Post

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 13, 1445 — Wednesday, November 29, 2023

Kyrgyzstan to deliver aid

KABUL (Ariana News): Kyrgyzstan authorities have announced that they will deliver 100 tons of food aid to earthquake victims in Afghanistan, local media reported. Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Emergency Situations has said that they will soon deliver 100 tons of food to Afghanistan, including 75 tons of flour, 20 tons of sugar, 5 tons of sunflower oil, 500 beds, the same number of warm blankets and mattresses, 24.kg news agency reported on Tuesday.

UN seeking alternative livelihood for farmers

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Afghanistan has stated that it is actively working towards finding alternative livelihoods for Afghan farmers. This initiative aims to provide Afghan farmers with sustainable alternatives to poppy cultivation. On Monday, the organization said on its social media platform X that a group of experts convened to pursue alternative cultivation methods for Afghan farmers, in a bid to provide them with sustainable alternatives.

natives. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Afghanistan has made it its goal to establish alternative livelihoods in Afghanistan, creating sustainable income opportunities for farmers who were previously engaged in illegal poppy cultivation. The agency has emphasized the need for more discussions to find alternative livelihoods for Afghan farmers who were previously involved in poppy cultivation. This comes after the

UNODC previously reported that poppy cultivation in Afghanistan had decreased by up to 95% following the rise of the Taliban government in the country. The UNODC has issued a warning about the far-reaching consequences of the substantial decrease in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. This reduction has compelled Afghan farmers, already facing severe economic challenges, to switch to crops that yield significantly lower profits, resulting in a staggering 92% drop in their income.

Supporting returnees collective responsibility

KABUL (BAN): Mullah Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Afghan Deputy Prime Minister, met with Qari Din Mohammad Hanif, the Acting Minister of Economy and the head of the Committee for Raising Aid for Returnees, to discuss the situation of the returnees and the coordination of the assistance for them. The Deputy Prime Minister stated that all Afghans have a national and Islamic responsibility to support the returnees with their resources and abilities, especially in the winter season. He also urged the committee to use all its capabilities to attract and collect aid for the returnees.

Qari Hanif reported to Mullah Abdul Salam Hanafi about the activities and functions of the committee, which is committed to collecting aid in coordination with other committees and striving to deliver the aid to the returnees at the appropriate time.

Minister meets with Sherbaz

KABUL (BNA): Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, the Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, met with Sherbaz Kaminzada, the head of the Chamber of Commerce, Industries, and Mines, and Mansoor Ahmadzai, the head of the National Mining Committee. They discussed customs tariffs, royalties on mines, mining sector challenges, and the establishment of a national mining committee between the two entities. Delawar emphasized the importance of cooperation for the country's economic development and growth.

Delawar also held a meeting with influential figures from the Mashwani tribal community. The leaders shared some of their problems and suggestions related to the mining sector in their regions. The mines and petroleum minister assured them of his commitment and support to address their issues within the available resources.

Ministry seeks AKF's support

KABUL (BNA): The Acting Minister of Urban Development and Housing, Sheikh Hamdullah Numani, has requested the Agha Khan Foundation's collaboration in constructing housing facilities for returnees. This request was made during a meeting with Rahat Big, the head of the habitat program of the Agha Khan Foundation.

The meeting focused on coordinating the foundation's projects with the activities of the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing. They also discussed the foundation's cooperation in providing housing and addressing the concerns of returnees. Rahat Big expressed gratitude for the ongoing collaboration of the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing and other officials in the implementation of the foundation's projects in Afghanistan. The two sides agreed to cooperate in solving challenges and issues related to the foundation's activities in the country. Sheikh Hamdullah Numani assured that necessary cooperation would be provided to resolve issues in coordinating Agha Khan Foundation projects in Afghanistan. He also appreciated the foundation's efforts in providing shelter and services for the returnees. The Ministry of Urban Development and Housing is committed to working with the Agha Khan Foundation to improve the living conditions of returnees in the country.

Iran called for formation of inclusive govt in Afghanistan

TEHRAN (Ariana News): Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has once again called for the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan. According to IRNA news agency, Nasser Kanani, the spokesman of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, said in a press conference on Monday: "Regardless of the developments related to the meetings and the level of Iran's presence, we have a basic principle, we seek to help stability and security in Afghanistan for life with peace for the people of Afghanistan."

He added: "We consider Afghanistan's security to be Iran's security, and in this framework, we believe in the usefulness of regional mechanisms to consolidate peace and stability in Afghanistan and to form a government that represents all the people of Afghanistan."



Kanani said: "Iran's all diplomatic activities are defined in this framework, and when we talk with the

Taliban (Islamic Emirate), we express our views. We are committed to the people of Afghanistan and we believe that everyone should contribute to the formation of an inclusive gov-

ernment." This comes as the Islamic Emirate has said that the current government of Afghanistan is inclusive and it includes representatives of all ethnic groups.

Afghan female journalists face unemployment, information barriers

KABUL (Khaama Press): An organization known as the "Afghan Women Journalists Association" has released the findings of their survey on the status of female journalists in Afghanistan over the past two years. According to the report, the majority of women journalists have become housebound during this period. According to officials from this organization, more than 200 female journalists and media personnel from both the capital and the provinces participated in this survey. They were asked about the challenges they have faced in relation to the recent changes that have occurred in the past two years, providing insights into the current sta-

tus of women journalists and potential solutions to overcome these challenges. The results of the Afghan Women Journalists Association's survey were announced during a press conference in Kabul on Sunday. According to Mina Habib, a representative of the organization, the presence of female journalists in the media has significantly declined following the collapse of the Republic system. She noted, "Most female journalists have become housebound, and some have even left the country." According to the survey conducted by this organization, 45% of female journalists have identified unemployment as their

most significant challenge in continuing their work, with 5% of them citing poverty as a concern. The survey also highlighted that 10% of female journalists consider lack of access to information as a serious obstacle, while 7% of female media employees have expressed concerns about job insecurity and personal safety. Hajar Jafari, a reporter for a private radio station in Kabul, states that the major challenge for female journalists is the lack of access to information. She also emphasizes that members of the Taliban administration often prevent the presence of journalists at press conferences. According to the survey conducted by this organiza-

tion, 2% of journalists consider wearing a mask to be a hindrance to their media work. Additionally, there have been reports of mistreatment of female journalists by the Taliban. Majabin Salar, another journalist in Kabul, views wearing a mask during event coverage as a mandatory requirement imposed by the Taliban and finds it uncomfortable. While this organization has not provided details about the methodology of conducting this survey and data collection, the Reporters Without Borders organization stated in its latest report that following the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, 86% of female journalists lost their jobs.

UNODC holds meeting in Kabul over drug alternative livelihoods

KABUL (Ariana News): The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said it brought a group of experts together in Kabul to discuss solutions for sustainable alternative livelihoods for former poppy farmers who relied on illicit crop cultivation. "We need more conversations about alternative livelihoods," UNODC Afghanistan said on X. "UNODC recently brought a group of experts together in Kabul to discuss solutions for sustainable alternative livelihoods for former poppy farmers who relied on illicit crop cultivation."

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) welcomed the meeting and said that it is necessary to find an alternative to poppy cultivation in order to have a drug-free Afghanistan.



Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, said that now that the cultivation of poppy is prohibited in Afghanistan, the time has come to prevent it, and the Islamic Emirate wants to perma-

nently eradicate narcotics from Afghanistan. Experts say such meetings are not enough and the government should take serious measures against drug trafficking. According to them, if an alternative to

poppy cultivation is not found, it is possible that people will return to poppy cultivation. UNODC recently reported that poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has decreased by 95% this year.

Drought hit Helmand Kochies call for support

LASHKARGAH (Pajhwok): Some Kochies living in southern Helmand province have been worried about upcoming winter and said due to recent droughts they had lost their livestock and now were unable to support their families. Lal Khan, a Kochi man, who lives in the Sarkar locality on the outskirts of Lashkargah, said he relied on livestock farming but drought took everything from him and now he was worried how to support himself and family in the winter. He told Pajhwok Afghan News: "We had a lot of animals, we used to meet all the needs of life in this way, but due to the recent droughts, our livestock has ended and now we are wondering how we will meet the expenses in the coming winter."

We want the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and other supporting organisations to provide humanitarian support ahead of harsh winter. Raz Khan, another Kochi man, said: "Due to recent droughts, we have sold our domestic animals and now we are working in the city or other areas, we do not have shelter, it is cold season, our children are sick." He said he had 500 sheep but due to the drought he sold all of them and now struggling with the life.

"I cannot support my family financial expenditures, every month I take loan from friends, now I am 2,000 afs loan to pay," he said. Sado, another Kochi man, said earlier he had cattle and traveled to different areas of the country during different seasons but this year he sold his cattle. He said: "Kochies are not familiar with farming and other jobs, so now everyone is wondering how they will meet the expenses of their families in the coming winter."

Sado said: "Government should pay attention to us, give us tents, what should we do, some people daily go for work, some begging, we have children to feed them. Nasruddin Khaksar, deputy head of the Kochi Affairs, said recent drought had left negative impact on living of Kochies and put them in deep troubles. He said: "Efforts are underway to attract support for Kochies." He said according to a survey 72,000 Kochies families live in Helmand and they have problems in different areas.



‘Refugees forced to return at worst possible time’

KABUL (Khaama Press): The director of the World Food Program (WFP) in Afghanistan, Hsiao-Wei Lee, has expressed deep concern regarding the forced deportation of refugees from Pakistan ahead of the harsh winter. Lee highlighted that more than one million people are expected to leave Pakistan, with over 370,000 already arriving in Afghanistan. These refugees are being compelled to return

to Afghanistan during what is considered the most challenging time of the year. Lee emphasized the grim prospects for these families, stating that they are uncertain about their survival in the upcoming freezing winter. Afghanistan faces an unforgiving winter, making it extremely challenging for the returnees. Unfortunately, there are no welcoming arms awaiting these families in their

home country. The returnees have voiced their dissatisfaction with the behavior of Pakistani forces and are requesting that the deportations be halted or that they be allowed to take their belongings with them. Despite calls from the UN and human rights groups to stop the deportations, Pakistani authorities plan to complete the process by January, further intensifying the dire situation.

Calls mount to speed up work on highway



K A N D A H A R (TOLOnews): Passengers and drivers traveling on the Uruzgan-Kandahar highway want officials to speed up the reconstruction of the road which started four months ago. According to them, if the work on the road is not completed soon, they will face many problems in the coming winter. "From Kabul and Kandahar, this is our most important road, and we also transfer patients on this road," said Ahmadullah, a driver.

"Cars get punctured and break down, we suffered many such problems along the way," said Grani, a driver. "When it rains, the road makes a lot of people stay, it has damages on both sides, which is filled with water," said Esmat, a passenger. The head of public works of Uruzgan also accepted the challenges of drivers and passengers but pledged the completion of the road before winter. "Yesterday, we had a meeting with the company.

We also had a meeting three days before and we prepared them so that the work on the road should be finished before the city planning notice went up to stop the work," said Adam Khan Namani, head of the public works of Uruzgan. The highway between Uruzgan and Kandahar is 165 km long, of which 40 km needs concrete and the other 125 km has been built only in a basic way, but due to the wars in recent years, some culverts have been destroyed, and the reconstruction work continues.

US tells Israel any military operation in Gaza avoid further civilian displacement

WASHINGTON: The Biden administration has told Israel that it must work to avoid “significant further displacement” of Palestinian civilians in southern Gaza if it renews its ground campaign aimed at eradicating the Hamas militant group, senior US officials said.

The administration, seeking to avoid more large-scale civilian casualties or mass displacement like that seen before the current temporary pause in the fighting, underscored to the Israelis that they must operate with far greater precision in southern Gaza than they did in the north, the officials said, briefing reporters on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House.

Amid mounting international and domestic pressure about the rising Palestinian death toll, the White House has begun to put greater pressure on Israel that the manner of the coming campaign must be “carefully thought through,” according to one of the officials. The Israelis have been receptive when administration officials have raised these concerns, the official said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has made clear that Israeli Defense Forces will eventually restart military operations after the conclusion of the current, temporary ceasefire that has allowed for an exchange of hostages taken by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. The two sides agreed Monday to extend the truce for an additional two days and to continue swapping hostages for prisoners.

President Joe Biden has said he would like to see the pause — which has also allowed a surge of much-needed humanitarian aid to get into Gaza — continue as long as feasible. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will return this week to the Middle East as the US hopes to find a way to extend the ceasefire and get more hostages released, the State Department said Monday. It will be his third trip to the region since Israel’s war with Hamas began last month.

Still, Biden and top officials have also been clear-eyed about Israel’s desire to continue operations focused on Hamas that over the last seven weeks have largely focused on the north. They have said they support Israel’s goal of eliminating Hamas’ control over Gaza and the threat it poses to Israeli civilians, but have grown more vocal about the need to protect the lives of Palestinian civilians. Hamas has been known to seek shelter among the territory’s civilian population, and Israeli officials have released videos from northern Gaza of what they said are weapons stockpiles and firing locations placed among civilian infrastructure.

More than 13,300 Palestinians have been killed since the war began

on Oct. 7, roughly two-thirds of them women and minors, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry in Gaza, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants. More than 1,200 people have been killed on the Israeli side, mostly civilians killed in the initial attack. At least 77 soldiers have been killed in Israel’s ground offensive.

The US believes roughly 2 million Palestinians are now in south and central Gaza. Biden administration officials have made clear to the Israelis that an already stretched humanitarian support network would be unable to cope with the sort of displacement that those from northern Gaza have endured in Israel’s retaliatory strikes and ground operations.

Biden administration officials have also told the Israelis they expect them to conduct operations in a way that will be “maximally deconflicted” with the operation of humanitarian aid facilities, United Nations-supported shelters and core infrastructure, including electricity and water. The World Health Organization has warned that the war has caused a burgeoning public health crisis that is a recipe for epidemics as displaced Palestinians have been forced to take shelter in cramped homes and camps.

One administration official said vaccines are among the medical goods flowing into Gaza, but there has also been a focus on potable water supplies and sanitation to prevent outbreaks of typhoid and cholera. To that end, the White House has also pushed to get as much fuel into Gaza as possible — something the Israelis resisted, particularly in the first weeks of war, citing concerns that it would be siphoned by Hamas. The officials said the US on Tuesday would dispatch the first of three US military humanitarian aid flights to northern Egypt carrying medical supplies, food aid and winter items for Gaza’s civilian population.

Meanwhile, carting heavy cans of water through muddy streets, searching mounds of rubble for clothes, mourning lost relatives and homes — Gazans relieved from Israeli bombardment during the truce with Hamas were still facing the daily hardships of war.

At a water station in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on Tuesday, people filled plastic containers and lugged them to homes or shelters using carts pulled by donkeys or by hand, bicycles, a shopping trolley, a wheelbarrow, even a wheel-chair.

“The struggle for water happens daily, since we were first displaced until now. Even during the cease-fire, they didn’t find a solution to the water problem,” said Rami Al-Rizek, displaced with his family from their home in Gaza City. Now in its fifth day, the pause in fighting between

Israel and Hamas has allowed an increased number of aid trucks to enter Gaza from Egypt, but the humanitarian needs are so immense that many Gazans have felt little or no impact.

“Whether there is a truce or not, we still have no electricity, no water, and none of life’s basic necessities,” said Muath Hamdan, another man waiting at the water station. It had rained, and a steady stream of children and adults trudged through mud and puddles in sandals and flip flops on their way to the water station. The quest for water was the main activity that could be seen on the streets.

In a different area of Khan Younis, Maryam Abu Rjaileh had returned to her home, reduced to rubble by an Israeli air strike, to search for clothes for her children. The family are now sheltering at a school, in a classroom shared with many others. “We see our homes getting destroyed, our dreams getting destroyed, we see the efforts we put into our homes all destroyed,” said Abu Rjaileh. “How can I describe our situation? They gave us a four-day truce, what are these four days? We come here, feel sorry for ourselves and turn back.”

In another part of town, Yasser Abu Shamaleh paced over the pile of debris that used to be a block where many of his relatives lived. He said more than 30 of them had been killed — his parents, sisters and brothers, nieces, nephews and cousins. “Two things made me come to this area. First, my cousin is still under the rubble and no-one has been able to get him out. Second, my painful memories,” he said.

Abu Shamaleh, who said he survived because he, his wife and their five children live in a different building, picked up chunks of concrete and tossed them aside. A rag doll could be seen in the rubble. “As much as you try to retrieve things, it’s useless. We need machinery and tools to get things out,” he said.

“The truce is the time to lift the rubble and search for all the missing people and bury them. We honor the dead by burying them. What use is the truce if the bodies remain under the rubble?” he said. The war began when militants from Hamas, the Islamist group that controls Gaza, rampaged through southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people, including babies and children, and seizing about 240 hostages, according to Israeli figures. Israel responded with aerial bombardment and a ground assault on Gaza, killing more than 15,000 people, around 40 percent of them children, according to Gazan health officials. Another Khan Younis resident, Ahmed Al-Najjar, said of the truce: “Four days are not enough, and forty days are not enough, and four years will not be enough to get over the pain.” — Arab News



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi chairing a meeting on mental health issues, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

ECP adjourns hearing on Imran’s party role till Dec 5

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Tuesday adjourned the hearing concerning the removal of Imran Khan Niazi’s name as the party chairman from the records till December 5.

The four-member Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) bench, headed by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Sikandar Sultan Raja continued hearing Khalid Mahmood’s case. The counsel representing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) requested an extension until next week to submit the response as a copy of the petition had not been provided. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Sikandar Sultan Raja stated that, as per ECP records, a copy had been furnished to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). The case’s hearing is postponed until Wednesday, but the lawyer urged for a further adjournment to next week, citing their engagement in intra-party elections.

The Election Commission member questioned the procedure for inter-party matters. Subsequently, the lawyer was instructed by the Election Commission to submit the power of attorney. Petitioner, Khalid Mahmood Khan, has submitted a plea seeking the removal of the Chairman of Tehreek-e-Insaf from his party position. The argument put forth is that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman, having been penalized in the Tosha Khana case, should be ousted from the role.

Court orders markets to close by 10pm

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday directed authorities to close all businesses by 10 pm daily, as part of efforts to address the increasing levels of smog in the city.

Justice Shahid Karim of the Lahore High Court issued a detailed on set of environment-related petitions, directed authorities to enforce the closure of all markets, restaurants and other businesses by 10 pm. The court has directed CCPO Lahore and the Punjab chief secretary to ensure the implementation of court orders. The Lahore High Court (LHC) has further directed Punjab government to issue notification regarding the 2-day work-from-home policy for banks and offices.

Pakistan’s second largest city of Lahore once again ranked on Tuesday as the world’s most polluted city, despite efforts by the government to reduce toxic smog in the metropolis. Lahore held the top spot on a real-time list of the world’s most polluted cities with an air quality index (AQI) of 353 at around 1pm, according to Swiss group IQAir. AQI as high as 151-200 is considered unhealthy, while an AQI rating between 201 to 300 is more harmful and AQI over 300 has been extremely hazardous.

The air becomes heavier in the winter as compared to summer, causing poisonous particles in the atmosphere to move downwards and making the atmosphere polluted.

As a result, a layer of polluted particles, including large amounts of carbon and smoke, covers an area. Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi announced on Thursday that schools, colleges and all other educational institutes will remain closed in 10 districts of Punjab for an additional two days — Friday and Saturday — weekly due to the worsening smog situation.

Alvi calls for national mental health policy

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has emphasized the need for formulating a national mental health policy to address the mental health issues in Pakistan as 24% population of the country was facing various mental health issues.

Chairing a follow-up meeting on mental health in Pakistan held at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Tuesday, he stressed upon an institutional framework and public-private partnership to provide mental health services to the people. On the occasion, a detailed presentation by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination on the National Mental Health App “Humraaz” highlighted that more than 240,000 calls had been received since its launch in April 2023.

The meeting was attended by Caretaker Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Dr Nadeem Jan and representatives of the National Commission for Human Rights, the World Health Organization, and senior government officials. Representatives of the provincial health departments, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan

Psychiatric Society, Taskeen Health Initiative, Pakistan Psychological Association, Pakistani American Psychiatric Association of North America, British Pakistani Psychiatrists Association, other organizations working on mental health attended the meeting via video link.

Dr Arif Alvi appreciated the launching of “Humraaz” that was providing mental health assistance and counselling services to the people in need. He called for improving the effectiveness of the Humraaz app, besides strengthening the mental health support system in the country.

He highlighted that mental health was a major concern for Pakistan which required coordinated efforts by both the public and private sectors to utilize their expertise. He further emphasized the need for an integrated approach on all mental health-related programs and initiatives to effectively address the mental health challenge being faced by the country. President Alvi stressed upon the need for the capacity building of human resources, besides providing online trainings to overcome the shortage of mental health professionals. The meeting underscored

the need for raising awareness about mental health issues to educate the people about the importance of seeking mental health counselling. The role of the family in providing psychological support and helping manage health issues was also highlighted.

During the meeting, the need for collective measures and an integrated approach involving various stakeholders, including relevant ministries, Pakistani psychiatric associations based in the USA and the UK, and civil society was also stressed. The minister for Health Services appreciated the role played by President Dr Arif Alvi and the First Lady in raising awareness about various health issues in Pakistan. He expressed the hope that the precedent set by the Presidency would be sustained and followed.

President phones families of martyrs: President Dr. Arif Alvi held telephonic conversation with families of the security personnel martyred in recent acts of terrorism in North Waziristan and Pasi.

The President paid tributes to the services and sacrifices of the martyrs for the homeland. Commiserating with the bereaved families, the President prayed to God Almighty to grant high status to the martyrs.

All 41 Indian workers trapped in tunnel rescued

NEW DELHI (AFP): Indian rescuers have safely brought out all 41 workers from a collapsed Himalayan road tunnel after a marathon 17-day engineering operation to free them, a minister said on Tuesday. “I am completely relieved and happy as 41 trapped labourers in the Silkyara Tunnel Collapse have been successfully rescued,” Minister of Road Transport Nitin Gadkari said in a statement.

“This was a well-coordinated effort by multiple agencies, marking one of the most significant rescue operations in recent years.” The rescued men were draped in orange marigold flower garlands in celebration as they were greeted by state officials, government photographs showed, with a line of ambulances waiting to receive them. Crowds cheered as emergency vehicles with lights flashing readied to leave the tunnel entrance, where the workers had been trapped since a portion of the under-construction tunnel in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand collapsed on November 12. AFP reporters spoke to family members waiting at the site who confirmed the exhausted men had been freed, pulled out through 57 metres (187 feet) of steel pipe on stretchers specially fitted with wheels.

Relatives outside had already begun celebrating even before the first man was pulled out. “We are thankful to God and the res-

cuers who worked hard to save them,” Naiyer Ahmad told AFP, whose younger brother Sabah Ahmad is among the trapped workers, and who has been camping at the site for over two weeks. Sudhansu Shah, who has also been camping out since shortly after the November 12 tunnel collapse waiting for his younger brother Sonu Shah, said relatives were relieved. “We are really hopeful and happy,” he said.

Dhami praised the “prayers of tens of millions of countrymen and the tireless work of all the rescue teams engaged in the rescue operation.” The health of the workers was “fine”, but a team of medics in a field hospital were ready on site as soon as they were brought out, he added. Previous hopes of reaching the men were dashed by falling debris and the breakdown of multiple drilling machines, and the government warned multiple times of the “challenging Himalayan terrain”.

After repeated setbacks in the operation, military engineers and skilled miners dug the final section by hand using a so-called “rat-hole” technique, a three-person team working at the rock face inside a metal pipe, just wide enough for someone to squeeze through. Indian billionaire Anand Mahindra paid tribute to the men at the rock-face who squeezed into the narrow pipe to clear the rocks by hand.

“After all the sophisticated drilling equipment, it’s the humble ‘rat-hole miners’ who make the vital breakthrough,” Mahindra said on X, formerly Twitter. “It’s a heartwarming reminder that at the end of the day, heroism is most often a case of individual effort and sacrifice.” Last week, engineers working to drive a metal pipe horizontally through the 57 metres of rock and concrete ran into metal girders and construction vehicles buried in the rubble, snapping a giant earth-boring machine.

A separate vertical shaft was also started from the forested hill above the tunnel, a risky route in an area that has already suffered a collapse. Digging also took place from the far side of the road tunnel, a much longer third route estimated to be around 480 metres. The workers were seen alive for the first time last week, peering into the lens of an endoscopic camera sent by rescuers down a thin pipe through which air, food, water and electricity were delivered.

The workers had plenty of space in the tunnel, with the area inside 8.5 metres high and stretching about two kilometres in length. Arnold Dix, president of the International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association, who has been advising the engineers, told reporters ahead of the rescue that the men were in good spirits, and that he had heard they had been “playing cricket”.

Body passes ‘Pakistan Council for Science & Technology Amend Bill’

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Science and Technology unanimously passed the bill titled “The Pakistan Council for Science and Technology (Amendment) Bill, 2023.” Senator Sardar Muhammad Shafiq Tareen chaired the meeting of the committee held at Parliament House on Tuesday.

The mover of the bill, Senator Shahadat Awan stated that the aim was to maintain Parliamentary oversight over the Council by making it mandatory for the Council to submit an annual report to Parliament. While discussing the implementation status of recommendations, the Secretary for MoST stated that the ministry has complied with the committee recommendations, and its report has been submitted before the committee.

Furthermore, the committee was briefed on the pending promotions in all departments, especially PSQCA, and the reasons for the delay. Secretary for MoST, Ali Raza Bhutta, mentioned that promotions were pending due to the absence of a regular Director General and inter-depart-

mental disputes in PSQCA. However, the ministry has directed PSQCA to expedite the pending promotion cases. Regarding vacant posts, Secretary MoST stated that the ministry has scrapped the ongoing process due to committee suspicions, and new posts will be announced after analyzing the required workforce of PSQCA. The committee recommended the ministry to continue recruitment after addressing all the lacunas.

The committee was briefed on the terms, conditions, and tenure of the existing DG Pakistan Hilal Authority. Secretary MoST informed that the current DG, Akhtar Ahmed Bughio, was appointed on April 10, 2023, for a term of three years, and its period was extended in May 2023 for further three years, entitled to all perks and privileges of Grade 21 of Civil services.

Moreover, the Senate body deliberated on the recovery of Rs. 2.5 Million in unjustified benefits from DG PHA. DG PSQCA stated that the initial inquiry suggests that money was transferred without following prescribed rules. However, a detailed report will be submitted to

the committee upon the conclusion of the investigation. In addition, the committee discussed the inquiry conducted on the illegal appointment of Ali Bux Soomro and Khalid Ahmad Bulbani in PSQCA. DG PSQCA informed that, according to PSQCA records, no inquiry has been conducted against the mentioned individuals, and they were recruited following all the required procedures. However, Senator Sardar Muhammad Shafiq Tareen stated that a copy of an inquiry has been submitted before the committee, indicating that an inquiry was initiated against the said individuals for illegal appointments. Secretary Most maintained that the ministry will investigate the matter and submit its report to the committee upon conclusion.

In attendance were Senator Dr. Muhammad Humayun Mohmand, Senator Sana Jamali, Senator Engr. Rukhsana Zuberi, Senator Dr. Afnan Ullah Khan, Senator Muhammad Asad Ali Khan Junejo, Senator Shahadat Awan, Secretary MoST Ali Raza Bhutta, DG PSQCA and other senior officers of relevant departments were also in attendance.

NATO ministers discuss Russia-Ukraine war, Kosovo unrest at Brussels summit

BRUSSELS: Foreign ministers of NATO countries have assembled in Brussels for security talks as Russia presses ahead in its war against Ukraine and Israel enters the fifth day of a fragile truce with Palestinian group Hamas. The Russia-Ukraine war appeared to top the agenda of the two-day summit which began on Tuesday, as NATO’s chief urged allies to continue supporting the war-ravaged country amid funding hold-ups in Washington and Europe.

“I’m confident that the United States will continue to provide support because it is in the security interest of the United States to do so and it’s also in line with what we have agreed,” NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said. “I urge allies, and allies are also committed to continue to deliver support,” he added. Some \$61bn in proposed US aid to Ukraine is being held up by the US Congress, while another \$50bn package from the European Union is struggling to pass due to opposition from Hungary.

Al Jazeera’s Step Vaessen, reporting from Brussels, said the funding

delays show indications of “fatigue” from some NATO members 21 months into the war. Ukraine’s top diplomat Dmytro Kuleba will try to overcome such fatigue and lobby for continued NATO backing when he joins the summit on Wednesday.

Kuleba will also work with NATO ministers to outline a plan for reforms aimed at helping Ukraine gain eventual membership in the security alliance. Russia has said NATO expansionism is at the core of its grudge against bordering Ukraine, which it has repeatedly warned not to join the alliance.

More than 500,000 troops from Russia and Ukraine are estimated to have been killed or wounded since Moscow marched troops across its neighbour’s border in February 2022. At least 10,000 civilians have also been killed in the conflict, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has said. Apart from the Russia-Ukraine war, NATO ministers also planned to discuss Russia’s “destabilising actions” throughout the region, including allegations it has been enabling undocumented

migrants to reach neighbouring Finland.

Finland last week closed nearly all its border crossings with Russia after it said an influx of migrants arrived at its border with Russia. Another topic on the agenda will be unrest between Serbia and Kosovo, where NATO has in recent months deployed more troops to reinforce its peacekeeping force following an attack on Kosovo police. The ministers are also likely to address the seven-week war between Israel and Hamas, though it is not officially on the agenda.

Al Jazeera’s Vaessen said the ministers would discuss “not only the extension of the ceasefire [between Israel and Hamas] but a future for Gaza after the war is finished”. Hanging in the background of the summit is the membership status of Sweden, which has been awaiting ratification from Turkey and Hungary for 18 months. Stoltenberg on Tuesday told Hungarian media he expected the two countries to approve Sweden’s membership bid without further delay, but gave no precise timeline. — Aljazeera